

# The Making of Romantic Love

LONGING AND SEXUALITY IN EUROPE,  
SOUTH ASIA & JAPAN, 900–1200 CE

*William M. Reddy*



# The Making of Romantic Love

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*Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South  
Asia, and Japan, 900–1200 CE*

WILLIAM M. REDDY

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**WILLIAM M. REDDY** is the William T. LaPrade Professor of History at Duke University and the author of *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*.

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*To Isabel*



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In a common Western way of feeling, romantic love is paired with sexual desire. The lover feels both at once, yet the two feelings are in tension with each other. Desire is an appetite, self-regarding, pleasure seeking. Love is other-directed and entails placing the good of the beloved above one's own. True love motivates the lover to master self-regarding desire. Loving self-restraint, because it subordinates desire to concern for the other's well-being, in turn renders desire potentially innocent. When the beloved returns one's love, and when neither of the two lovers' well-being is threatened by sexual embrace, then love and desire may both be fulfilled without harm. The opposition between love and desire is thus a productive one.

This peculiar dualism is unique to Western conceptions and practices. The present study attempts to explore the historical origin of this peculiar, potentially productive opposition of love and desire, so common in Western ways of feeling. The present study also offers a comparative treatment of Western romantic love, in which its unique features stand out clearly.

Anthony Giddens is one of the few scholars to have noticed the unusual character of this dualism. "In [European] romantic love attachments," he remarked, "the element of sublime love tends to predominate over that of sexual ardor. The importance of this point can hardly be overstressed. The romantic love complex is in this respect as historically unusual as traits Max Weber found combined in the protestant ethic. Love breaks with sexuality while embracing it."<sup>1</sup> Much more gratifying than love alone or

1. Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 40.

desire alone, fulfilled romantic love, in many Western and Western-influenced contexts, becomes an end in itself, the object of an “earthly religion,” as Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim have put it.<sup>2</sup>

The present study shows that this very specific, Western conception of romantic love was first formulated in the twelfth century CE. The making of “courtly love,” the medieval version of romantic love, in twelfth-century Europe is compared to the very different practices of sexual partnerships in two other places: (1) in regional kingdoms of Bengal and Orissa in the ninth through twelfth centuries CE, and (2) among the imperial aristocracy of Heian Japan in the tenth and eleventh centuries CE. In these other contexts, sexual partnerships were viewed as capable of reaching sublime heights. But in these non-European places, the contrast between sublime sexual affect and profane sexual affect was conceptualized in entirely different ways. South Asian and Japanese sexual partnerships differed sharply from each other, but in neither non-European context did the conceptions, practices, or rituals surrounding sexual partnerships rely on an opposition between true love, on the one hand, and desire, on the other.

The *trobairitz* (“female songwriters” in Occitan) and *troubadours* (“male songwriters”) of twelfth-century southern France were the first to speak of *fin’amors* (“true love” or “refined love”). In the words of troubadour Giraut de Borneil, love’s mastery of desire made possible a joy that was “a hundred times” better than the satisfaction of desire alone. From the *trobairitz* and *troubadours*, this way of thinking spread quickly. The transformation was both rapid and unprecedented. One searches in vain through ancient Greek and Latin literature—from the *Iliad* to the *Aeneid*, from Sappho to Ovid, from Plutarch’s account of Antony and Cleopatra’s love to the later Greek romances—for any trace of an opposition between love and desire. One cannot find a kind of love that masters desire in Nordic sagas, Old English epics, Celtic folktales, *chansons de geste*, or other literature of the early Middle Ages prior to the twelfth century.

The originality of the “courtly love” phenomenon is well known to medievalists. The inventiveness of the *trobairitz* and *troubadours* has never been doubted. But scholars have not agreed on the origin and significance of the twelfth-century conception of “courtly love.” Although the debates on this issue have been heated and wide-ranging,

2. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Das ganz normale Chaos der Liebe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990), translated as *The Normal Chaos of Love*, trans. Mark Ritter and Jane Wiebel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

scholars on all sides of the debate have failed to take into consideration the impact of the Gregorian Reform, a movement to reform church and society that popularized a conception of sexual desire as a kind of appetite.

In this study, an examination of some contemporary non-Western materials will make it possible to pose the question of courtly love's origin from a new angle. Sexual practices in the courts and temples of regional kingdoms such as those of the Senas in Bengal and the Gargas in Orissa—including the great pilgrimage shrine at Puri—lacked both the concept of “desire-as-appetite” and the concept of a kind of “true love” that is opposed to desire. Likewise, materials relating to the Japanese imperial aristocracy in mid-Heian times lack both terms of the opposition—both “true love” and “desire-as-appetite” are missing. Terms such as the Sanskrit *shringara rasa* or the Heian *koi* or *monoomoi* refer to a longing for a sublime sexual partnership that is reciprocal and that excludes coercion. But these concepts do not distinguish desire, conceived of as an appetite, from love, conceived of as selfless care and devotion to another.

These non-European cases encourage one to reconsider the new understanding of sexual desire that became prevalent in twelfth-century Europe. The churchmen and churchwomen who were the architects of this new understanding built upon an older idea of sexual desire as a kind of appetite, similar to hunger or thirst. Since the fourth century, theologians had taught that original sin weakened reason and impaired the capacity of the will to resist temptations, especially those temptations that stimulated the appetite of sexual desire. But for centuries these ideas gained little traction outside the narrow circles of serious ascetics and theological experts. For over five hundred years, church leaders compromised in various ways with lay elites and with the less devout members of the clergy, permitting or winking at practices that did not match with the strict views of the fourth-century church fathers. Finally, eleventh- and twelfth-century theologians and canonists sought to end all compromise. Responding to a reawakened interest in asceticism across Christendom, they fashioned an extreme conception of sexual desire-as-appetite and attempted to outlaw sexual pleasure for all Christians. This move was ambitious, perhaps the most ambitious piece of reform the Gregorians attempted, in view of the customs then in place. By the early twelfth century, it was widely taught that not even legitimately married Christian couples could consent to feeling sexual desire-as-appetite for each other without committing a sin. Even when it was not sinful, sexual touching—pleasant or not—was inher-

ently polluting. One act of coitus, even in legitimate marriage, even if free of pleasure and therefore of sin, was nonetheless enough to permanently taint both soul and body.

When the troubairitz and troubadours first proclaimed the existence of *fin'amors*, they rejected the church reformers' implicit assumption that all sexual longings arose from desire-as-appetite. For the troubairitz and troubadours, the idea of sexual desire as an appetite was utterly inadequate for describing all the things that lovers felt for each other. In elaborating their love doctrine, however, the troubairitz and troubadours conceded the existence of desire-as-appetite. Accepting desire-as-appetite, they affirmed only that "true love" also existed and that it could govern the dangerous energies of desire-as-appetite and prevent appetite from motivating selfish, harmful acts.

From this beginning, an enduring dualism was incorporated into Western notions of romantic love. This dualism was never recognized officially by clerical authorities. But in each age, its continued relevance was ensured by the persistence of Christian teachings on desire-as-appetite. Prior to the Renaissance period, with one or two exceptions, the doctrines of romantic love were not spelled out in treatise or essay, official or unofficial. The theological implications of the doctrine of *fin'amors* were not debated in the schools. Instead, "courtly love" doctrine found expression in a shadowy space beyond clerical regulation, through vernacular literature, music, and the decorative arts. In these profane genres, carefully crafted to avoid direct challenge to priestly authority, the counterdoctrine of true love exercised a profound influence on gender norms and courtship practices.

The South Asian and Japanese settings that will be examined here, by contrast, did not share the metaphysical dualism of "soul" and "flesh" characteristic of medieval Christian thinking. In many Sanskrit texts, the realm of emotion and desire was governed by an opposition between *bhava* and *rasa*. *Bhava* consisted of transient states, including things that in English would be called emotions—despondency and joy—and things that would not—recollection, cruelty, sweating, trembling. *Rasa* consisted of the sacred, spiritual nectar or extract of certain of these transient states, including sexual states.<sup>3</sup> Thus, everyday love-lust, *rati*, was opposed to the sacred nectar of love-lust, *shringara rasa*. Certain devotees ritually enacted or meditated on the divine sexual partnership of Shiva and his consort Parvati or that of Krishna and

3. Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187.

his consort Radha, hoping to participate directly in the *shringara rasa* that these divine couples felt. Participation in *shringara rasa* could certainly lead to bodily states a modern Westerner might regard as “sexual arousal,” although this term cannot be translated into Sanskrit. The contrast between *bhava* and *rasa* was central not only to religious understandings and rituals but also to the practices of the rising aristocracy of at least some royal courts in South Asia. Courtiers and their ladies, kings and their queens sought to mirror aspects of divine behavior, especially divine “play” (*lila*) and the love liaisons that were a part of divine play.

In many Japanese texts of the Heian period, desire, including sexual desire, was conceptualized in a Buddhist frame of reference, within which all desire in this world is inherently frustrating and brings inevitable suffering. Sexual desire has no special status in this framework. At the same time, strong matriarchal tendencies and the worship of indigenous *kami* deities in Japan encouraged Heian aristocrats to regard their longings for specific sexual partners as the manifestations of spiritually significant promptings, encouraged by the gods. Luxury, too, was associated with the extravagant splendor of the spiritual realms of the Buddhist sutras and with the uplifting refinement of the quasi-divine emperor and his court. Thus love poetry could have an incantatory force and attract a beloved by its subtlety and refinement. Lovers attracted each other by the luxury of their dress and surroundings, the refinement of their movements and gestures, and, above all, their skill in composing little jewel-like love verses. Besides fulfilling each others’ longings, lovers could offer spiritual compassion as a form of consolation for the sufferings of this world, just as Amida Buddha and the many bodhisattvas did. Even lesser, more fleeting sexual encounters could partake of the spiritual, although never with the completeness of a more enduring partnership.

In these contexts, the idea of sexual desire-as-appetite simply could not be found. It is not that persons in these non-Western contexts did not sense changes in themselves when in the presence of or contemplating what we might in the West today call a “sexual partner.” Deploying in each case quite different category schemes for understanding what Christians divided into “bodily” and “spiritual,” elites in Bengal and Orissa and in Heian Japan simply did not distinguish “appetites” from other types of motivational forces, nor did they group the “sexual” appetite with hunger or thirst. As we will see, therefore, there is no indication in the documents that members of these elites regarded sexual release as inherently pleasurable. Instead, pleasure was only possible if



certain prerequisites were fulfilled, and these prerequisites included a spiritual dimension. For this reason, there was no need for a notion of “true love” capable of taming desire.

## The “Longing for Association” as a Type of Emotion

Viewed together, the three cases that will be examined here support the idea that a “longing for association” in the most general sense is a salient structural possibility in many human communities. The term *longing* is preferable to *desire* or *love* because of the centuries-old use of the English term *desire* as a synonym of *lust*, meaning appetitive craving for sexual release, and because of *love’s* opposition to lust.<sup>4</sup> *Longing* is free of this old dichotomy. *Association*, likewise, is a general term that can refer to any significant relationship and therefore does not tie the investigator down to a specific conception of sexual partnerships. Whether as transgression, as norm, or as ideal, the longing for association can bring partners (including sexual partners) together in more or less enduring collaborations in a wide variety of cultural contexts, but not in all. Many languages, but not all, have verb tense or personal pronouns. In similar fashion many sets of transmitted practices, but not all, make provision for, name, idealize, or outlaw the longing for association between potential or actual sexual partners.

These three case studies also suggest that the longing for association is an “affect” or “emotion” in the sense that these terms are used in present-day cognitive neuroscience, affective neuroscience, and cognitive behavioral therapy. In these fields, many practitioners insist that affect should no longer be sharply distinguished from cognition.<sup>5</sup> A brief introduction to some basic concepts and discoveries in these fields will provide a useful way of thinking about the longing for association as an emotion. What is particularly useful about recent trends in the cognitive sciences is that they provide a language for talking about affect that is free of such Western-specific notions as “passion,” “appetite” or “drive.”

The breakdown of the distinction between “reason” and “emotion”

4. For *desire*, the *Oxford English Dictionary’s* meaning no. 2 is “*spec.* Physical or sensual appetite; lust.” For *lust*, the *Oxford English Dictionary’s* meaning no. 4 is “Sexual appetite or desire. Chiefly and now exclusively implying intense moral reprobation: Libidinous desire, degrading animal passion. (The chief current use.)”

5. For reviews, see Luiz Pessoa, “On the Relationship between Emotion and Cognition,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 9 (2008): 148–58; and Seth Duncan and Lisa Feldman Barrett, “Affect Is a Form of Cognition,” *Cognition and Emotion* 21 (2007): 1184–1211.

in recent experimental research is a development that is attracting the close attention of some scholars in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. Experimental studies in Western contexts have found that depression, for example, is associated with negative evaluations of the self that pop into the sufferer's focus of attention frequently, without bidding, because they are highly "activated," in the jargon of cognitive research. Evidence that refutes these negative evaluations seems to have little effect on their activation. These negative evaluations are said to be "chronically accessible."<sup>6</sup> Other studies have found that spider phobias, for example, are associated with highly activated thoughts about spiders. Indeed, work in the new field of affective neuroscience strongly suggests that all "emotions" are associated with activated thought "material," that is, with cognitions, and that emotions are, in practice, indistinguishable from aspects of cognitive processing.<sup>7</sup>

The special activation of thought material called "chronic accessibility" results in part from frequent repetition. Beyond a certain threshold, an activation can become self-sustaining because each time that the thought material pops into attention, a side effect is the enhancement of its activation level, which in turn makes its return to the focus of attention in the future more likely. Cognitive behavioral therapy aims at breaking such self-sustaining chain reactions.<sup>8</sup> The implication is that a person's emotional "temperament" consists of an array of such "chronically accessible" thought material, developed over a lifetime of patterned repetitions and habituations.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of such an approach for a possible history of emotions is a subject I have explored in other publications.<sup>10</sup> It is sufficient

6. Examples of recent studies include Rebecca D. Ray et al., "Individual Differences in Trait Rumination and the Neural Systems Supporting Cognitive Reappraisal," *Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Neuroscience* 5 (2005): 156–68; Richard M. Wenzlaff et al., "Beneath the Veil of Thought Suppression: Attentional Bias and Depression Risk," *Cognition and Emotion* 15 (2001): 435–52. A useful review of early stages of these developments is Richard M. Wenzlaff and Daniel M. Wegner, "Thought Suppression," *Annual Review of Psychology* 51 (2000): 59–91.

7. Justin Storebeck and Gerald L. Clore, "On the Interdependence of Cognition and Emotion," *Cognition and Emotion* 21 (2007): 1212–37; Richard J. Davidson, "Seven Sins in the Study of Emotion: Correctives from Affective Neuroscience," *Brain and Cognition* 52 (2003): 129–32.

8. See, e.g., David M. Clark et al., "Cognitive Therapy versus Exposure and Applied Relaxation in Social Phobia: A Randomized Controlled Trial," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 74 (2006): 568–78; Ulrike Zetsche, Thomas Ehring, and Anke Ehlers, "The Effects of Rumination on Mood and Intrusive Memories after Exposure to Traumatic Material: An Experimental Study," *Journal of Behavioral Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry* 40 (2009): 499–514.

9. See, e.g., Ray et al., "Individual Differences in Trait Rumination."

10. Most recently, William M. Reddy, "Emotional Styles and Modern Forms of Life," in *Sexualized Brains: Scientific Modeling of Emotional Intelligence from a Cultural Perspective*, ed. Nicole Karafyllis and Gotlind Ulshöfer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 81–100; see also William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001),

to note here that this research puts emotional expression—whether verbal expression, gestural expression, or facial expression—in a new light. Repeating frequently “I am happy” or “I pledge allegiance to the flag” can initiate self-sustaining thought activations. At the same time, as cognitive behavioral therapy shows, such chain reactions can be broken in the proper circumstances. An emotional expression such as “I love you” does not merely describe an emotion; it usually activates and enhances the background activation level of that range of thought material that is the emotion. But this outcome, while common, is not certain. When an emotional expression fails to elicit the expected confirming activations, it may lead to a new self-understanding. Emotional utterances are therefore similar to performatives, as described by J. L. Austin, because, like performatives, they are a way to “do things with words.” But they differ from performatives because of the unpredictability of their outcome. (I have proposed to call them “emotives” in previous work.)<sup>11</sup>

One advantage of this new understanding of the link between affect and cognition is that it is content free. Freudian theory insisted on finding the origins of cultural content in unconscious drives and conflicts, thus giving cultural content an occult meaning available only to the expert outside observer. Affective neuroscience, in contrast, has little to say about the content of cultural material or practices. It simply seeks to uncover the various ways in which any cognition can be formulated, can become established as a readily available configuration, can rely on a differential subset of systems and pathways, and can, in some instances, become chronically accessible to attention. This is perfectly compatible with recent methods developed in historical ethnography, which focus on how ideas can move along what John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff have called the “chain of consciousness” from unconsciously accepted common sense (that is, ideas that are “chronically accessible” to many) to become consciously contested political issues (that is, ideas whose expression no longer smoothly generates the expected response in an important subset of persons).<sup>12</sup>

John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff see such movement along the chain of consciousness as linked to shifts in the patterns of “hegemony”

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and “Emotional Liberty: Politics and History in the Anthropology of Emotions,” *Cultural Anthropology* 14 (1999): 256–88.

11. Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*.

12. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 29.

in the Gramscian sense. Thought material that is highly activated, or that becomes chronically accessible, is the neural locus where “common sense,” or “culture,” or a “hegemonic” set of practices can reside. Through repetition (whose outcome is always uncertain), thought material either reconfirms its configurations or undergoes change. In such an approach, cultural material will inevitably present itself as variable, hybrid, contested, and subject to historical change. At the same time, one sees that some kind of cultural material, some array of thought material having the status of unquestioned common sense, must be available to each person if that person is to have an identity (in a broad sense) or engage in goal-oriented action.

Love literatures and documents from many cultural settings report that lovers become preoccupied with and ruminate about beloveds, sometimes to the point of obsession. In each of the three cases examined here, texts refer to, describe, and elaborate upon such states. Through the differences in vocabulary and understandings, one glimpses a common human possibility. Such states, rather than being induced by a “sex drive,” are likely the result of the self-reinforcing character of chronic accessibility. Lovers in the grip of preoccupation and rumination consider the beloved, not in the hope of appetitive release (sublimated or not), but as a potential partner in a multifaceted, open-ended relationship. Disciples can become preoccupied with a charismatic religious figure in similar fashion. So, in the present day, can the admirers of actors, singers, and other performers known through the mass media. In the past, courtiers have easily become preoccupied with the great lord or lady who holds in his or her hands all their hopes for status and honor. Doubtless this latter observation helps explain why love literatures in world history have so often arisen in princely courts, where sexual partnerships are but one of the ways loyalties knit together persons of different ranks.

## **The Current Science of Sexual Desire**

Since the pioneering work of figures such as Alfred C. Kinsey in the 1940s and 1950s and William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson in the 1960s, sexual desire and its dysfunctions have become the subjects of an active subfield with its own journals and research agendas. Initially a relatively simple paradigm guided research. Sexual arousal in males was signaled by the engorgement, or tumescence, of the penis and in females by the lubrication of the vagina. Studies seemed to confirm

the popular belief that men were more easily aroused than women. In a model still espoused by many experts, sexual desire is said to trigger sexual arousal, and sexual arousal to lead on to orgasm.<sup>13</sup> Sexual desire in this model is understood as a drive or appetite, “just like other needs or motives, such as hunger or thirst,” that is “regulated by CNS [central nervous system] control mechanisms.”<sup>14</sup>

In recent years, however, this rather mechanical approach to sexual desire and arousal has been questioned by a number of researchers, resulting in a turn to “qualitative research methods.”<sup>15</sup> As Stephanie Both and her associates remark, sexual desire differs sharply from hunger and thirst in that there is “no evidence of any adverse effects of sexual abstinence” and “little evidence for a homeostatic mechanism in human sexual motivation.”<sup>16</sup> Quite simply, the organism does not need sex to be healthy, nor does the nervous system appear to handle sexual release as if a certain minimum were required for equilibrium. We do not, inevitably, grow ever more “horny” if deprived of sex.

In a review of 2007, Benjamin D. Sachs examined nineteen different theories that attempt to account for sexual desire and sexual arousal, gauging the gradual dispersal of opinion over time.<sup>17</sup> Some experts still simply equate sex drive with frequency of orgasm, as Alfred Kinsey did.<sup>18</sup> Some distinguish desire from arousal; others do not find any grounds for doing so. Some regard sexual arousal as an emotion (rather than a physiological state) and insist that one must rely on individual reports of experiences to gain access to this emotion. Still others equate sexual arousal with sexual motivation—that is, any observed tendency to approach sexual targets. One group of researchers, working mostly with animal models, distinguishes sharply between an arousal mechanism that spurs organisms to initiate copulation and a copulatory

13. This is the model proposed in Helen S. Kaplan, *The Sexual Desire Disorders: Dysfunctional Regulation of Sexual Motivation* (New York: Bruner/Mazel, 1995); it is also sanctioned by the official *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the American Psychiatric Association (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

14. Kaplan, *The Sexual Desire Disorders*, 3–4; cited in Stephanie Both, Walter Everaerd, and Ellen Laan, “Desire Emerges from Excitement: A Psychophysiological Perspective on Sexual Motivation,” in *The Psychophysiology of Sex*, edited by Erick Janssen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 327–39.

15. Erick Janssen et al., “Factors That Influence Sexual Arousal in Men: A Focus Group Study,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 37 (2008): 252–65, quote from p. 253.

16. Both et al., “Desire Emerges from Excitement,” 327–28.

17. Benjamin D. Sachs, “A Contextual Definition of Male Sexual Arousal,” *Hormones and Behavior* 51 (2007): 569–78.

18. See, e.g., Jennifer M. Ostovich and John Sabini, “How Are Sociosexuality, Sex Drive, and Lifetime Number of Sexual Partners Related?” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30 (2004): 1255–66.

mechanism that subsequently takes over. Sachs defends penile tumescence as a measure of sexual arousal in men when it occurs in “a sexual context,” although he admits that “sexual context” is a concept that is difficult to pin down.

Questionnaire and focus-group studies suggest that both men and women find the relationship between desire and arousal to be complex, even hazy. Both identify a wide array of factors influencing their responses. Individuals differ widely in their reactions to these factors; and specific individuals react quite differently depending on context. Erick Janssen and associates have proposed a dual-control model, according to which sexual response is determined by the operation of relatively independent excitatory and inhibitory systems within the central nervous system.<sup>19</sup>

In a 2004 focus-group study by Cynthia A. Graham and associates, for example, female participants of various ages, sexual orientations, and ethnic backgrounds tended to agree that erection of the penis was a reliable indicator of male arousal but rejected the idea that vaginal lubrication was a reliable sign of arousal in women.<sup>20</sup> Participants found that lubrication sometimes occurred when they felt sexually uninterested and sometimes failed to occur when they felt aroused. Some said they could not distinguish between sexual interest (desire) and sexual arousal. Many agreed that arousal did not necessarily follow from interest, or interest from arousal. The authors pointed out the importance of “relational and sociocultural factors” in shaping desire and arousal, especially women’s deep concerns over “being used, criticized, or rejected by partners as important inhibitors of their arousal.” Impressed by the ease with which participants could identify “turn ons” and “turn offs,” the authors found that their evidence supported the dual-control model.

In 2008, Janssen and his associates published a similar focus-group study of men.<sup>21</sup> The participants agreed that they could feel sexually aroused without having an erection and experience erection without feeling sexually aroused. Older men found the dissociation between penile erection and arousal to be stronger than younger men did. Like the women in the 2004 study, these men did not clearly differentiate

19. J. Bancroft and E. Janssen, “The Dual Control Model of Male Sexual Response: A Theoretical Approach to Centrally Mediated Erectile Dysfunction,” *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Review* 24 (2000): 571–79; see also Janssen et al., “Factors That Influence Sexual Arousal in Men.”

20. Cynthia A. Graham et al., “Turning On and Turning Off: A Focus Group Study of the Factors That Affect Women’s Sexual Arousal,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 33 (2004): 527–38.

21. Janssen et al., “Factors That Influence Sexual Arousal in Men.”

between desire and arousal. Janssen and associates in their conclusion noted that “several of the men’s narratives seem to reflect more traditional, perhaps even hegemonic . . . notions of masculinity (e.g., desiring sex when performing well, wanting to know how one measures up with other men).” But this was not the predominant pattern. “Our findings transcend notions of indiscriminate and unfaltering male desire and arousal, and point at more complex and diverse patterns in men, some compatible with more traditional notions of masculinity, some consistent with ideas more commonly associated with women’s experience of desire and arousal.”<sup>22</sup>

In neuroscience research, a parallel trend can be observed. For many years, researchers believed that the neurotransmitter dopamine was a crucial factor in the reward mechanism—that is, the pleasure—of sexual arousal. However, Raúl G. Paredes and Anders Ågmo, in a wide-ranging 2004 review, found that researchers had no grounds for connecting dopamine and sexual behavior. “We conclude that the pharmacological data basically reinforce the notion that dopamine is important for motor functions and general arousal. These actions could, in fact, explain most of the effects seen on sexual behavior.” Dopamine release in the nucleus accumbens of the brain “is associated with all kinds of events, aversive as well as appetitive” and thus “can have no specific effect on sexual behavior.” Several studies, they remark, show that dopamine “is of no importance for sexual reward.”<sup>23</sup>

In recent years, the new technology of brain imaging has been brought to bear on the question of sexual arousal. In a 2007 review, Serge Stoléro and Harold Mouras examined ten studies of sexual desire and/or sexual arousal, five using positron emission tomography (PET) of the brain, five employing functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The authors carefully explored the possible functions for each of the many brain regions apparently involved. Their review underscores two characteristics of this research: (1) the striking variability in findings among studies carried out using very similar methods, and (2) the difficulty of identifying any region whose activation is specific to sexual arousal as opposed to other functional responses. In the face of this variability, the authors’ solution was to focus only on the possible functions of the twelve widely scattered regions that were each

22. *Ibid.*, 263. See also Debra M. Quackenbush, Donald S. Strassberg, and Charles W. Turner, “Gender Effects of Romantic Themes in Erotica,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 24 (1995): 21–35.

23. Raúl G. Paredes and Anders Ågmo, “Has Dopamine a Physiological Role in the Control of Sexual Behavior? A Critical Review of the Evidence,” *Progress in Neurobiology* 73 (2004): 179–226, quote from p. 179.

identified in at least three studies. On the question of what is specific to sexual arousal, the authors had only speculative answers: “That specificity may be related to (i) a distinctive pattern of activated / deactivated areas, and/or (ii) the activation / deactivation of discrete areas within the broad regions demonstrated by PET, for example, the part of the rostral ACG [anterior cingulate gyrus] reported to control erection in animals and the part of the somatosensory cortex related to the perception of penile tumescence, and/or (iii) small regions where activation cannot be recorded reliably with current neuroimaging techniques.”<sup>24</sup>

In another review of 2007, Adam Safron and associates proposed a possible network of brain regions involved in sexual arousal, based on previous neuroimaging studies. The ten widely dispersed regions they identified included parts of the anterior cingulate cortex and the medial occipitofrontal cortex, both of which are regions known to be involved in the “top-down” processing—that is, the goal-directed or context-dependent modulation—of emotional responses. Among the ten regions were sites also involved in anticipation of monetary gain (five of the ten regions), cocaine craving (four of the ten regions), eating chocolate, attractive faces, positive and negative emotionally salient stimuli (one region each) and a site necessary for positive affect and liking.<sup>25</sup>

The neurophysiological findings are consistent with the findings of questionnaire and focus-group research. Regions activated during episodes of sexual arousal in the laboratory include regions that respond to a wide range of pleasant stimuli and others that can process social context, higher-level goals, self-evaluation and self-esteem, and the behavior of potential partners. Hence sexual arousal involves learning and is likely subject to significant cultural and historical variation.

Of course, research in this area is ongoing, and it would be impossible to offer a fully up-to-date evaluation here. But the studies mentioned and the thrust of the discussion papers in a wide-ranging anthology edited by Erick Janssen, *The Psychophysiology of Sex* (published in 2007, based on a conference held at the Kinsey Institute), suggest that sexual desire and sexual arousal are not simple, preprogrammed states but are regulated by learned appraisals of context and person.

There is good scientific evidence, therefore, to suppose that what

24. Serge Stoléru and Harold Mouras, “Brain Functional Imaging Studies of Sexual Desire and Arousal in Human Males,” in *The Psychophysiology of Sex*, ed. Erick Janssen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 3–34, quote from pp. 23–24.

25. See Adam Safron et al., “Neural Correlates of Sexual Arousal in Homosexual and Heterosexual Men,” *Behavioral Neuroscience* 121 (2007): 237–48, table 1, p. 239.



many Westerners experience as “sexual desire” is not a hard-wired physiological “drive” but a Western cultural construct, or set of related conceptualizations and practices, with a long and intricate history. When this cultural construct is inculcated from an early age, through frequently repeated images and practices, one learns to interpret one’s responses in a manner that approximately agrees with the construct and, in the end, these responses appear to confirm it. Sexual desire relies on neurological mechanisms, just as a piece of piano music relies on the existence of pianos. Or, to extend the metaphor, Western forms of sexual desire are like a genre of music that one learns to improvise, and the neurological mechanisms are like an instrument on which any number of such genres might be played. In the Western genre, notions of “appetite” or “drive” have long played a crucial structural role, but there are no keys on the instrument that uniquely correspond to these terms.

Most adults can identify a word written in their native tongue in a few hundred milliseconds.<sup>26</sup> Yet all would agree that word recognition is a skill learned over many years of practice. Brain imaging shows that word recognition is a skill that involves the differential activation of a number of brain regions. Manifestations of sexual desire in many Western societies—such as responses to a sexually revealing photograph—may have been learned in a similar fashion and may, in a similar fashion, operate automatically and rapidly. They certainly display similarly complex and widespread activations of brain regions.

Romantic love has also been the object of some neurochemical and neuroimaging research, but the results have been, if anything, even more problematic than those concerning desire and arousal. Italian neuroscientists Donatella Marazziti and Domenico Canale, for example, in a 2004 study analyzed hormone changes in persons who had recently fallen in love. They found that testosterone levels in women went up while those in men went down. About this finding, the researchers expressed some perplexity. “It is tempting to link the changes in testosterone levels to changes in behaviors, sexual attitudes or, perhaps, aggressive traits which move in different directions in the two sexes,” they remarked. “However, apart from some anecdotal evidence, we have no data substantiating this which would justify further research.”<sup>27</sup>

Also in 2004, Andreas Bartels and Semir Zeki made two series of

26. A recent study that relies on rapid recognition of written words is Lisa B. Wilson et al., “Implicit Phonological Priming during Visual Word Recognition,” *NeuroImage* 55 (2011): 724–31.

27. Donatella Marazziti and Domenico Canale, “Hormonal Changes When Falling in Love,” *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 29 (2004): 931–36.

fMRI brain scans, one of persons in love and the other of mothers of young children. They found that the patterns activated by romantic love and maternal love are quite similar. Both involve brain regions known to be sensitive to oxytocin and vasopressin—two neurohormones that are associated with attachment behaviors in human and animal studies. The authors regarded these results as both intriguing and inconclusive. It is not difficult to accept that romantic love and maternal love have a lot in common, but it would be desirable, as well, to be able to distinguish them from each other. “Both romantic and maternal love activate specific regions in the reward system and lead to suppression of activity in the neural machineries associated with the critical social assessment of other people and with negative emotions,” the authors observe. They emphasize the very “tentative” nature of their findings, and conclude with the remark: “These results have thus brought us a little, but not much, closer to understanding the neural basis of [love].”<sup>28</sup>

There is, therefore, nothing in the latest neuroscience research on sexual desire, sexual arousal, or romantic love that permits one to conclude these states are caused or orchestrated by hard-wired brain systems. Instead, the most sophisticated methods presently available yield results that are compatible with the idea of a substantial role for cultural determinants in the occurrence of and the experience of such states. This conclusion is consistent with trends in many other areas of cognitive neuroscience. Even pain, according to recent findings, is directly modified by one’s habituated expectations.<sup>29</sup>

The claim being made here is not that longings and arousal states do not exist or that they do not occur in close coordination with each other in some persons. The claim is that neither such states nor their coordinated occurrences are the manifestations of a deeper, genetically programmed bodily “appetite” that impels us toward sexual gratifications.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the presumption that sexual desire was a powerful bodily appetite was passed on from Christian theologians and moralists to medical researchers and social scientists, and it became a piece of accepted social-scientific com-

28. Andreas Bartels and Semir Zeki, “The Neural Correlates of Maternal and Romantic Love,” *NeuroImage* 21 (2004): 1155–66, all quotes from p. 1164.

29. The pain system, like other sensory systems, has many nerve pathways leading downward from the cortex to modulate input long before it “arrives” in regions whose activation correlates with verbal reports and decision making—a point emphasized in an editorial by Mark D. Sullivan, “Finding Pain between Minds and Bodies,” *Clinical Journal of Pain* 17 (2001): 146–56.

mon sense. It has the tremendous weight of sixteen hundred years of Western conceptions of the self behind it. But, as with so much social-scientific doctrine, the evidence that has seemed to support this presumption has consisted mostly of case studies in which the researcher's method blocked falsification. Sexual desire may some day in the future be regarded much as *accidia* (a medieval term for lack of energy) or hysteria (a late nineteenth-century term for troubling bodily symptoms believed to have psychic origin) are regarded today—as emotional states that were once considered extremely common and then strangely faded from view.<sup>30</sup> Present-day experimental evidence offers little support for the age-old Western doctrine that there is a sexual appetite that is comparable to hunger or thirst.

### The Anthropology of Romantic Love

Romantic love is the object of vibrant research and debate in anthropology. However, anthropologists have not taken note of what I referred to above as the “fruitful” dualism that opposes true love to desire-as-appetite in Western conceptions and practices. The reasons for this are complex and not trivial.

The English word *love* can mean so many different things that, by convention, one adds the word “romantic” to distinguish those types of love that include a sexual component from all other types of love. This is the sense of “romantic love” deployed by William Jankowiak and Edward Fischer in a widely cited study published in 1992.<sup>31</sup> The authors presented evidence that romantic love was present in 147 out of 166 cultures, or 88.5 percent. Their definition of romantic love was very broad. Evidence of any one of five criteria was regarded as sufficient: (1) accounts of personal anguish and longing, (2) love songs or folklore “that highlight the motivations behind romantic involvement,” (3) elopements due to mutual affection, (4) native accounts of passionate love, and (5) ethnographers' affirmations. The authors believed their findings disproved a view expressed by a number of scholars that romantic love was found only in modern individualistic societies. The evidence, they concluded, strongly supported the universal occurrence of romantic love. Jankowiak subsequently edited an anthol-

30. Ian Hacking has discussed the historical rise and fall of mental illnesses in *Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

31. William R. Jankowiak and Edward F. Fischer, “A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Romantic Love,” *Ethnology* 31 (1992): 149–55.

ogy of essays by ethnographers presenting evidence for the existence of romantic love in a variety of cultural settings from West Africa to Polynesia.<sup>32</sup>

In a 1998 essay, Charles Lindholm rejected Jankowiak and Fischer's conclusion, however, on the grounds that their definition of romantic love lacked sociological and cultural specificity.<sup>33</sup> Lindholm distinguished modern Western societies, where individuals seek "secure identity" in love, from societies such as Tokugawa Japan, ancient India, the Roman Empire, and some Muslim social orders in which love "stands opposed to the more formal structures that provide a high degree of social integration."<sup>34</sup> "Though sparse," he concluded, ethnographic material demonstrates that

romantic love is not necessarily the prerogative of a leisured class; it does not require a complex society; it is not solely heterosexual, nor does it always lead to marriage; it is not intrinsically linked to capitalism, small families, sexual oppression, a cult of motherhood or a quest for identity; it is neither a disguise for lust nor evidence of evolution at work. Rather, romantic attraction is an attempt to escape from certain types of social contradictions and structural tensions through the transcendental love of another person. As such, it is experientially akin to the experience of religious ecstasy.<sup>35</sup>

Lindholm's views will be echoed in several respects in the conclusions of the present study. But Lindholm's observations strongly indicate the need for a more nuanced vocabulary. After all, his objection to Jankowiak and Fischer's conclusions may be the result of a terminological confusion. Jankowiak and Fischer cast the widest possible net that the term "romantic love" permits. Lindholm defines the term "romantic love" more narrowly, as a transcendental feeling for another.

In this study, the term "longing for association" will be used to refer to that wide net that Jankowiak and Fischer cast, and the term "romantic love" will be reserved to refer to those forms of the longing for association that have emerged in Western and Western-influenced cultural settings where one or another of the historical versions of desire-as-appetite is accepted as common sense. To illustrate the importance of this distinction, consider a case mentioned by Leonard Plotnicov in

32. William R. Jankowiak, ed., *Romantic Passion: A Universal Experience?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

33. Charles Lindholm, "Love and Structure," *Theory, Culture & Society* 15 (1998): 243–63.

34. *Ibid.*, 253.

35. *Ibid.*, 257–58.

the 1995 anthology edited by William Jankowiak. Plotnicov reports on a Nigerian informant who became fascinated, even obsessed with his third wife the moment he saw her. Although he already had two wives, he said, "I told her I wanted to marry her. She said she had nothing to say about that, and directed me to her parents." He immediately went to negotiate with the parents and soon married her.<sup>36</sup> Whatever this man's emotion was, to equate it with "romantic love" as practiced in certain Western settings is to ignore the centrality of *reciprocal* feeling and of *exclusivity* in Western norms for love partnerships. In Western thinking, these are aspects that distinguish romantic love sharply from lust, which, as an appetite, is believed to be indiscriminate as well as indifferent to its object's subjective states and wishes. Although Jankowiak and Fischer would regard the statements of Plotnicov's informant as evidence for the universality of romantic love, it is clear that this informant was conducting his relationships with his wives without reference to a notion of sexual appetite of the kind that is accepted as common sense in many Western locations, and without the related ideas that (1) a lover must prove her or his love is true (i.e., not mere appetite) by displaying fidelity (among other things), and (2) that marriage should not be based on appetite. "Longing for association" may be a better term for what Plotnicov's informant felt.

More recently anthropologists have begun to study the rapid spread of romantic love as a self-consciously chosen modern practice, more or less modeled on images circulating in global media, including Bollywood films, Hollywood films, and Harlequin romances, and in local advice columns, magazines, and television shows in many countries. These "modern" practices are often adopted in social settings in which older norms for the arranging of marriages are changing or no longer function.<sup>37</sup> These studies have uncovered a wide variety of practices

36. Leonard Plotnicov, "Love, Lust and Found in Nigeria," in *Romantic Passion: A Universal Experience?* ed. William Jankowiak (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 128–40, quote from p. 134.

37. See two recent anthologies: Jennifer Cole and Lynn M. Thomas, eds., *Love in Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Jennifer S. Hirsch and Holly Wardlow, eds., *Modern Loves: The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship and Companionate Marriage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006). See also Holly Wardlow, *Wayward Women: Sexuality and Agency in a New Guinea Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Laura M. Ahearn, *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Jyoti Puri, "Reading Romance Novels in Postcolonial India," *Gender and Society* 11 (1997): 434–52; L. A. Rebhun, *The Heart Is Unknown Country: Love in the Changing Economy of Northeast Brazil* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Steve Derné, *Movies, Masculinity, and Modernity: An Ethnography of Men's Filmgoing in India* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000).

and understandings of the longing for association, indicating just how broad this concept needs to be in order to cover the full range of its possible realizations.

Holly Wardlow, for example, has examined the rise of what she calls “romantic passion and companionate marriage” among the Huli of Papua New Guinea. The majority of marriages among the Huli are arranged by the couple’s elder kin and entail a substantial bride-price that is gathered by borrowing pigs and cash from a large number of the groom’s relatives. Wives are the principal horticulturalists, and their productivity is crucial to the well-being of their husband’s households. But sermons by Christian missionaries and videos have bestowed the prestige of modernity on marriages between *lawini* (boyfriend or girlfriend). If two *lawini* engage in premarital sex, traditionalists regard the young man as having stolen the woman’s sexuality from her family, since he did not negotiate and pay the bride-price first. Today, however, some young *lawini* are able to make successful appeals to the moral standards of the Christian church, forcing their elders to accept their desire to marry. Nonetheless, the groom must still arrange for bride-price payment.<sup>38</sup>

Jennifer Cole has found that the young people of the port city of Tamative, Madagascar, are adopting the traditional concept of *fitiavina* to the urban cash nexus. In rural areas around Tamative, *fitiavina* is a central emotion associated with “continuous reciprocal exchange of material support.”<sup>39</sup> There, *fitiavina* links ancestors to the living; ancestors bestow blessings and must receive a constant flow of rituals of *fitiavina* and gratitude. In the village it is assumed, “a man makes *fitiavina* through gifts to the woman, and the woman returns *fitiavina* by offering her sexual and domestic services, and labor.”<sup>40</sup> But in town, this perfectly respectable set of expectations quickly begins to take on a disturbing appearance. A young man saw a woman looking at a dress and offered to buy it for her; she accepted with great pleasure. The next day she searched him out and indicated she was willing to go out with him. “I couldn’t even eat I was so busy dreaming of her,” the man told Cole. “Starting then we were together. She was fifteen years old, and I was sixteen.” He plans to marry her one day, “because she is pretty

38. Wardlow, *Wayward Women*.

39. Jennifer Cole, “Love, Money, and Economies of Intimacy in Tamative, Madagascar,” in *Love in Africa*, ed. Jennifer Cole and Lynn M. Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 109–34, quote from p. 113.

40. *Ibid.*, 117.

and of good character, and she knows how to bend.”<sup>41</sup> In Tamative, another young woman announced to her companions, “If there isn’t any *sosy* [literally ‘sauce,’ slang for ‘money’] in the relationship, I would just tell the guy to get a job.” However, “A young male college student in the group looked dismayed.” Just because he was poor? he asked. “Guys just make us pregnant,” she answered. “Why go with him if he can’t fulfill you?” Men complained of such views, saying that there is no more *fitiavina madio* (clean love). But the very existence of the term, *fitiavina madio*, indicates an emergent unease about the translation of traditional expectations in a monetized economy.

Characteristic of these and other ethnographic studies of the recent spread of romantic love practices is the absence of any reference to desire-as-appetite. Huli men in Papua New Guinea denigrated women who left unhappy marriages and sought the company of other men. But the women’s offense was not that they became slaves of appetite or served men who were slaves of their appetites. Their offense was to ignore the property rights that family and clan were said to hold in daughters’ sexual potential. “In fact,” Wardlow reports, “many Huli contemptuously say that when a woman accepts money for sex she is ‘eating her own bridewealth,’ ‘eating her own *tauwa*’ (the compensation payment given to a woman’s kin or husband in cases of pre- or extramarital sex), or, more viscerally, ‘eating her own vagina.’”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in Tamative, Madagascar, the notion of clean love implies not an altruistic devotion that contrasts with appetitive desire. Instead it points to the way love is supposed to bind the exchange of goods (such as sex and money) into ties of lasting reciprocity.

In these and other case studies, the “romantic love” idea may gain prestige from its association with global exchange and development and with Western and non-Western images and media. But, in many, if not most, cases, romantic love is set, not against desire-as-appetite, but against traditional practices of arranged marriage that remain vital. Doubtless one explanation for the popularity of Bollywood films in parts of Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia is that these films, unlike Western-produced films, focus on the problem of the arranged marriage and its relationship with “modernity” and personal freedom.<sup>43</sup> As the Huli and Tamative studies as well as other ethnographic

41. *Ibid.*, 123.

42. Wardlow, *Wayward Women*, 167.

43. Laura Fair, “Making Love in the Indian Ocean: Hindi Films, Zanzibari Audiences, and the Construction of Romance in the 1950s and 1960s,” in *Love in Africa*, ed. Jennifer Cole and Lynn M. Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 58–82.

studies make clear, the spreading use of cash and the spreading liberties that sometimes come with market integration are not enough by themselves to impose the typically Western love-lust distinction.<sup>44</sup> Instead young people, longing for association in novel circumstances, make new relationships and a new vocabulary from available local and media-introduced ingredients.

## Gender: The Straitjacket of Courtly Love

Romantic love appears to lock men and women into very rigid roles. In twelfth-century courtly love texts, the woman may seem at first glance to benefit from her elevation to the status of beloved “lady,” but a closer look reveals—or so many scholars have argued—that putting her on a “pedestal” was only a more effective way of disciplining her. Men submitted to her yoke only the better to make her dance to their tune. This irony was first noticed in the early years of the sexual revolution.<sup>45</sup> Some feminists insisted that romantic love ought to be swept away; others argued that it might be possible to reform it; and still others believed that the proper sphere of such heroic mutual devotion could be found only in the realm of same-sex intimacy.<sup>46</sup>

Scholars who were critical of the romantic love tradition, including medieval courtly love, gained additional ammunition when the preeminent French Freudian psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan turned his attention to the matter. In Lacan’s thinking, desire, while it remained an appetite or drive, also served as the source that generates founding fantasies about self and other. The resolution of the Oedipus conflict in early childhood, when the child accepts the “law of the father” that forbids sexual fantasies about his mother, is also in Lacan’s view the crisis that readies the child to understand the structure of language. From this point on, to desire and to speak are, in Lacan’s way of thinking, closely associated. Desire becomes almost coterminous with possessing or expressing intentions. In volume 7 of Lacan’s seminar series, he explicitly discussed the troubadour songwriters of the twelfth century, the very earliest writers to glorify the beloved lady. Lacan regarded the trouba-

44. See also the interesting study by Ahearn, *Invitations to Love*.

45. Kate Millet was among the first to make this argument; Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 36–37.

46. See, e.g., Susan Ostrov Weisser, ed., *Women and Romance: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs* 5 (1980): 631–60.



dour love song as a good example of a desire-induced fantasy “which could have no real concrete correspondent.”<sup>47</sup> Of course, in Lacan’s view, all desire involves fantasies that have no concrete correspondent.

But a number of literary scholars, taking their cue from Lacan, noted that troubadour fantasies about women tended to restrict the desires and fantasies that women were permitted to have. In the 1990s, scholarly works inspired by Lacan transformed our understanding of twelfth-century courtly love. The work of these scholars has been so important in shaping the scholarly discussion of courtly love that they must be carefully considered here. Such work tends to treat sexual desire, following Lacan, as an ahistorical given. While this study will offer considerable evidence against such a view, there can be no denying that courtly love conventions tended to discipline the behaviors of men and women pursuing sexual partnerships, often in ways that must have entailed considerable suffering. As practiced today, the conventions of romantic love are still strict and confining. However, it is wrong to suppose that such restrictions have supported a patriarchal hegemony. Because the concept of desire-as-appetite was itself reductionistic and stigmatizing in its effects, love offered, at least for some, an escape from these effects.

Because many troubadour songs depict the beloved lady as cool and indifferent, Lacanian scholars reasoned, the women whom troubadours said they loved were actually not permitted to have desires. In troubadour lyric, and courtly love literature more broadly, men appeared to possess a monopoly of desire. Uncovering the effects of this monopoly was an important part of the larger effort to demystify romantic love and empower individuals in the present to find less oppressive forms of intimacy.

R. Howard Bloch, for example, writing in 1991 went so far as to insist that courtly love took over from Christian theology a preoccupation with “misogynistic virginity,” loving an impossible purity that could only be oppressive to real woman.<sup>48</sup> In courtly love literature, many, if not most, love relationships were depicted as adulterous, and the lovers were expected to guard the strictest secrecy with respect to their liaison. For Bloch, this preoccupation with secrecy was yet another oppressive feature of the courtly love ideal. Love must be expressed in language, yet to express it is to reveal it, and to reveal it is, in some sense,

47. Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 167–84, quote from pp. 177–78.

48. R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 151.

to violate secrecy. In numerous songs and stories, Bloch examined the lovers' "compulsion to reveal," a compulsion that invariably led to ruin.<sup>49</sup> "The secret endures only to be broken," Bloch concluded.<sup>50</sup>

Sarah Kay, writing in 1990, found that in troubadour love songs male subjectivity was "split between alternatives (irony), spun across an indeterminate space (hyperbole) and realized by the fluctuations of tropes which both constitute and exceed it (metaphor and metonymy)." The women whom troubadours praised and longed for, however, "do not enjoy the pains or pleasures of an elaborated psychology."<sup>51</sup> Women, she found, were treated as if they belonged to two distinct genders, common women, who were beneath contempt, and ladies (*domna*), who were loved as if they were male lords. Metaphors of feudal submission obscured women's subordinate social status. She found songs of the *trobairitz* (women songwriters) to be full of ambivalence about the dominant role men assigned to them. In one of the Comtessa de Dia's songs, Kay notes, "the first-person speaker hovers between endorsing a set of values which have public sanction (i.e., are standard in male poetry) and lamenting their lack of correlation with her own experience. Disappointedly she enumerates the qualities of a *domna* which she possesses, but which have not 'worked' for her."<sup>52</sup> From such materials, one can piece together a picture of the *trobairitz* as violating "arbitrarily constructed gender roles which problematize the subjectivity of historical women."<sup>53</sup>

Simon Gaunt, writing in 1995, concluded that the troubadour love song was "(inevitably) a monologue."<sup>54</sup> "The absence of dialogue between poet and lady underscores the phallogocentric nature of the masculine discourse of the lyric" (143). Bernart of Ventadorn's beloved, according to Gaunt, "is not a real woman; rather she is his own creation within the poem, a sign within his discourse." The alternation between worship and misogyny in troubadour songs, for Gaunt, "is due to the disparity between the image of the ideal *domna* the troubadour creates and the real women as he sees them" (129). Gaunt sees in Arnaut de Marueilh's "Us Jois d'amor," for example, "an attempt to fantasize

49. *Ibid.*, 127.

50. *Ibid.*, 126.

51. Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 49.

52. *Ibid.*, 103.

53. *Ibid.*, 108.

54. Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142. In the following brief discussion, page numbers for this work appear parenthetically in text.

a woman with masculine qualities who can be relied upon to defend masculine values." The poet "is not concerned at all with any real women here, but only with an image he has created for himself and which he guards jealously." The *trobairitz* songs, in contrast, provide a "haunting and moving record of how trapped and constrained some women felt when faced with the rhetoric of the *canço* [male troubadours' song]" (179). Women, in their love songs, expressed their anxiety about language and about the feudal submission men claimed to offer them. They recognized "the trap male troubadours set for their *domnas* when they describe them as haughty and imperious, only then to reproach them with this" (176).

More recently, many scholars of courtly love have recognized that the *trobairitz* and other medieval women writers were able to challenge the idealized images of them woven by male songwriters. This recognition led to a more nuanced view of the gender implications of courtly love literature. Recent rereadings of medieval love literature, according to E. Jane Burns, in a review essay of 2001, revealed courtly love as

a protean process of social interaction that admits substantial variation, adaptation, and modulation depending on who plays which part and with whom. . . . Indeed, despite its heteronormative veneer and its tendency to displace and occlude women as subjects, courtly love, when taken as the full range of amorous scenarios staged between elite heterosexual couples in a court setting, offers models for love relations that disrupt the binary and exclusive categories of male and female and masculine and feminine used typically to structure the Western romantic love story.<sup>55</sup>

But even in this revised view, the question of women's desire remained the crucial one. "Indeed, we have begun to see," Burns concludes, "that within and around the courtly paradigm of unrequited male desire and putative devotion to women, other models productively contest its premises and erode its hegemonic hold on heterosexual amorous couplings."<sup>56</sup>

The Lacanian approach to twelfth-century courtly love literature has sometimes gone too far. As we will see, for example, troubadours and romance writers do not seem to have been much concerned about the virginity of their beloveds, contrary to Bloch's view. The very ac-

55. E. Jane Burns, "Courtly Love: Who Needs It? Recent Feminist Work in the Medieval French Tradition," *Signs* 27 (2001): 23–57, quote from p. 48.

56. *Ibid.*, 25–26. See also Sarah Kay, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

ceptance of adultery entailed recognition that the idealized beloved was already sexually active. Bloch also goes too far in treating the preoccupation with secrecy as a dead end that made the realization of love inherently impossible. As we will see, selective silence was a normal feature of aristocratic speech, crucial to the enjoyment of many de facto rights and possessions. In addition, many of the love stories that end badly can be read as part of a polemic against jealousy; the villains of these pieces—jealous husbands and controlling fathers—ruin what they wish to possess by refusing to grant women a margin of maneuver. Finally, as we will see, women writers such as the trobairitz did not reject or protest against their idealization in the eyes of male lovers. Instead, their songs and stories are simply the mirror image of the men's. Exactly like the men who loved, these women idealized the objects of their love and treated themselves as subject to weakness, doubt, variation, anxiety.

For eight centuries, in Western depictions, romantic love has been consistently promoted as an emotion that inspires heroism in women just as much as in men, each according to her or his gender norms. Chrétien de Troyes's Guinevere in the twelfth-century romance *Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart*, heroically resisted the pretensions of her evil captor Meleagant, as we will see in chapter 3. Madame de Lafayette's heroine, in her seventeenth-century novel *The Princess of Cleves*, bravely tells her husband the truth after falling in love with a high-ranking courtier. Jean-Pierre Jeunet's Amélie Poulain heroically overcomes her fear of life to pursue a mysterious lover in his 2001 film *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*.

Nonetheless, in most respects, recent scholarship on courtly love has accurately characterized the strict heterosexuality, the oppressively idealized tone, the unreality and lack of concreteness of the earliest literature of Western romantic love. This scholarship has also correctly characterized this literature as promoting male authority, male action, male self-determination. Although the women of this literature were capable of substantial activity in their own sphere, as we will see, nonetheless, as women, they were boxed into roles of relative dependency, just as men were boxed into roles of fierce independence, combativeness, touchiness about their honor, and unquestioning loyalty to overlords. Living up to such standards was as difficult for men as for women, not least because the standards often gave rise to contradictions that forced individuals to choose; and success in pursuing ideals and negotiating contradictions was one of the things lovers most admired in the beloved.

How could such a literature and the practices it licensed represent a kind of resistance, then? The answer lies in placing this literature back in its full original context. This context included a set of theological doctrines about sexuality that were being carefully elaborated and disseminated by the church. This context also included a campaign by the church to take over primary responsibility for all legislation and litigation involving sexual behavior and marriage. This campaign was eventually successful; a large body of canon law treating sexual questions was developed, ecclesiastical courts were established and their sweeping jurisdiction over sexual matters gradually, fitfully conceded. These twin developments, theological and legal, were part of a larger transformation usually referred to as the “Gregorian Reform.” Its impact was so sweeping between 1050 and 1200 that R. I. Moore has proposed calling this period the “first European revolution.”<sup>57</sup>

The Christian church, by the time of Gratian’s *Decretum* and Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* (mid-twelfth century), had a well-developed concept of sexual appetite, a list of sexual sins that involved an elaborate taxonomy of sexual acts (not sexual orientations), and a set of laws ready to be applied to the whole of Christendom. The sexual appetite was a sign of original sin within the body; as such, it was inherently polluting, even when gratified without sin. Only its denial could engage the spiritual in a positive way.

Neither eighth- through twelfth-century Bengal and Orissa nor tenth- through eleventh-century Heian Japan distinguished the “sexual” in this way or treated it as devoid of positive spiritual potential. They did not have a concept of “sexuality” or “sexual appetite.” They recognized that persons could have longings for what certain Westerners might today call “sexual” acts. They also recognized that persons could go into states of what certain Westerners today might call “arousal.” But they did not categorize such longings or arousals as “natural” or “bodily,” as opposed to supernatural, personal, or intentional. In different ways, they lumped what we would call bodily arousal into much broader categories of personal responses to the world. Such responses were not inherently polluting. Quite the opposite, they regarded such things as filled with positive (and negative) intentionality and spiritual potential.

Courtly love, in this context, can be seen as a recipe for escaping the Gregorian Reform’s blanket condemnation of all sexual partnerships as sinful and polluting. That the recipe involved rigid formulas only un-

57. R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2000).

derscores how difficult it was to evade the stigmatization of sex that reformers actively promoted. The conformity of courtly lovers to prevailing gender norms—indeed their conformity to a wide array of social norms—was simply one more way of proving that no shame should attach to their one point of dissent, their one area of transgression.

## Romantic Love and the History of Sexuality

The concept of sexual desire is a subject of ongoing critical reflection and debate in the field of sexuality studies. Some scholars continue to treat desire as a given, in accord with the legacy of Freudian theory or with the thinking of Lacan. Still other scholars have accepted the view, first associated with “queer theory,” that desire is itself a cultural, discursive, or performative construct. This latter view is compatible with the results of recent research in the psychophysiology of sex, reviewed above. Both queer theorists and researchers on the psychology of sexuality such as Stephanie Both and Erick Janssen would readily agree that sexual desire is a response that cannot be separated from a person’s situation, or situated-ness, in a particular setting.

The status of sexual desire is crucial to understanding the history of sexuality. Nineteenth-century medical researchers, commonly referred to as “sexologists,” argued that sexual desire came in fixed forms: one natural (heterosexual desire), the others degenerate (homosexual desire, sadism, masochism, nymphomania, satyriasis, etc.). One may reject the claim that some of these are “degenerate” forms but accept the validity of the taxonomy or of a revised taxonomy. The history of sexuality then becomes the history of the ways in which persons expressed and fulfilled the various fixed forms of desire that they felt. In particular, those forms of desire that have been suppressed as deviant or transgressive over the centuries, and that have found expression in covert practices, call for careful historical reconstruction. This was the approach adopted in John Boswell’s pioneering study of 1980, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*.<sup>58</sup> Boswell claimed to discover gay subcultures in many periods of the past and, in particular, found a remarkable tolerance for homosexuality in certain periods of Christian history.

But if desire is itself a cultural construct and if the various taxono-

58. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

mies of desire's forms offered by experts since the nineteenth century are simply one aspect of the way desire is construed in the present era, then the history of sexuality becomes a quite different project. The goal then is to recover the history of the whole range of constructions that have emerged over the ages and to try to understand the dynamic of their unfolding. The very term *sexuality* and its equivalents in other European languages did not come into use until the late eighteenth century. The central idea of the sexologists, that sexual orientation is an inherent feature of one's identity, was widely accepted by the early twentieth century. But this idea simply has not been found in documents dating from before 1800.<sup>59</sup> There is also much evidence from before 1880 of sexual behaviors that defy neat categorization in terms of the sexologists' taxonomy of sexual orientations. More recently, evidence has accumulated that such taxonomy-defying behaviors continued into the twentieth century as well, at least in certain settings.

This evidence of sexual malleability has not gained much attention from the larger public. As Jeffrey Weeks observed in 2005, we see "all around in popular texts and media an unthinking essentializing of sexuality and sexual identities, partly because of the geneticization of sexual theory."<sup>60</sup> But for many scholars, including Weeks, misgivings about the very idea of categorizing sexual orientations will not go away. As Fausto-Sterling has shown, the biology of human sexuality may involve such a range of variability that it defies simple categories.<sup>61</sup>

In European history, there is an emerging consensus that it makes little sense to apply modern sexual taxonomies to ancient or medieval times. Boswell's pathbreaking views have been set aside in favor of more nuanced stances.<sup>62</sup> Judith Bennett has suggested, for example, that one should speak, not of lesbian sexuality, but of "lesbian-like" sexual behaviors in the medieval period. The examples she brings forward—of sexual rebels, marriage resisters, cross-dressers, single women, and women

59. Groneman mentions a first investigation of nymphomania in 1775: Carol Groneman, *Nymphomania: A History* (New York: Norton, 2000), 6. Thomas W. Laqueur chronicles the campaign against masturbation of the eighteenth century in *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone, 2003). But Davidson convincingly dates the full medical takeover of sexual behavior from the 1840s: Arnold I. Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 1–29.

60. Jeffrey Weeks, "Remembering Foucault," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14 (2005): 186–201, quote from p. 188.

61. Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic, 2000), 235.

62. See, for a review, Mathew Kuefler, "The Boswell Thesis," in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, ed. Mathew Kuefler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1–31.

living together in unregulated communities—show that lesbian-like behaviors were “arguably as important as sexual practices” and that, theology and law notwithstanding, medieval European society was “filled with possibilities for lesbian expression.”<sup>63</sup>

For other scholars, however, even a term such as “lesbian-like” is too closely linked with anachronistic sexologist taxonomies. Disentangling thought from the sexologists’ legacy has not been easy. As Ann Laura Stoler noted in 1995, Foucault’s reversal of the “repressive hypothesis”—the idea shared by Freud and certain sexologists that sexual desire was unduly repressed in modern societies—was not carried through with full attention to all its implications.<sup>64</sup> Foucault, Stoler insists, did not reject Freudian models altogether. Instead, in his “discussion of the discourses and technologies of sex” he said little about “what sorts of desires are produced in the nineteenth century and what people do with them.”<sup>65</sup>

Foucault also ignored the imperial and racial context in which the sexologists and others worked. He failed to overturn the widespread assumption that “colonial power relations can be accounted for and explained as a sublimated expression of repressed desires in the West, of desire that resurfaced in moralizing missions, myths of the ‘wild woman,’ in a romance with the rural ‘primitive,’ or in other more violent, virile, substitute forms.”<sup>66</sup> Such ideas are too often invoked “to substitute for an analysis of historical depth.”<sup>67</sup> In colonial contexts, according to Stoler, “discourses of sexuality often glossed, colonized, appropriated, and erased a more complicated range of longings and sentiments that, boiled down to sex, were made palatable as they were served up for immediate consumption.”<sup>68</sup>

Stoler’s notion of a range of “longings and sentiments” that were erased when they were “boiled down to sex” will turn out to be crucial in this study of the origins of romantic love. As we will discover, boiling diverse longings and sentiments down to sex is nothing new in European history, and present-day scholars are not the first to have denounced reductionistic moralizing.

Like Stoler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick believed that Foucault’s analysis of the “post-Romantic ‘power/knowledge’ regime” did not lead his fol-

63. Judith M. Bennett, “‘Lesbian-Like’ and the Social History of Lesbianism,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9 (2000): 1–24, quote from p. 22.

64. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

65. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 166.

66. *Ibid.*, 167–68.

67. *Ibid.*, 170.

68. *Ibid.*



lowers to question the status of desire as consistently as they might have done. This regime is “the one that structures and propagates the repressive hypothesis” and, Sedgwick continues, “follows the Freudian understanding that one physiological drive—sexuality, libido, desire—is the ultimate source, and hence in Foucault’s word is seen to embody the ‘truth,’ of human motivation, identity, and emotion. In my own first book on sexuality, for example, I drew on this modern consensus in explaining the term ‘male homosocial desire . . . in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of ‘libido.’” However, she goes on, “This consensus view does not exclude emotions, but . . . it views emotion primarily as a vehicle or manifestation of an underlying libidinal drive. . . . Reducing affect to drive in this way permits a diagrammatic sharpness of thought that may, however, be too impoverishing in qualitative terms.”<sup>69</sup> Just as Stoler regrets the erasure of “longings and sentiments,” Sedgwick believed that emotions ought to supplant desire as the primary concern of sexuality studies. She was especially concerned with shame in relation to performance and suggested that “‘queer performativity’ is the name of a strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma.”<sup>70</sup>

Ann Cvetkovich prefers affect over desire for similar reasons. Her study of butch-femme texts, and ethnographic work with butch-femme women and AIDS activists brought her to explore the role of trauma in the everyday understandings of touch and in the creation of marginal “counterpublics.” For Cvetkovich, “The receptivity of femmes, their openness to the ‘trauma’ of penetration and touch, and the phenomenon of butch untouchability, a resistance to touch that can be both sexual and emotional, together suggest the surprising relevance of lesbian public cultures to discussions of trauma.”<sup>71</sup> In the context of trauma, deadened affect provides untouchability, and to open oneself, to make oneself receptive (not “passive”) is itself a noteworthy achievement, an assertion of self.

69. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 17–18. See also Judith Butler, “Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 16 (1999): 11–20.

70. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 61–62.

71. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 52. However, one must also register Ruth Leys’s warning, that reliance on trauma or shame to offer a universal grounding of identity or taxonomic or diagnostic framework can quickly lead into a new, tangled thicket of errors; see Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), and *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

For scholars like Stoler, Sedgwick, or Cvetkovich, sexual touching is not about desire first and only secondarily about the life history of the individual as a locus of various kinds of repression. Sexual touching is entirely personal and affective, a practice involving diverse longings and sentiments, that finds its place within complex life plans.

Sharon Marcus links the interest of queer theorists in affect and sentimentality to the repeated frustration of more conventional attempts to define sexuality.<sup>72</sup> As Marcus has remarked, “The finer the optic with which scholars view sexuality, the more difficulty they have defining it at all.”<sup>73</sup> Historical research undercuts every taxonomy that is put forward. Some work suggests, in fact, that different forms of homosexuality “have less in common with one another than with their heterosexual equivalents.” In addition, Marcus warns, “normative homosexuality, like normative heterosexuality, generates its own transgressions.”<sup>74</sup> She complains, finally, that “there is little extant work on the queerness of those conventionally considered heterosexual.”<sup>75</sup> Like James Schultz, she deplores that the “distinct forms” and “variations and tendencies” of heterosexuality have remained obscure, protected by the “illusion of its universality.”<sup>76</sup>

Schultz insists that there was no concept of heterosexuality (and hence no concept of homosexuality either) in medieval times and that loving male-female couples were not thought to be inspired by “heterosexual” desire. Speaking of Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), Schultz remarks, “For Thomas, the paramount distinction is between abstinence and activity.” Like all medieval experts, Thomas Aquinas sought to categorize, not persons or orientations, but morally significant acts. The most important distinction among sexual activities is between those that are “natural,” that is, that can lead to conception of a child, and those that are not. “If you separate out the venereal acts that we would call heterosexual from all the others, you completely overturn Thomas’s hierarchy,” Schultz points out. Thomas Aquinas did not consider oral sex and penetrative sex between man and woman as both “heterosexual,” for example. Because it did not lead to conception, oral sex was

72. Sharon Marcus, “Queer Theory for Everyone: A Review Essay,” *Signs* 31 (2005): 191–218. See, e.g., Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

73. Marcus, “Queer Theory for Everyone,” 205.

74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*, 196.

76. *Ibid.*, 205.

“unnatural,” just as were masturbation, sex with a same-sex partner, or sex with an animal. Penetrative rape, which was “natural,” was not as evil to Thomas Aquinas as oral sex with one’s legitimate spouse.<sup>77</sup> Schultz also points out that the Middle Ages lacked any concept of sexual orientation.<sup>78</sup>

In view of these stark differences between notions of sexuality prevalent in the medieval period and those prevalent today, rather than refer to “heterosexual,” “homosexual,” or “heteronormative” aspects of medieval thinking or practice, this study will rely on the term *desire-as-appetite* to characterize the church doctrine that was widely disseminated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Where the promoters of courtly love differed from the clerical reformers, as we will see, was not on the existence or power of desire-as-appetite. They differed in asserting the existence of a better, pure, and more powerful motivating force that God approved of and that could bring sexual partners together in innocent bliss, called *fin’amors*.

Even historians of very recent times have found sexual categories troubling. Martha Vicinus notes that some of the nineteenth-century British women she has studied never fulfilled their sexual love of intimate friends—for a variety of reasons including “social circumstances, religious scruples, a belief in the superiority of nonfulfillment, or a preference for the erotic pleasure of unfulfilled, idealized love.”<sup>79</sup> Her subjects “were enormously inventive in creating a satisfactory language, spoken and bodily, for their own desires that bears little resemblance to the elaborate terminology of the post-1928 period.”<sup>80</sup> Vicinus therefore prefers to use the word “lesbian” only sparingly for this period but insists on retaining it, even though “all categories and definitions must remain provisional.”<sup>81</sup>

Studies by Michael Rocke of Renaissance Florence and by George Chauncey and Matt Houlbrook of early twentieth-century New York and London, respectively, have uncovered very substantial participation in male same-sex sexual contact that was not experienced as an indelible orientation, nor marked as such by the surrounding society.<sup>82</sup>

77. James A. Schultz, *Courtly Love, Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 55.

78. *Ibid.*, 57–58.

79. Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778–1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), xix.

80. *Ibid.*, xxiv–xxv.

81. *Ibid.*, xxiii.

82. Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4–5; Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in*

Other studies suggest similar practices were tolerated, as worthy only of jokes and literary evocations, in the elite schools and among the well-educated young men of Renaissance England.<sup>83</sup> Such studies suggest that a fluidity in practice, a fluidity that cannot easily be captured by taxonomic labels, has continued to characterize sexual touching right into the present era.

But there is another side to this coin. Ruth Vanita, for example, working on the history of women's same-sex relationships in South Asia, takes a position similar to Martha Vicinus's. Noting the existence of sexual categories in precolonial South Asian texts, she asks whether it is useful to scrap the very idea of sexual identities. The *Kamasutra*, for example, speaks of men of the "third nature" (*tritiya prakriti*), who, whether of masculine or feminine appearance, desire other men. A medical text of the epic period (late BCE to fourth century CE) asserts that there are men who can be aroused only by performing oral sex on other men, calling them *A'sekya*.<sup>84</sup> In present-day India can be found *hijras*, male "eunuch-transvestite" sex workers, many of whose clients are married men.<sup>85</sup> Even if these and other South Asian labels do not match present-day Western categories, the concept of sexual identity ought to remain an open question, Vanita believes. Thus the vexed question of the "uneasy and sometimes impossible portability of sexual categories" remains unresolved, although some believe that category labels remain indispensable for guiding research.<sup>86</sup> The alternative, in their view, is that a whole continent of nonconforming practices will

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*the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic, 1994). See also H. G. Cocks, "Modernity and the Self in the History of Sexuality," *Historical Journal* 49 (2006): 1211–27.

83. See Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); see also the essays included in Jonathan Goldberg, ed., *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), especially the following essays: Donald N. Mager, "John Bale and Early Tudor Sodomy Discourse," 141–61; and Elizabeth Pittenger, "'To Serve the Queere': Nicholas Udall, Master of Revels," 162–89.

84. Michael J. Sweet, "Eunuchs, Lesbians, and Other Mythical Beasts: Queering and Dequeering the *Kama Sutra*," in *Queering India: Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society*, ed. Ruth Vanita (New York: Routledge, 2002), 77–84; see also Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, eds., *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 24, 26, 48; for discussion, see Linda Garber, "Where in the World Are the Lesbians?" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14 (2005): 28–50, see pp. 37–38.

85. On *hijras*, see Gayatri Reddy, "The Bonds of Love: Companionate Marriage and the Desire for Intimacy among Hijras in Hyderabad, India," in *Modern Loves: The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship and Companionate Marriage*, ed. Jennifer S. Hirsch and Holly Wardlow (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 174–92; Vinay Lal, "Not This, Not That: The Hijras of India and the Cultural Politics of Sexuality," *Social Text*, no. 61 (1999): 119–40.

86. Anjali Arondekar, "Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14 (2005): 10–27, quote from p. 12.

be resubmerged in a sea of silence. But their opponents fear another sea of silence on the part of historians, should historians fail to recognize the precise contours of past practices, practices that ignored the boundaries created by present-day taxonomies.

## A Note on Method

It has become apparent in the course of this investigation that some scholars will respond with incredulity to the claim that sexual desire is not universal. For this reason, in addition to reporting on the latest social-scientific and neuroscience investigations of sexual desire, above, this work relies on a comparison of three case studies. The non-Western cases examined here are investigated solely with the end in mind of establishing that longing for association can, indeed, bring lovers together in the absence of any notion of desire-as-appetite.

The comparative method employed here and the contrast that will emerge between certain European and non-European practices of sexual partnerships are crucial to an appreciation of the case made in regard to twelfth-century European practice. The evidence presented in the first part of the study is not intended to stand on its own. Despite the temptation that many will feel to read only the chapter or chapters concerning their own area of expertise, no evaluation of this study should neglect the whole sweep of the comparative analysis.

Comparative method has been under a cloud recently. The recent emphasis on diversity, conflict, and change *within* “cultures”—a word that some now avoid as suggesting a misleading uniformity—has forced recognition that comparativists have often treated their cases as monolithic and insulated from the outside. H. Richard Okada, for example, warns that “the very framework of the cross-cultural installs two positivities between which the researcher apparently is freely able to ‘cross.’ The installation of two positivities, however, effects the simultaneous construction of two identities that are ahistorical and monolithic, self-identical each to itself, with each possessing its own distinctive characteristics.”<sup>87</sup>

Yet the need for comparison remains. That need stems from the danger that the local common sense of a scholar’s community will go

87. H. Richard Okada, “Speaking For: Surrogates and *The Tale of Genji*,” in *Crossing the Bridge: Comparative Essays on Medieval European and Heian Japanese Women Writers*, ed. Barbara Stevenson and Cynthia Ho (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 5–27, quote from pp. 8–9.

unchecked and be accepted implicitly as universally valid. Local forms of common sense continue to characterize working communities, even if we now understand that commonsense ideas are often ambiguous, incomplete, and contradictory and that communities are often riven with discord and conflict. Even where “community” breaks down entirely, certain kinds of shared common sense necessarily continue to direct the actions of those fragments and factions that remain capable of joint action. To abandon comparison is to forgo one of the most powerful analytical tools available for uncovering the limitations of common sense.

Comparison, explicit or implicit, is inherent in ethnographic method insofar as ethnographic method aims at rendering explicit what is implicit, articulating the principles that govern practice and tracking the transitions of certain practices from the status of received custom to that of contested political principle. In the study of the history of emotions, ethnographic method aims to uncover diversity and change in the intimate domain of experience of the self and to examine—as here—whether there may be facets of emotional experience that shape historical change rather than simply reflect it. The evidence presented here supports the idea that the longing for association was an experience that led European elites to push back against the Christian doctrine of desire-as-appetite. In so pushing back, they launched the extremely successful and enduring set of doctrines and practices that make up the romantic love tradition.

Limiting this study to the period 900 to 1200 CE served two purposes: (1) the time period selected was one in which contacts among the three areas under study were few and almost entirely indirect, and (2) focusing on this particular interval in the past permitted reliance on a rich scholarly literature for each case that has itself grown up due to the availability of an imposing array of original documents and monuments.

The three settings were, of course, not entirely independent of each other. Individuals, information, skills, and art forms crossed every boundary—between Christian and Muslim areas, between Muslim and “Hindu” areas, among South Asian, Southeast Asian, Chinese, and Japanese areas. This constant traffic influenced courts and court-based standards of refinement all across Eurasia. The architecture of many Romanesque and Gothic churches, South Asian temples, and Heian temples spoke of distant but significant mutual influences. Pillars, covered walkways, towers, sacred statuary, and narrative bas-relief were among the common elements of sacred architecture in both Europe

and South Asia in this period. Buddhist places of worship, across the far-flung reaches of Buddhist practice, offered figures of the Buddha and illustrations of scenes from the sutras as aids to meditation. The emotional tone of bhakti may have derived part of its inspiration from Sufi mysticism as well as Buddhist devotionalism. Sufi practices, in turn, drew on allegorical interpretation of Arabic love literature. Arabic love literature from al-Andalus, in turn, was probably known to some troubairitz and troubadours.

But in the short term of a fifty- to hundred-year window there was little chance for direct mutual influence across thousands of miles of distance and formidable language barriers. The documents strongly suggest that short-term influence was minimal or nonexistent—we will return to this point in the Conclusion.

The chapters in Part II, Points of Comparison, are not intended to be full explorations of the cases in question. They have two limited aims: (1) to examine evidence for the presence of longing for association in Bengal and Orissa, and in Heian Japan; (2) to provide an analysis that is sufficiently detailed to counter any impression that the elite “cultures” of these areas were monolithic or unchanging. These non-Western practices of longing for and engaging in “sexual” partnerships took form within whirlpools of shifting interests and forces, just as the emerging European practices did.

This study does not consider a very important topic, that is, the implications of its findings for later periods of contact, colonialism, empire, and nation-state formation. If desire-as-appetite is indeed a local European notion, the mutual impact of European and non-European transactions and confrontations takes on a very different appearance. The implications are just as weighty for European and Western “Orientalisms” as they are for local reform movements and modernization drives in non-Western locations. They are just as decisive for our understanding of the formation and unfolding of sexual partnerships uniting Western-origin (or partially “Western”) and non-Western-origin (or partially “non-Western”) persons; for the rise of “prostitution,” in the Western sense, in various places, under imperialism; and for the rise of new concepts of propriety.<sup>88</sup> But engaging directly with such issues must be left for other studies.

88. See, e.g., William M. Reddy, “The Anti-Empire of General de Boigne: Sentimentalism, Love, and Cultural Difference in the Eighteenth Century,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques* 34 (2008): 4–25; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Matt K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Antoinette M. Burton, *Burdens of*

## Love as Dissent

One of Freud's earliest disciples in the United States, A. A. Brill, summed up Freud's attitude toward the sex drive very simply. "The urge is there, and whether the individual desires or no, it always manifests itself."<sup>89</sup> The eleventh-century holy hermit Peter Damian, pioneer of the Gregorian Reform movement, would have agreed. After a life of rigorous chastity and self-denial, he prayed to the Blessed Virgin as follows: "My glorious Lady, the image of virginal purity, the norm of all virtue, miserable before you, and unhappy, I offend by the dirty rottenness of my flesh, and violate in my body that chastity of which you, Mother, are the author."<sup>90</sup>

As with Sharon Marcus's 2007 study of nineteenth-century British women, this study too will focus on the distinct forms, the variations and tendencies of "heterosexuality," or opposite-sex sexual interaction, in three historical contexts. The aim is to explore, as Marcus puts it, "what remains to be seen if we proceed without Oedipus."<sup>91</sup> Taking inspiration from Marcus's method of "just reading" the documents,<sup>92</sup> this study will show that leaders of the Christian church of the Gregorian Reform period (1050–1200 CE) attempted to boil down to sex the diverse longings and sentiments that commonly brought sexual partners together in fleeting or in enduring relationships. Their "sex" was not the same as ours, of course. Peter Damian's or Thomas Aquinas's views differed profoundly from Freud's or from Jacques Lacan's. But when compared to the non-Western conceptions and practices examined here, the family resemblances between Peter Damian and Sigmund Freud will be clear. In roughly the same period as Peter Damian's, in certain South Asian and Japanese contexts, there was no doctrine of desire-as-appetite, and there emerged no concept of true love.

Twelfth-century romantic love, courtly love, was no necessary or natural configuration. Instead, it represented a limited form of "queer

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*History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

89. Cited in John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 223.

90. Peter Damian, *De Bono Suffragiorum et Variis Miraculis*, Caput IV in *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844–65), vol. 145, cols. 556–57. See the careful discussion of Peter Damian's attitudes toward sexual purity and pollution in Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), esp. pp. 92–106.

91. Marcus, *Between Women*, 21.

92. *Ibid.*, 3.



performativity,” in Sedgwick’s sense, a practice that aimed to counter the effects of “habitual shame.” Or, taking one’s cue from Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s notion of romantic love as an “earthly religion,” one might call twelfth-century romantic love a kind of shadow religion, a religion with its own texts, rituals, and devotions but which dared not proclaim itself as such. Viewed in the light of such an origin, the history of Western romantic love is in need of revision, down to and including its recently gained status as a nearly compulsory norm for the founding of enduring sexual partnerships and families in many Western countries.

PART ONE

# The Emergence of Courtly Love in Europe



# Aristocratic Speech, the Gregorian Reform, and the First Troubadour

“The poetic typology of romance took shape in opposition to, and as escape from, a bleak marriage ideology that canonists and theologians championed.” —JAMES A. BRUNDAGE<sup>1</sup>

Certain twelfth-century aristocrats and their imitators insisted that sexual partnerships became a source of moral improvement and transcendent joy if they were founded on “true love” (*fin’amors*). Scholars refer to this medieval ideal of *fin’amors* as “courtly love.” There is general agreement that the twelfth century’s positive vision of sexual partnerships was something entirely new in Western literature and that such positive visions have been constantly with us ever since. Debate has been rife, however, over a variety of other questions: where this new vision of sexual partnership came from; why it came into being in the twelfth century; and whether, and how much, it was really practiced.

In this chapter, evidence is brought forward in support of a novel explanation of the origins of courtly love. In chapter 2, we will provide further support for this explanation by carefully examining the original cultural context of the songs of the *trobairitz* and troubadours, who

1. James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 184.

first popularized the courtly love ideal. In chapter 3, we will consider the incorporation of the courtly love ideal into the verse narratives of some Arthurian romances and also examine the question of how widely the principles of courtly love were actually put into practice in the twelfth century.

The precise form of courtly love can best be understood through an ethnographic reading of the evidence, carefully considering how diverse features of twelfth-century aristocratic life interacted. Three features of the century's social life combined to shape the courtly love ideal: (1) a specific form of aristocratic speech; (2) a related approach to kinship reckoning, gender identities, and "sexual" relationships; and (3) the impact of the Gregorian Reform. The argument of this chapter, in summary, is as follows:

1. Twelfth-century aristocrats regarded speech about authority, status, or relationships with their fellows as subject to "proof" through rule-governed violence. By the same token, aristocrats also considered the quiet, *de facto* enjoyment of a right or status as perfectly legitimate, so long as it was not explicitly challenged by the articulated claims of other aristocrats. Should someone else openly challenge such *de facto* enjoyment, then recourse to violence became necessary. Violence was governed by the rules of the feud or, occasionally, by the rules of trial by combat. The rules of the feud were enforced, intermittently, by kings and great lords, who often intervened in their subordinates' feuds to arrange reconciliation. But even when it was not punished, violence deployed in ways that broke with the rules of the feud was less likely to be regarded as decisive.

2. Partly because of this relationship between speech and violence, twelfth-century aristocrats preferred, or tolerated, a rather flexible kinship reckoning system. Claims to offices, lordships, or land could be articulated on the basis of male or female descent, legitimate or illegitimate descent, primogeniture or partible inheritance, affinal or cognatic ties. When such flexible reckoning produced disagreements, the capacity of rival claimants to deploy rule-governed violence would then determine whose claim was valid. In this flexible system, access to aristocratic status, to the rank of *nobilis*, was just as open to quiet usurpation—or violent adjudication—as any other claim.

Aristocratic women were just as capable of making claims to offices, lordships, or land as aristocratic men. Women were also just as capable of quietly enjoying an office, a lordship, or a property so long as no one challenged their right to do so. But they were much less likely to be skilled at arms or in the art of military command (although there

were exceptions). Therefore, to make good their claims, most women had to rely on male intermediaries—husbands, fathers, uncles, cousins, or loyal subordinates. Subtle changes in women's behaviors began in the late eleventh century. One finds a growing number of aristocratic women who sought to exercise influence over men by developing charismatic personae of a new kind. This charisma included the capacity to command and to rule. But many women also cultivated refinements of dress, language, manner, and decor in ways that increasingly differentiated them from men.

3. In the same period, the Gregorian Reform emerged, a movement of the church aimed at purifying the clergy as well as at transforming the political and sexual practices of lay society. Launched in the mid-eleventh century, this broad movement included popular, eremitic, monastic, heretical, and papal currents. There was much disagreement and debate among reformers. Some issues—such as the proper governance of wandering preachers or the meaning of the Eucharist—were not settled until the thirteenth century. But all factions agreed on the sinful character of sexual desire, even within marriage. All factions agreed on the inherent superiority of asceticism and insisted on ascetic self-denial among the laity as well as among the clergy. Reformers strove to eliminate, among other things, fornication, polygyny, divorce, and adultery, as well as relationships they considered to be incestuous and acts that they called “sodomy,” that is, sins “against nature.” To eliminate such practices, however, the church had to clarify which relationships were extramarital or adulterous in character, which were valid marriages, and likewise which persons were of illegitimate birth and which persons were related by blood and therefore could not marry.

Making such matters clear inevitably clashed with the flexible attitudes toward speech and kinship of the aristocracy. For a long time, aristocrats responded to the church's sexual regulations by treating them creatively as rules like any other—a matter for making strategic claims or keeping silent. For them, marriage was a family matter, one type of alliance among others, flexible and dissoluble. As reformers made divorce increasingly difficult to arrange, accordingly, aristocrats began to justify separations by claiming to have entered unwittingly into incestuous marriages. As informal polygyny became more difficult, aristocrats found ways of quietly sustaining adulterous relationships. As the inheritance claims of “illegitimate” children (that is, illegitimate in the eyes of the reformers) lost validity, parents found ways of quietly endowing them with lesser offices and smaller properties.

Courtly love was a practice that developed in this context, first among aristocrats and soon among nonaristocratic townspeople and landowners. It was not just a literary fashion or allegorical style or discourse but also, in part, a positive rejection of the Gregorian Reform's uncompromising condemnation of all sexual pleasure.

In a characteristic aristocratic way, then, many sought to pursue quietly an altogether un-Christian, even anti-Christian, type of sexual partnership. Courtly love provided an idiom within which such partnerships became part of the emergent aristocratic code of conduct known as "chivalry." The refinement, the pure selflessness of *fin'amors*, or "true love," as its promoters called it, was such—or so they claimed—that true love easily mastered sexual desire. Love easily disciplined the dangerous sexual appetite that plagued Christian ascetics in their quiet retreats and terrified Christian theologians, who branded sexual *concupiscentia* or *libido* (both meaning appetitive desire, or "lust") as the greatest threat to salvation. So holy was love, its promoters insisted, that any sexual enjoyment that furthered love's aims was good and innocent.

In relying on song, poetry, and fiction, propagators of the courtly love ideal avoided direct condemnation by church reformers. Their works of art were sinful, to be sure. But as entertainments they did not appear to threaten the church's monopoly of religious doctrine. In a maneuver typical of aristocratic speech, singers of love songs and tellers of love stories showed their listeners how they could quietly enjoy what they could not openly claim.

This argument—that courtly love doctrine grew up in part as a kind of covert religious dissent<sup>2</sup>—gains in plausibility when the European case is contrasted with the non-Western cases discussed later in this study. The comparative framework is essential to the argument. Various forms of the "longing for association" were present in each cultural context. But only in Europe was this longing reshaped as a refined love, a refinement that consisted in part in its sharp differentiation from sexual desire, an unruly appetite, or a craving for sexual pleasure that resembled hunger or thirst.

This new notion of refined love was also in tune with the search of some aristocratic women for charismatic influence. Their search only intensified as the reform of marriage tended to disadvantage women vis-à-vis their husbands. Twelfth-century "courtly love" can thus be

2. Jeffrey B. Russell, "Courtly Love as Religious Dissent," *Catholic Historical Review* 51 (1965): 31–44.

identified as an early version of the typical Western configuration of “romantic love,” which today is still seen, in certain Western and Western-influenced areas (and nowhere else), as standing in sharp contrast to sexual desire and yet mastering and purifying desire.

## The Character of Aristocratic Speech in the Twelfth Century

Courtly love literature of the twelfth century developed as a facet of aristocratic speech; it was first composed at courts, in local vernacular languages, sometimes by noble men and women, sometimes by clerics or commoners in their service. Although few aristocrats were literate in this period, most did rely constantly on written documents and charters drawn up by their aides.<sup>3</sup> Courtly love literature was also soon written down and increasingly relied on written forms for its transmission. But it is worth remembering that, in aristocratic understanding, binding claims and promises were oral in character.

### *The Status Quo Ante*

To appreciate how aristocrats understood and used speech, especially in regard to sexual partnerships, it is useful to examine some specific episodes. The first three episodes examined here, of 977 CE, 985 CE, and 1098 CE, suggest how aristocrats understood claims, complaints, and silence and, in addition, indicate the range of activities women might undertake in their own defense in the period before the Gregorian Reform made its impact felt on aristocratic life.

In about 977, Emma of Blois, wife of William, fourth duke of Aquitaine (died 993), heard of her husband’s flagrant adultery with the wife of one of his viscounts. He tried to calm her, without effect. By chance, Emma met the adulterous viscountess de Thouars on the road; Emma attacked her, dragged her from her horse, and insulted her. Emma told her men they could do whatever they wanted with the offending woman. Then, fearing her husband’s anger, she took her men and retreated to one of her own fortresses (which she held as a part of her dower). The monastic chronicler who relates these events, Peter of Maillezais, writing about 1060, blamed Emma for her inordinate concern over her husband’s infidelity. William, who needed the backing of Emma’s brother, Count Odo I of Blois, tried twice to reconcile with her,

3. Martin Aurell, *L’empire des Plantagenêt* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 84–86, 106–8.



apparently without success.<sup>4</sup> Emma, through reliance on her dower, her fighting men, and her brother, was powerful enough to break the customary silence, to make a claim about her husband's adultery, and to force her husband to acknowledge it.

In 985, Fulk Nerra, count of Anjou (ruled 987–1040), married Elisabeth of Vendôme, cementing an alliance with her father, Count Bouchard I of Vendôme (died 1005). In subsequent years the alliance went sour. In 996, the Capetian king Robert II (ruled 996–1031) married the widowed Countess Bertha of Blois, gaining control of Blois, just to the east of Anjou, and soon thereafter Bouchard of Vendôme broke with Fulk Nerra, realigning himself with Robert. In 999, Bouchard and Robert launched an unsuccessful siege of Bourges, whose bishop and viscount were allied with Fulk's family.<sup>5</sup> Shortly thereafter, Fulk Nerra's wife Elisabeth of Vendôme gathered her men and seized the citadel in Angers, apparently intending to turn it over to her father and Robert II. After a counterattack that left much of the town in flames, Fulk had Elisabeth burned at the stake on a charge of adultery.<sup>6</sup> Robert now divorced the Countess Bertha in 1003, to marry a first cousin of Fulk Nerra's, tacitly acknowledging Fulk Nerra's victory in the recent round of warfare.<sup>7</sup>

Guibert of Nogent (1053–ca. 1124) tells how Enguerrand of Boves, count of Amiens (died 1115), in about 1098 asked his cousin the bishop of Laon to approve a divorce, on the grounds of his wife's adultery. Enguerrand of Boves then secretly seduced the wife of Count Godfrey of Namur (died 1139), abducted her, and—again with the approval of his cousin the bishop—married her. She was Sybil, daughter and heir to the count of Porcien, a worthy prize. Enraged at his loss, Count God-

4. Elisabeth Carpentier, "Un couple tumultueux en Poitou à la fin du X<sup>e</sup> siècle: Guillaume de Poitiers et Emma de Blois," in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen Âge: Accord ou crise?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 203–15; Reto R. Bezzola, *Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en occident*, Part II, *La société féodale et la transformation de la littérature de cour*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1960), 2:254–55; Bernard S. Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra, the Neo-Roman Consul, 987–1040* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 28, 48, 51.

5. Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra*, 62–76.

6. Barthélemy is agnostic as to the truth of this story. But he notes that Elisabeth's daughter Adèle was married, not by arrangement of her legal father Fulk Nerra, but by the intercession of her uncle Renaud, bishop of Paris, to an illegitimate son of the Comte de Nevers; that is, Adèle was treated as if she were illegitimate, suggesting she shared in the wrath directed at her mother. After her husband's death, however, once she was possessor of half of her father's lands, she was welcomed back into the family by Fulk and his son Geoffrey Martel. See Dominique Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme de l'an mil au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), 291–92, 296.

7. Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra*, 81; Constance B. Bouchard, "Eleanor's Divorce from Louis VII: The Uses of Consanguinity," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 223–35.

frey went to war against her abductor. He viciously executed, blinded, or maimed those accused of helping with the abduction. Slaughter, looting, and burning broke out on both sides.<sup>8</sup>

Sybil later spurned Enguerrand. But she could not go for long without a lover and soon loved a handsome youth; she “gave her little daughter to him in marriage to cover the wicked love affair,” Guibert charged, “and made him defender of her land.”<sup>9</sup> Beyond Guibert’s language, heavy with condemnation, one glimpses the maneuvering of a woman who may have exercised a powerful influence over the men in her surroundings. Perhaps tiring of the rivalry between two husbands, she successfully broke free of both of them, convincing a third man, of lesser years and lesser rank, to become her obedient protector.

Whether accurate or approximate, these anecdotes written by monastic authors who relied on oral transmission depicted women surrounded by armed retainers, intent on pursuing honor for themselves and their kin. There are abundant records of aristocratic women acting in these ways, going back to early Merovingian times.<sup>10</sup> In each of these three episodes a claim about adultery takes on meaning in relation to acts of violence—of revenge, punishment, abduction. The anecdote by Guibert of Nogent stands out in two respects, however. First, Guibert emphasizes Sybil’s affective responses; she is “seduced” (*sollicitata*) by two different men in succession. Second, Guibert condemns aristocrats’ subjection to such affects as rage and lust, as well as the complacency of their bishops in according divorces. For Guibert this was a story of “the heat of lust boiling over into cruelty” (*fervor scilicet libidinum despumans in crudelitatem*) because of one bishop’s weakness. Worst of all, the bishop in question apparently had “no realization of his sin” and displayed no “penitence before God,” even though he soon died a painful death.<sup>11</sup>

8. Guibert of Nogent, *De Vita Sua*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series Latina* (henceforward referred to as *PL*), ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844–65), vol. 156, book 3, chap. 3, cols. 0910A–0911D; translation: Guibert of Nogent, *Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent (1064?–c. 1125)*, ed. John F. Benton, trans. C. C. Swinton Bland and John F. Benton (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 147–51.

9. Guibert of Nogent, *De Vita Sua*, vol. 156 of *PL*, book 3, chap. 11, cols. 0934D–0935A; *Self and Society*, 186, here substituting “wicked love affair” for “wicked intrigue” to translate *amores nefarios*.

10. See Stephen D. White, “Clotild’s Revenge: Politics, Kinship, and Ideology in the Merovingian Blood Feud,” in *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Memory of David Herlihy*, ed. Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., and Steven A. Epstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 107–30; Nira Pancer, *Sans peur et sans vergogne: De l’honneur et des femmes aux premiers temps mérovingiens* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001); Martina Hartmann, *Die Königin im frühem Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009).

11. Guibert of Nogent, *De Vita Sua*, vol. 156 of *PL*, book 3, chap. 11, col. 0911B; *Self and Society*, 150.

Guibert's attitude is quite different from that of Peter of Maillezais, who wrote about sixty years earlier. Peter expressed a typical aristocratic attitude to questions of infidelity, whether political or marital: Emma should have kept silent. Openly claiming what one cannot enforce only reduces one's stature. What separated Peter of Maillezais from Guibert of Nogent was the first wave of that complex of changes within the church known as the Gregorian Reform. Guibert's attitude toward sexual pleasure and toward passion in any form was one of fear and revulsion.<sup>12</sup> Sybil of Porcien and her partners were behaving in line with aristocratic traditions of long standing. But Guibert looked at her through a new lens. Guibert accepted the characteristic reformers' belief that any life that was not governed by strict ascetic standards was a life mired in sin.

### *The Persistence of Aristocratic Speech*

By the late twelfth century, some monarchs had increased their military might and their authority over territorial lords, unevenly and intermittently. The Gregorian Reform had made some progress in reshaping aristocratic marriage and inheritance customs. And the notion of chivalry had emerged to name an increasingly coherent body of customs embraced by the armored, mounted warriors of the aristocracy. However, a certain aristocratic attitude toward speech and silence remained very much in effect, shaping the possibilities for sexual partnerships. Two episodes illustrate the point.

The first is from the well-known *History of William Marshal*, the verse biography of a famous Anglo-Norman knight of the second half of the twelfth century. William Marshal (1147–1219) was considered by many in his day as a paragon of chivalry.<sup>13</sup> The biography was commissioned by William Marshal's son in 1224, five years after his death, and completed by 1226. The author found much to praise in every phase of William Marshall's long career. However, while there are signs of invention

12. John F. Benton in his introduction remarked, "That Guibert looked upon his own sexuality with loathing can be seen throughout his writing." See "Introduction," in Guibert of Nogent, *Self and Society*, 7–33, quote from p. 18. While "sexuality" in the modern sense is not the right term for what caused Guibert's response, "loathing" well describes his stance vis-à-vis his own appetite of concupiscence.

13. Georges Duby quotes a courtier of Philip II who remarked, on hearing of William Marshal's death in 1219, that "in our time there was nowhere a better knight, more skilled in arms." See Georges Duby, *Guillaume le Maréchal, ou le meilleur chevalier du monde* (Paris: Fayard, 1984), 33–34.

and embellishment, many details of the biography have been independently confirmed.<sup>14</sup>

When rumor arose about an adulterous relationship involving William Marshal and Margaret of France in 1182, the *History* tells us, William's response was in perfect accord with the code of behavior of an honorable knight.

At that time, William Marshal was serving as mentor for young Henry (1155–83), eldest son of King Henry II of England (ruled 1154–89). Henry II ruled over the vast "Angevin Empire," including England, parts of Wales and Ireland, and, on the Continent, the duchies of Normandy, Aquitaine, and Brittany and the counties of Maine and Anjou. Young Henry was to inherit most of this empire, although certain parts had been reserved for his younger brothers.<sup>15</sup> William Marshal's task as mentor to the Young King (as he was called) was many-sided: to provide young Henry with military training, to lead young Henry's household knights in tournaments, and to provide young Henry with a model of courtly behavior.

By 1182 William Marshal had held his post as the Young King's mentor for twelve years. William was thirty-five years old and his pupil twenty-seven. The Young King was tired of being held at arm's length from power by his father, tired of training year after year. His younger brothers, Richard Coeur de Lion (1157–99) and Geoffrey (1158–86), had already been given real command of the real territories they would eventually inherit. He was especially envious of Richard, who would inherit the vast duchy of Aquitaine and who had enjoyed a free hand as well as parental assistance, since 1175, to subdue its troublesome barons.<sup>16</sup> William Marshal had less to complain of. Penniless younger son

14. Besides the new critical biography by David Crouch, there is a new edition of the *History*, with translation, published in 2002–6. See David Crouch, *William Marshal: Knighthood, War and Chivalry, 1147–1219*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2002); A. J. Holden, ed., *History of William Marshal*, with a translation by S. Gregory, 3 vols. (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2002–6). On the reliability of the *History*, see, in particular, David Crouch, "Historical Introduction," *History of William Marshal*, 3:22–42.

15. This was a characteristic compromise between the principle of primogeniture and the principle of partible inheritance. See John Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion: Kingship, Chivalry, and War in the Twelfth Century* (London: Hambledon, 1994), esp. pp. 34–38; see also Bruno Lemesle, "Le comte d'Anjou face aux rébellions (1129–1151)," in *La Vengeance, 400–1200*, ed. Dominique Barthélemy, François Bougard, and Régine Le Jan (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2006), 199–236, pp. 216–17.

16. On the Young King's attitude toward his father, see Matthew Strickland, "Arms and the Men: War, Loyalty and Lordship in Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*," in *The Ideals and Practices of Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the Fifth Strawberry Hill Conference 1990*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1992), 187–220. On Henry II's assistance to Richard in 1175–76, see Jean-Pierre Thuillat, *Bertran de Born: Histoire et légende* (Périgueux: Fanlac, 2009), 91. On

of a lesser-ranked noble, he had benefited greatly from his role as mentor, winning fame for his astonishing prowess in tournament combat as well as for his gracious manners, affability, and loyalty. He had also grown rich, or at least comfortable, as the head of young Henry's force, from the numerous ransoms he won on the tournament circuit.<sup>17</sup>

According to the *History*, certain other household knights of the Young King had grown envious of the favor the young Henry consistently displayed toward William Marshal. These jealous knights decided to discredit William. They formulated two charges against him. The first was that, during tournaments, one of William's companions would shout out, "This way, God is with the Marshal!" This call would attract many combatants who were hoping to test their ability against the famous knight. As they crowded around him, the crush became too great for them to fight, and William and his men easily grabbed their horses' reins—the act that officially marked them as captives. Meanwhile, young Henry was neglected, and left exposed to attacks. (See lines 5127–5240).<sup>18</sup> Almost as an afterthought the conspirators added a second accusation.

Mais cel est la verité fine

Que il le fait a la reine.

Si est granz dols e grant damage.

Si li reis saveit ceste rage

Bien seriom vengié de lui.

(LINES 5243–5247)

But it's the purest truth

That he is doing it to the queen.<sup>19</sup>

This is a great sadness and great damage.

If the king knew about this wild affair,

We would soon be avenged.

According to the *History*, the conspirators dared not tell young Henry of their scurrilous charges. For them, the question of speech—of who claimed what—was a delicate matter. They first approached Sir Ralph of Hamars, hoping he would tell the Young King for them. But when Ralph heard what they had to say, he denounced them, saying it was treason to accuse a man without cause. The Marshal was brave, courte-

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the Young King more generally, see also R. J. Smith, "Henry II's Heir: The Acta and Seal of Henry the Young King, 1170–1183," *English Historical Review* 116 (2001): 297–326; Ralph V. Turner, "The Households of the Sons of Henry II," in *La cour Plantagenêt (1154–1204): Actes du Colloque tenu à Thouars du 30 avril au 2 mai 1999*, ed. Martin Aurell (Poitiers: University of Poitiers, 2000), 49–62.

17. That William led the household knights, a claim advanced by the *History*, is confirmed by the surviving charters of young Henry; see Turner, "The Households of the Sons of Henry II," 53.

18. Line numbers in the text make reference to Holden, *History of William Marshal*.

19. This is the author's translation of line 5244, more literal than that of Holden, who translates line 5244 "he is fornicating with the Queen."

ous, and loyal; he had done them all favors. He had no reason to expect ill of them. Whoever proposed this “felonie” (“criminal act”) had allowed treason to imprison his heart (lines 5258–5275).

A crucial aspect of aristocratic speech was in play here: Ralph did not even consider the truth or falsity of the accusations; the issue was one of loyalty and past favors. For Ralph, an accusation was not a question of accurate description; it was a question of accurate reflection of relations of honor, mutuality, rank, loyalty. The conspirators at once sought to appease Ralph. They promised to keep the accusations a secret.

*“Il a molt entre dire et faire.*

*N’avom vers lui nul mal talent . . .”*

(LINES 5278–5279, EMPHASIS ADDED)

*“There’s a big gulf between words and deeds.*

*We bear him no ill-will . . .”*

And they asked Ralph to say nothing. He agreed: “Mal dahez ait qui l’esmouvra!” (“A curse be on anyone who bruits [these accusations] about!” [5290]).

Undeterred, the conspirators turned to a *vaslet* (“servant” or “young man” [5338]), a person too young or ignorant to share Ralph’s scruples. They got him drunk and encouraged him to tell the Young King of their accusations. If the Young King insisted on corroboration, they instructed the servant to tell the Young King that there were five knights who would confirm the charges. Young Henry was concerned by what the drunken *vaslet* said and demanded to hear it from these knights. Now the conspirators came forward. But, rather than confirm the *vaslet’s* words, they simply claimed

*Que c’esteit bien chose seüe*

*Come d’oïe et de veüe.*

(LINES 5421–5422)

*That it was a well-known thing*

*Heard of by people and actually seen.*

Now the king was troubled and began to treat William Marshal coldly.

Even when they “confirmed” the story, the accusers did not claim to have personal knowledge of the matter. They deflected blame for the charge onto everyone and no one; it is “bien chose seüe,” a thing well known to all. Adroitly manipulating the rules of aristocratic speech, the conspirators made no accusation. They posed as doing young Henry a favor. It was he who brought the subject up, not they. Reluctantly, when pressed, they did not deny that a certain thing was known to all.

They made no claim about William Marshal; they spoke only of *fama publica*.<sup>20</sup>

In speaking in this way the conspirators displayed their familiarity with the attitude expressed by Ralph of Hamars. Thinking like that of Ralph of Hamars created a dilemma for great men such as the Young King. If everyone felt the same about accusations—that they should not be made against someone who was honorable, loyal, and generous toward oneself—then it was quite possible for an adulterous love affair (or some other act injurious to a great lord) to become an open secret, a fact known to all but the spouse or rightful claimant.

In addition, for their accusations to have the desired effect on young Henry, it was necessary that they be plausible. A direct accusation of William Marshal may well have been less plausible than the claim they did make, which was a claim about gossip, not about William.<sup>21</sup> To make a direct accusation of William would have been to issue a challenge. William would likely have responded by calling for a trial by combat (as he later did).

It would certainly have been plausible to young Henry that William Marshal used trickery in tournaments. The *History*, widely regarded as an invaluable source on twelfth-century tournaments, recounts with approval a ruse employed in tournaments by the consummate knight Count Philip of Flanders and his men. Rather than enter the fray with the others, Philip would hold back, waiting until he saw easy pickings among combatants who had become exhausted and dispersed. Having suffered from this stratagem, young Henry's men paid Philip back with the same trick. William Marshal laid out the plan. At one tournament, the Young King also held back, pretending he would not take part in the fighting. He kept watch on the count of Flanders and his men, who were waiting their chance outside the fray. When Count Philip's men moved forward, the Young King called out to his men and all rushed the count's group, seizing horses and taking many captives.<sup>22</sup>

20. On the notion of *fama publica*, see Chris Wickham, "Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry," *Past and Present*, no. 160 (1998): 3–24; Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail, eds., *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Finbarr McAuley, "Canon Law and the End of the Ordeal," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 26 (2006): 473–513, esp. pp. 485–88.

21. The conspirators knew that young Henry would not believe their accusations, if formulated directly; see line 5165.

22. Lines 2713–2772. Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, p. 237, notes that such trickery "seems to have been regarded as perfectly respectable behavior." For another, similar incident, see lines 4823–

Unques puis en place ne vint  
 Li reis ou torneier deüst,  
 Que porveeir ne se seüst  
 De ceste bole e de tel gile.

(LINES 2768–2771)

After that the King never came to a site  
 to tourney  
 without availing himself  
 of this sort of trick and deception.

The accusers did not charge that William relied on trickery in a tournament. They claimed that he neglected the Young King while pursuing his own profit.

As with tournaments, so in warfare trickery and deceit were common and widely admired in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The evidence of admiration for deceptive speech and action is directly relevant to a proper understanding of adulterous love affairs. There are numerous examples known from the period, including the use of false war cries and deceptive heraldry and the often-used trick of feigning retreat to draw one's opponents into a vulnerable position (employed successfully by William the Conqueror in 1066). Winning over rebellious barons with false promises was no offense, insisted Robert of Meulan to King Henry I of England in 1101. Chrétien de Troyes's hero Erec, in *Erec et Enide* (written about 1170), uses captured heraldry to gain entry into the town of Windsor. William Marshal, according to the *History*, later devised a feigned retreat for Henry II, deceiving French forces into a withdrawal that left a whole region open to pillage. The king was delighted with this trick.

"Par les ielz Dieu!" ce dist li reis.  
 "Mareschal, molt estes corteis."

(LINES 7799–7800)

"By God's eyes!" said the King,  
 "Marshal, you are most courteous."

Many other examples of trickery and similar expressions of admiration for it are known.<sup>23</sup>

4916; here both the Young King's brother, Count Geoffrey, and Philip of Flanders hold back, looking for a chance to take advantage of the exhaustion or dispersal of other forces.

23. On this incident of a feigned withdrawal by Henry II, see lines 7782–7852 (Holden, *History*, I, 397–99); Gillingham examines this and other incidents of trickery in warfare in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 231–33. On feigned flight, see Ian Peirce, "The Knight, His Arms, and Armor in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood: Papers from the First and Second Strawberry Hill Conferences*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1986), 152–64. Sally Vaughn, citing chronicler Orderic Vitalis, notes that Robert of Meulan, chief adviser of Henry I, in 1101 urged the king to make use of deceit. See Sally N. Vaughn, *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan: The Innocence of the Dove and the Wisdom of the Serpent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 232. Jim Bradbury, relying on John of Marmoutier's *Historia Gaufredi Ducis*



There was, it seems, nothing wrong with a lie properly executed. Skill in deceptive use of speech, signs, and actions was esteemed and a great source of satisfaction for those who possessed it. There was one important exception. Honor bound an aristocrat to abide by his oath of loyalty or homage. Tricking or deceiving one's own lord was a "felonie," treason worthy of death (although this rule was, like all others, flexibly applied in practice). But lies and deceit in other venues were fair game. This attitude was perfectly consonant with the notion that claims, to be "proven," had to be defended with honorable violence. In effect, false claims successfully defended or false claims that one was prepared to defend if necessary were true or valid, that is, were equivalent to deceptions admirably carried off.

This facet of aristocratic speech was not the same as the modern commonsense notion that political power is usually pursued in Machiavellian ways. Instead, it reflected two distinct features of early medieval notions of political authority. One was the system of the feud, by which kin groups were bound in solidarity to avenge not only acts of violence but also verbal insults aimed at any member of the group. A second was the view that victory in combat was a sign of divinely sanctioned authority.

In a fascinating essay, Paul Veyne shows that Romans of the late republic and early empire felt no collective solidarity in regard to insult. When Augustus discovered the sexual transgressions of his daughter Julia, he made them known to all, with a speech in the Senate and an edict. Claudius lectured the praetorian guard about the misdeeds of his promiscuous wife Messalina, to justify his harsh punishment of her and to explain his resolve never to marry again. Epitaphs on Roman tombs of the period, set up along the highway for all to see, accused husbands, wives, and children of murder and debauchery. Advocates in the law courts poured out insults on the opposing party. It was an admired art. Romans knew that few were able to live up to the high

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of about 1180, notes use of feigned flight by Geoffrey V, count of Anjou (1129–51). See Jim Bradbury, "Geoffrey V of Anjou, Count and Knight," in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood III: Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference 1988*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1990), 21–38. Adrian Ailes, discussing a passage from *Erec et Enide*, as well as several real incidents, concludes that, both in war and in tournament, it was not considered dishonorable to conceal one's coat of arms or swap it for another's, so as to elude one's enemies. See Adrian Ailes, "The Knight, Heraldry and Armor: The Role of Recognition and the Origins of Heraldry," in *(The Ideals and Practices of) Medieval Knighthood, IV: Papers from the Fifth Strawberry Hill Conference 1990*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1992), 1–21. On Emperor Henry IV of Germany's mastery of battlefield trickery, see John Gillingham, "An Age of Expansion, c. 1020–1204," in *Medieval Warfare: A History*, ed. Maurice Keen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59–88, see pp. 73–76.

standards of republican virtue. Those who did so were praised as exceptions. But failures should be brought forward for public censure. An individual's indiscretions did not reflect ill on spouse or family members; close relatives often led the public denunciation.<sup>24</sup>

In the second century CE, Tacitus noticed the contrasting solidarity of Germanic kin groups in defending their honor.<sup>25</sup> Early "barbarian" law codes sought to reduce the violence of feuding with provisions for compensatory payments and for trial by combat to settle disputes. Early medieval clerical historians depicted God himself as jealous of his honor and prepared to wreak vengeance on those who slighted him. By Carolingian times, this theme was a standard feature of royal ideology. God delivered victory to the just king.<sup>26</sup> In the late tenth and the eleventh centuries, inheritors of Carolingian public power bound subordinates to them in part by offering them younger sons and daughters in marriage. By the mid-eleventh, a large proportion of the elite could claim at least matrilineal descent from a Carolingian or from one of the great officials appointed by a Carolingian. These ties were memorialized in distinctive naming practices.<sup>27</sup> Blood ties, in turn, justified "the adoption of old royal values, Carolingian ones, reshaped by the lower strata of the aristocracy."<sup>28</sup> Thus, to the concept of the feud, with its solidarity of a kin group against the insults of outsiders, was added the idea that all aristocrats possessed a share of sovereignty.<sup>29</sup> Within his or her proper sphere, an aristocrat's word was authoritative, his or her rulings definitive. And one's proper sphere was determined, in part,

24. Paul Veyne, "Les droits de la conscience publique sur la conduite individuelle: Un constat ethnologique," in *La société romaine* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 57–87. See also Yann Rivière, "Pouvoir impérial et vengeance: De Mars Ultor à la Diuina Uindicta (I<sup>e</sup>–VI<sup>e</sup> siècles ap. J. C.)," in *La Vengeance, 400–1200*, ed. Dominique Barthélemy, François Bougard, and Régine Le Jan (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2006), 7–42.

25. Jean-Pierre Poly, *Le chemin des amours barbares: Genèse médiévale de la sexualité européenne* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 77, 103.

26. White, "Clotild's Revenge"; G. R. W. Halsall, "Reflections on Early Medieval Violence: The Example of the 'Blood Feud,'" *Memoria y Civilización* 2 (1999): 7–29; Paul Fouracre, "Conflict, Power and Legitimation in Francia in the Late Seventh and Eighth Centuries," in *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimacy in Medieval Societies*, ed. Isabel Alfonso, Hugh Kennedy, and Julio Escalona (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3–26, see p. 19.

27. For a vivid case study of this process, see Claudie Duhamel-Amado, *Genèse des lignages méridionaux*, vol. 1, *L'aristocratie languedocienne du X<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Toulouse: CNRS-Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 2001), 19–43.

28. Bruno Lemesle, *La société aristocratique dans le Haut-Maine (X<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999), 156.

29. Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Naissance de la noblesse: L'essor des élites politiques en Europe*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 430–60; Duhamel-Amado, *Genèse des lignages méridionaux*, esp. comments, pp. 17, 21, 37, 68, 70, 83. T. N. Bisson emphasizes the centrality of lordship to nobility in "Princely Nobility in an Age of Ambition (c. 1050–1150)," in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2000), 101–13.

by the divine sanction of success in honorable combat.<sup>30</sup> The Byzantine princess Anna Comnena (1083–1153) tells of a Frankish knight who dared sit on the imperial throne in the presence of her father Alexeis I (ruled 1081–1118). The knight defended himself by stating, “I am a pure Frank and of the nobility; I know one thing: at a crossroads in the land where I was born there is a sanctuary erected long ago where anyone who desires to engage in single combat can post himself; there he asks God for help, while waiting for the man who dares to defy him. At that crossroads I waited a long time in idleness for an opponent; but no man of sufficient daring ever came.” This anecdote perfectly captures the notion of shared sovereignty and its link with rule-governed violence.<sup>31</sup>

The Young King, as depicted in the *History of William Marshal*, had a problem that Roman citizens did not face. Orissan and Bengali elites and Heian aristocrats did not face this problem either, as we will see in later chapters. The courtiers of a twelfth-century Orissan royal court feared, above all, a spouse’s adultery with a person of lesser rank, with its potential for pollution of the family. A Heian aristocrat was much less concerned with a spouse’s sexual indiscretions, although no one wished to become a subject of conversation. But in the world of William Marshal, to speak of a wife’s adultery was to make a formal insult that was equivalent to a challenge, initiating a feud. Insult called for personal violence as its response. Not only could public secrets easily arise; they were also always tinged with danger.

As a result, the Young King, according to the *History*, found it plausible that his wife was having an affair with William and that their affair was something known to all but himself. The author of the *History* obviously expected his readers would also find this charge to be cleverly constructed and Henry’s reaction understandable. The readers were assumed to be familiar with the problem of the open secret. Similar charges were often leveled against great women in the twelfth century, and they were often believed. Young Henry’s mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine (1022–1204), had been the butt of such rumors when she was married to Louis VII of France. During the Second Crusade, in March 1148, Louis had rushed Eleanor away from Antioch, suspect-

30. Poly, *Chemin des amours barbares*, 130–32, 142–62; Paul Hyams, “Feud and the State in Late Anglo-Saxon England,” *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001): 1–43; Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 103–6.

31. Quoted by Sébastien Nadot, *Rompez les lances: Chevaliers et tournois au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Autrement, 2010), 28.

ing her of an adulterous involvement with Raymond of Antioch. Louis moved to protect his honor by, in effect, silently abducting his wife, while simultaneously pretending not to know. Unlike Augustus Caesar or Claudius, he made no public accusation. But gossip spread, and chroniclers later repeated what they heard, minimizing it or embellishing it according to their taste.<sup>32</sup>

According to the *History*, William Marshal soon got wind of the charges against him. A friend encouraged him to go to young Henry and deny them. But, like his accusers, William refused to speak openly:

<p>“Ja Dex ne me garde de nus mals Se ja par mei est devant traite Chose que je n’aie unques faite. Lait me serreit a escondire Tele ovre qui ne fait a dire, Honte me serreit a retraire.” (LINES 5316–5321)</p>	<p>“May God not protect me from any ill in future if ever I were to be responsible for bringing up a matter in which I was never involved. It would be dishonorable for me to deny<sup>33</sup> a matter which does not bear speaking of, a shame for me to speak of it.”</p>
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The duty of silence William obeyed is worth underscoring. Merely to deny the charges, he insisted, would dishonor him. Like Ralph of Hamars, William Marshal also regarded speech about such matters as dangerous. Rather than speak, he simply made plans to leave Henry’s service. Henry insisted William accompany him to one more tournament, where William protected the Young King carefully. Afterward, William packed up and departed with his men. Direct speech was avoided by both Henry and William at this juncture, as something potentially shameful. As depicted in the *History*, young Henry’s response

32. For a careful discussion of these charges, see Edmond-Réné Labande, “Pour une image véridique d’Aliénor d’Aquitaine,” *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l’Ouest*, 3e trimestre de 1952, 175–234, see pp. 183–86. Labande relies on John of Salisbury’s account of the matter in his *Historia Pontificalis*, noting that John refrains from accusing the queen but allows the reader to infer that she was guilty of a serious breach of marital duty. Later chroniclers were less circumspect. On the quality of Labande’s reading of the record, see Martin Aurell, “Aliénor d’Aquitaine et ses historiens: La destruction d’un mythe?” in *Guerre, pouvoir et noblesse au Moyen Age: Mélanges Philippe Contamine*, ed. J. Paviot and J. Verger (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 43–49.

33. Here *lait*, in line 5319, is translated as “dishonorable” instead of “shocking” as in the Holden edition; see Malagi Rouquier, *Vocabulaire d’ancien français* (Paris: Nathan, 1992), 79, who defines *lait* as “odieux, désagréable.” As a noun, Rouquier includes “deshonneur” among the meanings of *lait*.

was similar to Louis VII's. He preferred to remain officially ignorant of any indiscretion, yet he was also content to see his rival distanced from his wife.<sup>34</sup>

At King Henry II's Christmas court in Caen, in December 1182, the author of the *History* tells us, knights and barons gathered from all over.<sup>35</sup> Young Henry and his household joined them. Now William Marshal decided to take action on his own behalf. He rode to Caen and entered the hall where the king and his son and many others were assembled. Before them all, he challenged young Henry to produce his accusers. (He made no mention of what they accused him of.) He said he would fight three of them on three successive days. If he lost any of the three combats, he could be punished as a traitor. But young Henry would not accept this challenge. William then proposed that Henry should cut off one of his fingers, and thus wounded he would fight one of his accusers.

"E se recreant me puet faire,  
Faites de mei, al chef del tor,  
Come de prouvé traïtor.  
Or poez ben veir, beal sire,  
Que malveise langue ose dire  
Ce qu'el n'ose mie prover."

(LINES 5802–5807)

"And if he can make me a coward,<sup>36</sup>  
Then treat me, at the end of the fight,  
Like a proven traitor.  
But you can easily see, fine Lord,  
That an evil tongue dares to say  
What it dares never prove."

Amid the silence that followed, William turned to young Henry's father, Henry II. He was being denied justice, William said, without reason or law. Therefore, he demanded a safe-conduct out of King Henry's lands. The safe-conduct was granted, and William left.

The logic of William's challenge relied on the procedure of trial by combat and thus, indirectly, on the practice of the feud.<sup>37</sup> William's

34. Historian David Crouch has found independent confirmation that William was out of favor with the Young King for a time; see Crouch, *William Marshal*, 51–52.

35. On the Christmas court at Caen in 1182, see John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 69.

36. *Recreant* is translated here as "coward," rather than "guilty," as in the translation in the Holden book, following Rouquier, *Vocabulaire d'ancien français*, 103, who defines the term as meaning "vaincu, lâche"; that is, the term could mean "defeated" or "cowardly" depending on context—a significant equation. The remainder of this passage has been translated slightly more literally than in the Holden book.

37. Trial by ordeal was considered a particularly appropriate procedure when eyewitnesses were lacking but rumor supported the guilt of the accused. Trial by combat was the appropriate form of the ordeal for male aristocrats. See Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water*, esp. pp. 102–19; McAuley, "Canon Law."

challenge helps to explain the conspirators' initial strategy. They avoided making an explicit accusation in the first place for the same reason they avoided taking up William's challenge at Caen, because they knew they were not his equals in combat. Like him, they saw no reason to speak openly except from a position of strength. The outcome of a trial by combat, or duel, was a validated claim. The *recreant*, a term which could mean either "coward" or "loser," became, in defeat, *prouvé traïtor*, a "proven traitor." That combat could decide the truth of a matter in dispute was widely accepted. Many examples are known to historians.<sup>38</sup>

In the case of insult, to accuse someone else without issuing or accepting a challenge was to condemn oneself. Evil tongues, as William put it, dare to say what they dare never "prove"—that is, what they dare not test in combat. The strategy of his accusers was the strategy of the weak, where weak equals invalid, untrue. Because William's challenge was not taken up, young Henry should have ruled him innocent of the charge. But no ruling was offered. For this reason, William was able to claim that he was being denied justice. The whole story, then, has been carefully composed to uphold William's reputation as a paragon of chivalry, punctilious about his duty even when abandoning his lord. The facet of aristocratic speech that shaped this episode—the practice of subjecting claims to the test of violence—deeply influenced both the literature and the practice of courtly love.

Whether William and young Henry's wife, Margaret of France, had a love affair is difficult to say. Historians have noted circumstantial evidence in favor of a relationship between them. Shortly after the New Year in early 1183, young Henry sent his wife away. Chronicler Roger of Howden states that she was sent to the court of her brother, King Philip II of France (ruled 1179–1223), "to be guarded."<sup>39</sup> The

38. See, e.g., Horst Fuhrmann, *Einladung ins Mittelalter* (Munich: Beck, 1987), 200; Alfred Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (1903; Monein: Pyremonde / Princi Negue, 2003–8), 2:104, 178; Sydney Painter, "The Lords of Lusignan in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Speculum* 32 (1957): 27–47, see p. 37; Lemesle, *La société aristocratique dans le Haut-Maine*, 162–63; Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme*, 660–80; Duhamel-Amado, *Genèse des lignages méridionaux*, 167, 168, 170–71, 191, 427–28; Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water*, 107.

39. Roger says: "et uxorem suam misit in Franciam ad regem Franciae fratrem illius interim costodiendam" in *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1868–70), 2:275. In another work, Roger says: "Interim rex junior misit Margaretam uxorem suam ad Philippum regem Franciae fratrem ipsius, qui eam honorifice suscepit, administrans universa sibi necessaria." In Roger of Howden, *Gesta regis henrici secundi benedicti abbatis*, 2 vols., ed. William Stubbs (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1867), 1:296. Alfred Richard, in *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 3:155–56, speculates that Margaret was charged with winning her brother over to young Henry's side; Philip II did, he says, urge his great vassals to join in support of young Henry. See chap. 3 for further discussion of Margaret's links to other members of the French royal family.

Young King was preparing to attack his younger brother Richard, on the grounds that Richard refused to do homage to him. Young Henry was throwing off his father's tutelage and acting like a king. The "guarding" of Margaret may have been a precaution at the beginning of a campaign. Still, this is not a sufficient explanation by itself. Great ladies of the period often accompanied their lords on campaign or led campaigns themselves.<sup>40</sup> It is possible, as Crouch suggests, that young Henry believed—or did not entirely disbelieve—the charges against William and Margaret.<sup>41</sup> But he dared not break openly with her; she was the sister of a valued ally, Philip II of France. Sending her to Philip's court was perhaps as close to showing disfavor as he dared to come.

Later in the spring of 1183, following young Henry's attack on his brother Richard, their father Henry II came to Richard's aid with a powerful force, siding with the younger son against the elder. At this juncture, according to the *History*, the Young King's advisers urged him to recall William Marshal, his best fighter and strategist. Hearing word of his return to favor, William prepared to march south to Limoges, where young Henry was gathering his forces. But first he did a curious thing; he went to the court of France to ask King Philip for a letter permitting him to rejoin young Henry. While waiting at Philip's court, he also sent to Henry II asking the king of England for permission to rejoin the Young King. Doubtless, young Henry would not have required such letters.<sup>42</sup> The most likely explanation for William's requests is that

40. Matilda of Tuscany-Canossa was active in organizing her own military operations during the Investiture Controversy; see Tilman Struve, "Mathilde von Tuszien-Canossa und Heinrich IV," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 115 (1995): 41–84. Margrave Ida of Austria led a contingent on crusade in 1102—see Richard, *Les comtes de Poitou*, 2:167–69. Gwenllïan, daughter of a Welsh "king" and wife of another, was said to have been killed in combat at Kidwelly in 1136; see Martin Aurell, *La légende du roi Arthur, 550–1250* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 112. Mabel of Bellême, in late eleventh-century England, commanded a retinue of up to a hundred knights, seizing a castle at one point and disposing of rivals; see Pauline Stafford, "Women and the Norman Conquest," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 4 (1994): 221–49. Henry II's mother, the Empress Matilda, participated in the command of her troops in some instances in the 1130s and 1140s, for example, when besieged at Oxford in 1142; see Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139–53* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1996), 118–25. The Welf princess Sophia oversaw the siege of Falkenstein in 1129; see Karl Leyser, "The German Aristocracy from the Ninth to the Early Twelfth Century: A Historical and Cultural Sketch," *Past and Present*, no. 41 (1968): 25–53, see p. 51. Sybil, countess of Flanders, led armies into the field "with a viril heart," according to one chronicler, while serving as regent in 1138–39 and 1147–49; see Karen S. Nicholas, "Countesses as Rulers in Flanders," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 111–37, see p. 123. Ermengard of Narbonne regularly led her vassals on campaign; see Fredric L. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). Eleanor of Aquitaine frequently campaigned with Louis VII and went on crusade with him (as did many other women during the Second Crusade); see Labande, "Pour une image véridique d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine."

41. Crouch, *William Marshal*, 50.

42. *Ibid.*

he foresaw the Young King's defeat at his father's hands. By securing permission in advance to help the rebellious son, he ensured that he would not be a target of retribution afterward.<sup>43</sup> But the requests for letters also delayed William for days, perhaps weeks, at the court of France, where Margaret was also staying.

By the time William rejoined his lord, in early June 1183, the Young King had fallen fatally ill. In his final agony, young Henry asked William to go to the Holy Land for him. (Young Henry had taken the crusader's vow that year, against his father's wishes, but now he knew he would not live to fulfill it.) Perhaps young Henry also thought with satisfaction that this honorable task would keep William and Margaret apart for years. William soon departed, to return from the Holy Land only in 1186, when he reentered Angevin service. That same year, 1186, Philip II arranged Margaret's remarriage to King Bela of Hungary.<sup>44</sup>

Although no firm conclusion can be made about the relationship between William and Margaret, the account of the events of 1182–83 in the *History* does make clear that any claim about a love relationship was a matter of personal honor and that honorable speech had to be backed up by rule-governed violence. The feud and trial by combat as a legal means of resolving feuds were integral features of a way of using language that turned utterances into sovereign claims founded on one's honor.

### *Aristocratic Speech, the Feud, and "Turbulence"*

Medieval historians have long recognized that the aristocracy of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was "turbulent" and unpredictable.<sup>45</sup>

43. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 3:129–31, notes that the barons who sided with Henry II's sons against the king in 1173–75 were ruthlessly punished afterward, and similar retribution was, in fact, meted out in 1183 to young Henry's allies after his death (*ibid.*, 166–71). Bertran de Born, for example, lost his castle but escaped with his life; see Thuillat, *Bertran de Born*, 91–92, 173.

44. June Hall Martin McCash, "Marie de Champagne and Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Relationship Reexamined," *Speculum* 54 (1979): 698–711, see p. 705. After Bela's death in 1196, Margaret traveled to the Holy Land, dying there in 1197. Richard (*Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 3:178) thinks the idea of the marriage came from Henry II, who benefited when Margaret forfeited her dower rights.

45. The term "turbulent" recurs constantly and can be traced back to clerical authors of the period such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Otto of Freising. For examples, see Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:90, 120, 142; Marcel Garaud, *Les Châtelains de Poitou et l'avènement du régime féodal, XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Poitiers: La Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, 1967), 33, 47; Hyams, "Feud and the State in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 12; Painter, "Lords of Lusignan," 40. On contemporary usage of the term, C. Stephen Jaeger cites Otto of Freising's use of the word in "Pessimism in the Twelfth-Century 'Renaissance,'" *Speculum* 78 (2003): 1151–83, see p. 1162. For another instance, see Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Laude Novae Militiae*, chap. 4, "De conversatione Militum Christi," in *PL*, vol. 182, col. 0926D. Anselm called King William Rufus an "untamed bull"; see Vaughn, *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan*, 163. See the insightful observations of Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 202. John



They could be pious one moment and devious the next, by turns devout and debauched, honest and underhanded, forgiving and resentful. Interpreting their mutual promises of fidelity in the light of their frequent betrayals and extravagant claims has been a major difficulty for historians, who have intensely debated the question whether the period from 1000 to 1150 brought an outbreak of anarchy or a more gradual change from a “public” type of authority to a “feudal” one.<sup>46</sup> “Turbulence,” in any case, was not a personal trait.<sup>47</sup> It was a widely admired ideal. Fair promises and mental reservations, loyalty alternating with treachery—these were aspects of well-understood aristocratic practices of shared sovereignty governed by the honorable deployment of violence.

The clerical writers of Latin texts in the twelfth century defined *violencia* in a special way that cannot be examined in detail here.<sup>48</sup> The concern here is to grasp the set of norms governing the lay aristocracy’s use of violence in the present-day English sense of that term, that is, (1) acts causing bodily harm and acts of abduction, seizure of property, or damage to property and (2) the coercion that resulted from the threat of such acts.<sup>49</sup>

When such acts were carried out in violation of accepted norms, exemplary punishment might follow. Guillaume, lord of Lezay, for example, attempted to kidnap members of a royal party as they entered his castle in 1137. These were men of Guillaume’s own sovereign

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Gillingham quotes a wonderful remark by the Byzantine princess Anna of Comnena concerning Robert Guiscard: “that Norman braggart Robert, notorious for his power-lust, of obscure origin, overbearing, thoroughly villainous, a brave fighter and very cunning, wonderfully built, and utterly determined.” See Gillingham, “An Age of Expansion,” 59–88, see p. 65.

46. See the debate over the “feudal revolution” in *Past and Present*: T. N. Bisson, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’” *Past and Present*, no. 142 (1994): 6–42; with comments by Dominique Barthélemy and Stephen D. White, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’” *Past and Present*, no. 152 (1996): 196–223; Timothy Reuter and Chris Wickham, “The ‘Feudal Revolution,’” *Past and Present*, no. 155 (1997): 177–208; T. N. Bisson, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’: Reply,” *Past and Present*, no. 155 (1997): 208–25. See also Stephen D. White, “A Crisis of Fidelity in c. 1000?” in *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimation in Medieval Societies*, ed. Isabel Alfonso, Hugh Kennedy, and Julio Escalona (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 27–49.

47. Stephen D. White has already made this point in his discussion of grief and anger in eleventh- and twelfth-century sources; see Stephen D. White, “The Politics of Anger,” in *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 127–52.

48. Jehangir Malegam, “No Peace for the Wicked: Conflicting Visions of Peacemaking in an Eleventh-Century Monastic Narrative,” *Viator* 39 (2008): 23–49.

49. It is in this sense that Lemesle urges historians to “réfléchir à l’origine et au caractère intentionnel des images sur la violence féodo-vassalique dont notre propre patrimoine intellectuel a hérité”; Lemesle, *La société aristocratique dans le Haut-Maine*, 17.

lord. His violation of the duty of hospitality to an overlord earned him death and the expropriation of all his lands.<sup>50</sup> Use of mercenaries and commoners in war was also frowned upon. These irregulars were often more thorough and more brutal when pillaging, more prone to dirty tricks on the battlefield. Mercenaries thought nothing of pillaging a church or monastery, for example, or holding priests and monks for ransom. When released from employment they often formed bands of brigands, setting up in ruined castles, ravaging farmlands, besieging towns. Therefore, when captured, these contemptible warriors were not held for ransom but killed or maimed.<sup>51</sup> Killing a captured aristocrat was, by contrast, considered a crime.<sup>52</sup>

Nonetheless, the rules of feuding permitted a certain latitude to the parties.<sup>53</sup> A properly conducted raid could be a method of “filing suit” against a foe. “To open a dispute over property rights with a ‘violent’ move,” writes Timothy Reuter, “burning crops or flogging peasants, for example—was a common early medieval practice which was not necessarily treated as a criminal act.”<sup>54</sup> Whether the feud involved minor castellans or great princes, the rules of the feud remained the same. What moderns would call “war” was simply feuding on a grander scale.<sup>55</sup>

Of course, not all aristocrats were as meticulous about formalities

50. See Painter, “The Lords of Lusignan,” 40.

51. On the treatment of mercenaries, see Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 3:158, 168–69, 189; Thuillat, *Bertran de Born*, 91–92, 145. Mercenaries must be distinguished from the growing number of stipendiary knights or knights who received money fiefs in the late twelfth century; see R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2000), 129; Turner, “The Households of the Sons of Henry II,” 56–57. Stephen of Blois paid a price for his reliance on mercenaries during the civil wars of 1135–53; Henry Plantagenet was also convinced to send his mercenaries home in 1151; see Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*, 24, 41, 46, 75–76, 157.

52. See Thuillat, *Bertran de Born*, 145, on Richard Coeur de Lion’s execution of Guillaume Arnaud, knighted by Adémar V of Limoges only a few weeks earlier; this was considered a much more serious offense than his drowning of scores of Basque mercenaries at the same time. Later, John’s killing of his nephew Arthur marked him, in many eyes, as unworthy to be king; see, e.g., Crouch, *William Marshal*, 91.

53. On the feud, see Howard Kaminsky, “The Noble Feud in the Later Middle Ages,” *Past and Present*, no. 177 (2002): 55–83; and various articles in *La Vengeance, 400–1200*, ed. Dominique Barthélemy, François Bougard, and Régine Le Jan (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2006), including Régine Le Jan, “La vengeance d’Adèle ou la construction d’une légende noire,” 325–40; Hermann Kamp, “La vengeance, le roi et les compétitions fidales dans l’empire ottonien,” 259–80.

54. Reuter, “The Feudal Revolution,” quote from p. 181. See also Timothy Reuter, “Nobles and Others: The Social and Cultural Expression of Power Relations in the Middle Ages,” in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2000), 85–98, esp. p. 89; White, “The Politics of Anger”; Wickham, “Gossip and Resistance”; Kamp, “La vengeance, le roi et les compétitions fidales dans l’empire ottonien”; Patrick J. Geary, “Vivre en conflit dans une France sans État: Typologie des mécanismes de règlement des conflits (1050–1200),” *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations* 41 (1986): 1107–33.

55. Kaminsky, “Noble Feud”; Geary, “Vivre en conflit”; White, “Crisis of Fidelity.”

as William Marshal. But almost all rebellions had their justifications.<sup>56</sup> In 1199, for example, Hugh IX of Lusignan and his brother Ralph kidnapped Eleanor of Aquitaine and forced her to recognize their right to the county of La Marche; she was relying on them for protection at that time as she worked to advance her son John's claim to the throne of England, following the death of Richard Coeur de Lion.

The Lusignan claim to La Marche went back to the death of Boso, count of La Marche, in 1091. In the absence of a direct heir, Hugh VI of Lusignan was one of three cousins who had claimed a right to inherit Boso's domain. Lusignan lords had reiterated this claim from time to time over the years. Some time before 1177, Audebert, count of La Marche, had caught his wife in an adulterous affair with one of his knights. He had slain the knight and dismissed his wife. In 1177, aging and childless, he agreed to sell La Marche to Henry II in return for five thousand silver marks, twenty mules, and twenty horses—the resources he would need to travel to the Holy Land. Geoffrey of Lusignan and his brothers, Hugh and Ralph (now vassals of Henry II), chose this moment to resurrect their grandfather's claim. If Audebert was without direct heirs, in their view, the right to inherit La Marche fell to them, through their great grandmother. Henry II rejected their claim and deployed a strong garrison to hold his new property. Later, in the mid-1190s, the Lusignans also extracted compensation from Richard Coeur de Lion, including an heiress as bride for the youngest Lusignan son, Ralph. But their temporary advantage over Eleanor in 1199 was too good an opportunity to pass up.<sup>57</sup>

An act of turbulence? Or the rightful claim of loyal vassals? Bruno Lemesle notes that "adroit use of a favorable situation" was standard procedure in feuds.<sup>58</sup> In addition, because the Lusignans won what they wanted, in terms of the code of aristocratic speech, their claim was validated.

Lay lords were skeptical about written records. For many lords, especially those who were illiterate, a charter, duly signed and sealed, was no more than a memento of an oral expression of will. Such a memento did not necessarily bind her or him or heirs in the future.<sup>59</sup> Because

56. Lemesle, "Le comte d'Anjou face au rebellions," shows how rebellions against Count Geoffroy Plantagenêt in Anjou between 1129 and 1146 were locally construed as feuds based on just grievances.

57. See Painter, "Lords of Lusignan," esp. 37, 43; Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:132–33, 3:137–39; Thuillat, *Bertran de Born*, 93–141.

58. Lemesle, "Le comte d'Anjou face au rebellions," 210.

59. See Fuhrmann, *Einladung*, 200; Vaughn, *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan*, 243; Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 3:5–6; Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, analysis of disputes in Narbonne dating from 1117 and 1162, 206–21; Elaine Graham-Leigh, "The Proconsul Ruling the City Called

there were so many types of claims that could be validated only through honorable violence, the gap between what the warrior elite claimed at any given moment and what was actually the case—in the sense of who possessed what *de facto*—might be enormous. Such a gap might also be clear to third parties; that is, might be an open secret.

As William Marshal put it, defeat in combat would “make” him a criminal; but if no one challenged him, he was innocent, whether the love affair was real or not. Higher authorities did not police the land, looking for offenders. Only when one party complained or when public order was threatened by an outbreak of violence did lords intervene.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, to appear powerful, it was unwise to challenge too many of one’s subordinates’ claims. A prudent lord might overlook a good number of lies, tolerate conspiracies simmering among his vassals, and accept their protestations of loyalty at face value, in order to retain maximum support against an external challenge.<sup>61</sup> The potential for irony in situations where open secrets prevailed was great—and this has clear implications for the use of irony in courtly literature.

A second late twelfth-century episode, in 1175, briefly narrated by chronicler Roger of Howden, confirms the relevance of aristocratic silence and rule-governed violence to illicit love affairs. In a context of shifting loyalties, strategic silences, and contingent promises, the rumored existence of an adulterous relationship between a lady and one of her husband’s vassals might be a question of only minor concern to the husband, one of many little problems demanding attention. This was apparently the situation of Count Philip of Flanders in 1175, until finally the two lovers went too far.

“There was in Flanders a certain knight named Walter of Fontanes,” writes Roger of Howden,

who like Lucifer among lesser figures, distinguished himself by his noble birth and by the light of his prowess. Taking note of his prowess, the Countess of Flanders

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Carcassonne: Memory, Title, and the Trencavel Viscounts, 1068–1209,” *Historical Research* 75 (2002): 170–87; Stephen D. White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints: The Laudatio Parentum in Western France, 1050–1150* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), esp. pp. 177–207 on the decline of the *laudatio parentum* in the thirteenth century.

60. Geary, “Vivre en conflit”; Lemesle, *La société aristocratique dans le Haut-Maine*, 156, 181–211. Well into the thirteenth century, even in criminal cases, a complainant risked heavy penalties if he could not prove his case against the person he accused; see McAuley, “Canon Law,” 484. See also Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water*, 107, 124; Kaminsky, “Noble Feuds,” 66 (on page 70 Kaminsky notes that the French crown issued over fifty-four thousand pardons for feuding in the period 1302–1568).

61. See Robert of Meulan’s advice to Henry I in 1101, mentioned in Vaughn, *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan*, 232; or the numerous concessions made by Richard Coeur de Lion during his struggle against Philip II of France, mentioned in Aurell, *L’empire des Plantagenêt*, 215.

took him as a lover, and pledged to make him her own. When the above mentioned Count of Flanders found out about this, he prohibited Walter once, twice, and a third time, to enter his house. But, just as human weakness always resists prohibitions, so this man ignored the Count's warnings. Thus it happened that, while the Count and his Countess were staying at Saint Omer, the Count pretended to retire, and the Countess sent a message secretly to her lover, to tell him that the Count was retired and commanding him to come at once. Hearing the Countess's command, and desiring to comply, he went quickly to her, and she received him warmly into her bedroom. When the Count was told of this, he returned unexpectedly and finding Walter in the bedroom, he ordered him to be seized and brought before him. Walter was brought before the Count and made to stand before him. The count asked him what he was doing in the Countess's bedroom, charging that he had come there to dishonor the Count. He, however, pressing into corruption, denied it as much as he could. *And to increase the plausibility of his denials, he proclaimed himself ready to prove his innocence in whatever manner the Count wished.* He did not come to dishonor the Count, but because the Countess had sent for him, he said. The count paid no attention to his words, nor did he want him to try to prove himself innocent. In a fury he ordered that he be beaten to death. The executioners surrounded him, and tied him hand and foot, and with swords and clubs killed him, hanging him half dead by the feet, with his head in a vile sewer. There, miserably, amidst the fetid odors, he was killed and ended his life. Then, indeed, Aelisinus and his sons with Jakelino of Avennis and the rest of [Walter's] relatives, in their fortified castles, rebelled against the Count, and prevented him from leaving on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Walter of Fontanes represented a powerful family. Elisabeth was likewise powerful, heiress to the neighboring county of Vermandois. Perhaps Philip of Flanders simply could not afford to alienate them both. They may have thought, in fact, that together they could overawe him or ignore him. To give three warnings was, they may have thought, to admit one's weakness. Like William, Walter was prepared to fight to prove his innocence. But the lovers did not count on Philip's anger, which worked against his own interests. At least, Philip managed to limit his outburst of rage to only one of the offending parties. Walter's relatives regarded the murder of their kinsman as a crime justifying rebellion. Eventually, Philip was forced to pay compensation

62. From Roger of Howden, *Gesta regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, 1:99–101 (author's translation; note that translation of *probitas* as "prowess" follows Aurell, *L'empire des Plantagenêt*, 115–16, who translates *probitissimus* as "très preux").

to these relatives.<sup>63</sup> Flemish chroniclers do not mention the matter at all, doubtless respecting the usual rule of silence with regard to insulting details of their lord's life. But all formulas of endearment disappeared from Philip and Elisabeth's joint charters from this time forward.<sup>64</sup>

According to the *History of William Marshal*, Philip of Flanders urged young Henry to recall William Marshal to his service in early 1183; he was a fool to let him go, Philip told young Henry.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps, from the point of view of William's biographer, Philip was the perfect figure to be cast in the role of the older, wiser man, warning young Henry to forgive and forget. By implication, Philip had learned the hard way.

Aristocratic silences were every bit as meaningful as their utterances. It was doubtless often difficult for them to distinguish what their fellow aristocrats knew but chose not to mention from things about which they were actually ignorant. It was within this gap, this area of silence and uncertainty, that courtly love took root and grew. If it flourished at all, it flourished in this shadowland. The exact contours of this space are therefore of the utmost importance for establishing the place of courtly love in twelfth-century practice.

Of course, both these anecdotes about illicit love affairs, between William and Margaret and between Walter and Elisabeth, bear the imprint of oral transmission. They appear to have been simplified and dramatized.<sup>66</sup> Both stories of adultery bear striking resemblances, as we will see, to the stories of Tristan and Isolde and of Lancelot and Guinevere—famous adulterers of courtly love literature. But oral simplification and resemblance to literary plots are not enough, by themselves, to discount these stories as mere fictions. Aristocrats of that period knew about themselves and the code of honor that governed their speech largely through orally transmitted stories.<sup>67</sup> The aristocratic honor code was no fiction, and the shadowy spaces of silence it created were very real.

63. Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, 2:82–83.

64. Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 250; Nicholas, "Countesses as Rulers in Flanders," 124–25.

65. *History of William Marshal*, lines 5601–5622.

66. See Crouch, "Historical Introduction," *History of William Marshal*, 3:22–41.

67. Maurice Keen notes the close links between literature and chivalric ritual such as tournaments; see Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 91–94. Sherry B. Ortner's notion of "schemas" is well adapted for understanding such phenomena; see Sherry B. Ortner, *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

## Flexible Kinship and Charismatic Women

Aristocratic inheritance practices were important for the origins of courtly love because they shaped the roles available to women. Where women could inherit lordship and rule in their own name, troubadour love songs to a *domna* (in Occitan, literally “female lord”) were not necessarily idealizing or figurative, as has often been claimed, but may often have made allusion to social practice.

### *Women Rulers*

Aristocratic families of the eleventh and twelfth centuries frequently favored the eldest son, either granting him exclusive control of his parents’ inheritance or ensuring him the lion’s share, with smaller shares going to younger sons and to daughters. In some instances, however, inheritance was shared equally by all siblings. If there were no surviving children, claims could be made by a wide range of kin from both the wife’s and the husband’s sides. If there were no sons, the lion’s share of the patrimony sometimes went to an eldest daughter, sometimes to a brother or nephew of the deceased.

This flexible kinship “system,” which included bilateral tendencies and patrilineal tendencies, has posed great difficulties for historians.<sup>68</sup> It is often impossible to know, from the surviving records, just what balance between the patrilineal and the bilateral tendencies existed in any given case. The consensus used to be that, with the decay of Carolingian governance and with the development of stone fortresses around the year 1000 and after, patrilineal reckoning and primogeniture enjoyed a growing advantage. But the timing of this shift is still under discussion. Inherited offices such as that of duke, count, or viscount could not be easily divided up or shared, some historians have noted; nor could command of castles.<sup>69</sup> Thus there was good reason,

68. For an introduction to the problem, see White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints*; see also Paul Fouracre, “Origins of the Nobility in Francia,” in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2000), 17–24; J. C. Holt, “Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England: I. The Revolution of 1066,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 32 (1982): 193–212.

69. Cases are known in which castles, lordships, and even counties were divided up or shared by heirs. On counties and lordships, see, e.g., on the Vendôme, Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme*, 295–97; on Orange, Walter T. Pattison, *The Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut d’Orange* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952), 15. See also Fredric L. Cheyette, “The ‘Sale’ of Carcassonne to the Counts of Barcelona (1067–1070) and the Rise of the Trencavels,” *Speculum* 63 (1988): 826–64. But the problems of sharing castles and lordships multiplied with each pass-

in each generation, to designate a principal heir who would command the castle or inherit the title. Younger sons and daughters might be endowed with ancillary or acquired properties or with a share of the revenue of the principal holding. Not all families followed the trend, and many did not do so until the middle or late twelfth century.<sup>70</sup>

Part of the difficulty of making sense of the inheritance practices of the period derives from the peculiarities of aristocratic speech already mentioned. A flexible and ambiguous kinship system allowed a range of individuals to make claims. If the strong unseated the weak, so much the better; strength was needed to protect the patrimony. For example, Dominique Barthélemy, in his study of the Vendômois in the eleventh century, found that women were mentioned less often than men as heirs in the surviving charters. But, in his view, this was not due to their lesser right to inherit. It was a side effect of their lesser capacity to deploy force. Women moved away from the family home when they married and were less able to keep track of family affairs. When women were in a position to claim their rights to a share of inheritance, it was often because they had assertive husbands. "Justice is rendered by groups of men," Barthélemy concluded, "and is caught up, for better or for worse, in the unfolding 'private' wars that are, by their nature, a matter for men."<sup>71</sup>

The ambiguities of this system in flux were especially apparent when

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ing generation; see Régine Le Jan, "Continuity and Change in the Tenth-Century Nobility," in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2000), 53–68; Ruth Harvey, "Courtly Culture in Medieval Occitania," in *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, ed. Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8–27; Moore, *The First European Revolution*, 68–69. Duhamel-Amado, *Genèse des lignages méridionaux*, 1:167, remarks of twelfth-century Languedoc, "La seigneurie est menacée d'implosion sous la pression d'une foule accrue de parents."

70. In general, see Leyser, "The German Aristocracy"; Georges Duby, "Lineage, Nobility and Knighthood: The Mâconnais in the Twelfth Century—A Revision," in *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 59–80; Constance B. Bouchard, "The Origins of the French Nobility: A Reassessment," *American Historical Review* 86 (1981): 501–32, and "Those of My Blood": *Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); John B. Freed, "The Counts of Falkenstein: Noble Self-Consciousness in Twelfth-Century Germany," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, 74 (1984): 1–70; Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme*; Martin Aurell, *Les noces du comte: Mariage et pouvoir en Catalogne (785–1213)* (Paris, 1995); J. C. Holt, "Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England: III. Patronage and Politics," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 34 (1984): 1–25. Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 34–37; Amy Livingstone, "Kith and Kin: Kinship and Family Structure of the Nobility of Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Blois-Chartre," *French Historical Studies* 20 (1997): 419–58. For overviews, see Martin Aurell, "Stratégies matrimoniales de l'aristocratie (IX<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)," in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen Age: Accord ou crise?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 185–202; Didier Lett, *Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiéval, V<sup>e</sup> – XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 2000).

71. Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme*, 536; my translation. See also, on these issues, esp. pp. 519, 525, and 533, where "rapports de force" are mentioned.



the sole surviving child was a daughter and this daughter also had a vigorous uncle or male cousin who wished to contest the inheritance.<sup>72</sup> Two well-known cases are those of Philippa of Toulouse (ca. 1068–ca. 1117) and the Empress Matilda (1102–67). Both women were able to rely on a sense of legitimacy and extensive loyalties that made them real contenders for rule. Philippa, sole legitimate direct offspring of Count William IV of Toulouse (died 1093) did rule Toulouse for a time with the help of a powerful husband, but she was pushed out twice by her paternal uncle and his son.<sup>73</sup> Matilda, sole legitimate direct offspring of King Henry I of England (ruled 1100–35), won a long civil war when her son was designated heir to the throne of England in 1153.

The origin of the struggle between the Empress Matilda and her cousin Stephen of Blois (ruled 1135–54) is well known and particularly revealing. Prior to his death in 1135, Henry I of England had insisted on three different occasions that his great vassals swear to respect Matilda's right to succeed him.<sup>74</sup> But when he died, Matilda, widow of Emperor Henry V of Germany (and therefore called the "Empress Matilda"), was not in England, having remarried Count Geoffrey V of Anjou. Her cousin (father's sister's second son) Stephen of Blois, count of Mortain and of Boulogne, moved quickly, rushing to London and convincing prelates and barons on the scene to crown him. His speed and skill edged out not only Matilda but also his older brother Theobald IV, count of Blois-Chartres, who was favored by a number of Norman barons.

A story was soon in circulation that Henry I, on his deathbed, had changed his mind and designated Stephen as his heir. Stephen rushed to London only to fulfill Henry I's wishes, according to the *Liber Eliensis*:

Since he was a renowned count and valiant knight, of proven integrity and greatly loved, and was descended from the stock of kings, and with the great men and the citizens won over by rewards and promises and the clergy fearing great disorder should he be turned away, he was received by the English as king of England. It greatly aided him in achieving this outcome that, just as the king his uncle had or-

72. See, e.g., Judith A. Green, "Aristocratic Women in Early Twelfth-Century England," in *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the Twelfth Century Renaissance: Proceedings of the Borchard Conference on Anglo-Norman History*, ed. C. Warren Hollister (Woodbridge/Suffolk: Boydell, 1997), 59–82, esp. p. 72.

73. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:140–60, 199–206.

74. Edmund King discusses the oaths in "Stephen of Blois, Count of Mortain and Boulogne," *English Historical Review* 115 (2000): 271–96, see pp. 288, 290. See also Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*, 12; Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother, and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

dered, Hugh Bigod swore on the holy gospels before the clergy and people that he had been present at the king's deathbed, and had heard him conceding the kingdom to Stephen his nephew, and had been sent by him to witness to this within England.<sup>75</sup>

But historian Edmund King regards the claim about Henry I's deathbed change of heart as very likely a fraud.<sup>76</sup> As the son of a daughter of William the Conqueror, Stephen's claim to the throne was no greater than Matilda's or his older brother's. But he saw that the balance of force would favor whoever could get to London first. When Pope Innocent II confirmed Stephen's coronation, according to Edmund King, "he referred . . . to the uncertainties of the time, to the strong support that Stephen enjoyed, and to his hereditary claim: 'you are known to be descended in almost a direct line from that king's [Henry I's] lineage.'"<sup>77</sup>

But Matilda was unswayed; her father had selected her, vows had been made, and she would rule. When her half brothers, Robert of Gloucester and Reginald of Cornwall, sided with her in 1138, she acquired a military force in England. Together they represented a league of the excluded, one legitimate daughter of a king and two illegitimate sons, against a mere nephew.<sup>78</sup> For ten years, Matilda and her supporters disputed Stephen's reign.<sup>79</sup> In the absence of stable royal authority, smaller-scale feuds broke out in numerous localities in England and Normandy, leading to a widespread "breakdown of order."<sup>80</sup> The chroniclers report that Matilda's arrogance got in her way. But in the end she prevailed, when her son by Geoffrey of Anjou was crowned as Henry II in 1154.

Besides Philippa of Toulouse and Empress Matilda, one could list many great ladies who, between 1050 and 1200, held the reins of power in their hands.<sup>81</sup> But these two prominent cases also reveal the chronic

75. Quoted and translated by King, "Stephen of Blois," 292, from *Liber Eliensis*, iii, cap. 46, ed. E. O. Blake, 3rd ser., xvii (Camden: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1962), 285.

76. King, "Stephen of Blois," 292–93.

77. *Ibid.*, 296; quoting Richard of Hexham, *The Chronicle of Richard, Prior of Hexham*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, 4 vols., edited and translated by Richard Howlett (London: Longman, 1884–88), 3:139–78, see 3:147–48.

78. Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*, 55–79.

79. Edmund King notes that she ruled in England in her own name, as daughter of Henry I, in "A Week in Politics: Oxford, Late July 1141," in *King Stephen's Reign (1135–1154)*, ed. Paul Dalton and Graeme J. White (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2008), 58–79. See also Hugh M. Thomas, "Violent Disorder in King Stephen's England: A Maximum Argument," in *King Stephen's Reign (1135–1154)*, ed. Paul Dalton and Graeme J. White (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2008), 139–70.

80. Thomas, "Violent Disorder," 146, 148.

81. See examples listed in note 40 above. Other noteworthy examples include William IX's aunt, Agnes, who ruled as regent for her young son Emperor Henry IV in 1056–61, and Urraca of León-

weakness of female claims. Both Philippa and Matilda lacked the training to command an army. Both women had to rely on male relatives for military leadership.

The modern impulse is to regard the rule of law as synonymous with justice and order. But it is essential to shed this prejudice if one is to understand the attitudes of twelfth-century aristocrats. All noble kin had rights in inherited properties, statuses, privileges. But no one had a right unless he or she asserted it. If males in the direct line were favored, it was because they were regarded as more likely to be able effectively to assert their rights and to back up their assertions with rule-governed violence. But when women were able to make assertions and back them up, they were treated with all the respect accorded to men. This rule of thumb applied to the whole of the nobility and probably to lower strata as well.<sup>82</sup> In such a context, all sexual partnerships were charged with political significance, and the longing for association was as much a political as a personal feeling.

### *Courtliness and Charismatic Women*

From the late eleventh century, there were numerous cases of women who seemed to wield a charismatic influence over the men around them. As models of beauty and refinement, learning and taste, they gave a new meaning to the possession of high rank and a new tone to life at the courts of territorial lords. It is plausible that they drew on ideas about elegance, grace, and affability that court-connected clerics had begun to praise in Latin writings of the eleventh century.<sup>83</sup> But we know very little about some of them, such as Almodis, daughter of the count of La Marche, born about 1010. She had two sons as the wife of Hugh V, lord of Lusignan (died 1060), before he had the marriage annulled on grounds of consanguinity. (She was the link legitimating the

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Castile (1109–26); on Urraca, see Therese Martin, “The Art of a Reigning Queen as Dynastic Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain,” *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1134–71. Eleanor of Aquitaine appears to have ruled Aquitaine virtually on her own between 1167 and 1173, with her teenage son Richard at her side; see Labande, “Pour une image véridique d’Aliénor d’Aquitaine”; Marie Hivergneaux, “Aliénor d’Aquitaine: Le pouvoir d’une femme à la lumière de ses chartes (1152–1204),” in *La cour Plantagenêt (1154–1204): Actes du Colloque tenu à Thouars du 30 avril au 2 mai 1999*, ed. Martin Aurell (Poitiers: University of Poitiers, 2000), 63–87. Sybil countess of Jaffa inherited the crown of Jerusalem in 1186 and selected her co-ruler; see chap. 3 for further discussion.

82. Wickham, “Gossip and Resistance.” see also Chris Wickham, “Fama and the Law in Twelfth-Century Tuscany,” in *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, ed. Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 15–26.

83. C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

Lusignans' later claims on the county of La Marche.) Almodis then married Count Pons V of Toulouse (died 1061) around 1040, bearing four children with him. Pons V separated from her in 1052, and she soon married Ramon-Berenguer I, count of Barcelona (ruled 1035–76). Later legend had it that he spirited her away with the help of a Muslim fleet. Almodis must have had a commanding personal aura. Fredric Cheyette remarks of her third marriage, "A love match it may have been, but also a match of wit and power."<sup>84</sup> She inspired all three husbands to jointly attack the count of Poitou in 1060.<sup>85</sup> The flexibility of marriage ties was crucial to her career.

Adela of Blois (ca. 1068–ca. 1122), daughter of William the Conqueror and mother of Stephen of Blois, was married to Etienne-Henri de Blois-Chartres in 1081 and reigned as countess of Blois-Chartres from her husband's death in 1102 until she entered a convent in 1120. Adela inspired an intense fascination among a number of Loire Valley prelates. She read Latin, could tell a good poem from a bad one, and tried her hand at verse. In her castle at Blois, her bedroom was decorated with tapestries representing the creation, Adam and Eve in Paradise, the flood and Noah's ark, Jupiter's loves, Bacchus, and the mythical lovers Pyramus and Thisbé. Over her bed was a canopy depicting her father's conquest of England.<sup>86</sup>

Baudri, abbot of Bourgueil (ruled 1089–1130), described Adela as possessing indescribable beauty and gracious conversation. Her chastity was unshakable. Men might find great satisfaction in contemplation of her, but their hopes were sure to be disappointed. She outshone all young ladies. On first sight of her, he felt sure he had already seen her in a dream, looking more beautiful than the goddess Diana. Hildebert of Lavardin, bishop of Le Mans (ruled 1095–1126), lifted Adela to the rank of the highest goddesses, who could not be compared to mortals without sin. Hugues of Fleury-sur-Loire (active 1100–1130) dedicated his *Ecclesiastical History* to her in 1109, praising her learning, her civil-

84. Cheyette, "The 'Sale' of Carcassonne," 839.

85. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:18; Fredric L. Cheyette, "Women, Poets, and Politics in Occitania," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 138–77, see pp. 157–58.

86. Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:376, from a poem describing her bedroom by Baudri de Bourgueil. See also Kimberly A. LoPrete, "Adela of Blois: Familial Alliances and Female Lordship," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) 7–43; Amy Livingstone, "Aristocratic Women in the Chartrain," *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 44–73; Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000), 117.

ity, her generosity. Geoffrey of Reims (active 1070–1100) compared her to the queens and goddesses of antiquity.<sup>87</sup>

Adela's self-cultivation was new, but she was not alone. In the 1120s, Guibert of Nogent complained of young women that "wantonness shows in their gait, only silliness in their behavior. . . . In the enlargement of their sleeves, the tightness of their dresses, the distortion of their shoes of Cordovan leather with the curling toes, they seem to proclaim that everywhere modesty is a castaway. A lack of lovers to admire her is a woman's crown of woe, and on her crowds of thronging suitors rests her claim to nobility and courtly pride."<sup>88</sup> Orderic Vitalis (ca. 1070–1141) complained that Fulk le Réchin, count of Anjou (ruled 1068–1109), started the fashion of shoes with curling toes to cover his bunions and that it soon spread. Soon noble men were letting their hair grow long, parting it in the middle and using curling irons like women. Both men and women began to wear tight tunics that reached to the ground, with long, wide sleeves.<sup>89</sup> Earlier, in about 1080, Raoul Glaber, a monk of Cluny, blamed the nobles of Aquitaine for the new refinements in clothing; they were "men of the greatest vanity, ridiculous in their manners and their clothing . . . hair cut to the middle of the scalp, beards shaven like clowns, and wearing the most indecent shoes."<sup>90</sup> Whatever the origin, this new concern with self-presentation created an environment in which certain women were able to shine.

Guibert of Nogent may have been thinking of Bertrada of Montfort when he complained of women's loose ways. In 1088 Fulk, the admirer of fashionable shoes, dismissed his third wife to marry the beautiful Bertrada. He was condemned by churchmen for this illegal marriage, and it was said that he neglected his military duties after the marriage.<sup>91</sup> Four years later, on May 15, 1092, Bertrada left Anjou to flee to King Philip I of France (ruled 1060–1108). Like Fulk, Philip dismissed his legitimate wife, mother of his son Louis, on grounds of consanguinity. Philip then found a bishop to consecrate his remarriage to Ber-

87. Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:373–74, 377–78, 380.

88. Guibert of Nogent, *De vita sua*, vol. 156 of *PL*, book 1, chap. 12, cols. 857D–858A; *Self and Society*, 65; also quoted in Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:468–69.

89. Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:465–66.

90. Quoted in Thuillat, *Bertran de Born*, 136. See also Gerald A. Bond, "Introduction," in William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine, *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*, ed. and trans. Gerald A. Bond (New York: Garland, 1982), x–lxxxvii, p. xlv, for further evidence that new fashions spread north from the Occitan-speaking region.

91. Lemesle raises doubts about this clerical criticism in "Le comte d'Anjou face aux rébellions," 206.

trada. But the reforming bishop Ivo of Chartres refused to come to the wedding and denounced Philip. Imprisoned briefly, Ivo fled to the protection of Pope Urban II (ruled 1088–99), who excommunicated Philip and Bertrada for their illegal conduct in 1095. The following year, Philip abjured the “adulterous” union. The couple promised to have no more sinful congress with each other, and Urban lifted the excommunication. But it was soon known that they were living together again as man and wife. A council of 1100 renewed the excommunication, and a second time the couple swore to live apart in 1105, but they were soon together again.<sup>92</sup>

Multiple oaths, repeatedly broken: Philip I and Bertrada seem to resemble Henry I’s barons, the ones who had promised three times to recognize his daughter Matilda as his successor, only to rally around Stephen of Blois. Were they all faithless, depraved sinners?<sup>93</sup> More likely the parties involved regarded an oath as a contingent undertaking, no matter how it was worded. Some clerics were shocked when Philip and Bertrada visited Bertrada’s former husband Fulk at Angers in 1106 and all three sat down to dinner together with Bertrada in the middle.<sup>94</sup>

Ermengard, viscountess of Narbonne (1130–96), stands out among the women rulers of the century for her ability to stay in power over decades without relying on the support of a husband or male relative or serving as a regent for a minor son. “During the half century of her rule” from 1142 to 1193, remarks Fredric Cheyette, “she was a full partner in all the region’s alliances, sieges, battles, truces, and treaties and in what must have been the constant, tangled negotiations as well that ordered this quadrille of shifting aristocratic friendships.”<sup>95</sup> Her court was also a center of literary patronage, and she became a favorite of the troubadours. The troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn said of her that “every act is so perfect that one cannot speak foolishness of her.”<sup>96</sup>

Little is known of Maubergeonne, viscountess of Châtellerault, except that she elicited a deep devotion from William IX of Aquitaine. Af-

92. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:130–32, describes Bertrada’s 1092 flight from Fulk to the town of Orléans. But Duby says it is not sure how her departure was arranged; Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 3–21. See also Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:289–90.

93. The chroniclers denounced Bertrada’s irresistible charms and Philip I’s depraved subjection to her; see Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest*, 14.

94. Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:289.

95. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 35.

96. *Ibid.*, 240, quoting from “La dousa votz”; see also Cheyette, “Women, Poets, and Politics in Occitania,” 138–77, esp. p. 149.

ter leaving his wife Philippa in Toulouse in 1113, William, on his return to Poitiers, brought Maubergeonne into his ducal palace; the apartment he assigned her became known as the “tour Maubergeonne.” He sought an annulment for his marriage with Philippa on the usual grounds of consanguinity, but the bishop of Poitiers would not go along. Instead, Bishop Pierre II, a reform-minded prelate, threatened to excommunicate William IX if he did not dismiss Maubergeonne. As Pierre read the act of excommunication in the cathedral of Poitiers, William IX is said to have threatened him with a sword, relenting when he realized Pierre was eager to become a martyr. William worked out reconciliation with the church by 1119. He also granted Maubergeonne a singular mark of favor by marrying his son (by Philippa) to Maubergeonne’s daughter, Aénor.<sup>97</sup> From this union was born Eleanor of Aquitaine, a key figure in the development of courtly love literature.<sup>98</sup>

The history of medieval Europe, from the Germanic invasions through the eleventh century, is filled with records of active women who played central roles in politics, religion, and patronage. Some were noted for their beauty; some climbed to the top by trading on their attractions as sexual partners.<sup>99</sup> According to Nira Pancer, Merovingian women were no different from men in their manners and were quick to launch into sharp-tongued insults.<sup>100</sup> But women of Bertrada’s and Maubergeonne’s generation were working to enhance their beauty, fashion, and manners and thereby their personal authority. They relied on the revival of commerce and the luxury trades to provide them with sumptuous accoutrements. The atmosphere around them seemed to carry an erotic charge. Powerful men, prelates and warlords, proved highly susceptible. In Occitan-speaking regions, a word was soon in use to describe the new atmosphere and new manners of the court: *cortezia*.<sup>101</sup>

97. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:248.

98. On Maubergeonne, see F. Chamard, “Chronologie historique des vicomtes de Châtellerauld avant la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, d’après les documents inédits,” *Memoires de la société des antiquaires de l’ouest* 35 (1870–71): 79–122; Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:205–13; Bond, “Introduction,” xxxi; Rita Lejeune, *Littérature et société occitane au Moyen Âge* (Liège: Marche Romane, 1979), 101–50; Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2 :272.

99. See Hartmann, *Die Königin im frühem Mittelalter*, for example, on Amalasintha, daughter of Theodoric (27–33), or Fastrada, one of Charlemagne’s wives (101–2). See also Roger-Xavier Lantéri, *Brunehilde, la première reine de France* (Paris: Perrin, 1995).

100. Pancer, *Sans peur et sans vergogne*, 227.

101. On the use and meaning of this word, see Bond, “Introduction,” xlv; Pierre Bec, “Introduction,” in *Chants d’amour des femmes-troubadours*, ed. Pierre Bec (Paris: Stock, 1995), 9–61, see p. 24; Burns, “Courtly Love,” 29; Joan M. Ferrante, “*Cortes’Amor* in Medieval Texts,” *Speculum* 55 (1980):

## The Gregorian Reform

Two of the women mentioned above, Philippa of Toulouse and Bertrada of Montfort, ended their days in the monastery of Fontevraud, founded by Robert of Arbrissel (ca. 1060–1117) in 1101. Prior to 1101, Robert's followers had traveled with him as he wandered and preached. Sins of the flesh were high on the list of evils he warned against. Once, it is said, he entered a brothel in Rouen to talk of the mercy of God. All present prostrated themselves, and he brought the women out to a stretch of wasteland to establish a holy community. He was warned more than once to prevent men and women from traveling together with him. His followers separated by sex when they slept by the side of the road, but the danger of scandal was still great.

In response, Robert established Fontevraud as a dual monastery—that is, an establishment that welcomed both men and women housed in separate cloisters. He placed it under the leadership of an abbess. Robert was unique among the famous preachers of the Gregorian Reform in placing women above men in the scale of spiritual excellence. “It is to them [women] that I have offered all the force of my talent, and what is more, I and my disciples have submitted to them for the good of our souls,” he wrote.<sup>102</sup> Noble ladies responded to him enthusiastically. His first abbess was a twenty-year-old noble widow, famous for her beauty. Bertrada of Montfort, who entered Robert's monastery in 1114, was soon joined by her sister Isabelle, another famous beauty whom one chronicler called an “amazon” because she liked to dress up in armor. Ermengard of Brittany must have followed soon after, as did Philippa.<sup>103</sup> The community soon grew to include three hundred women.

However, whatever he thought of women, Robert's organization of the community reflected the common clerical belief that sexual touching permanently tainted the soul. From the beginning, the Fontevrists went to great lengths to ensure the separation of male and female

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686–95. C. Stephen Jaeger convincingly links the emergence of the new elegant style to the influence of well-educated prelates such as Baudri, but their influence cannot account for the sexual meanings and gender differentiations that courtliness soon underwrote. See Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*.

102. Quoted in Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:286. See also Bond, “Introduction,” xxvii, xxxvii, xxxix; Bruce L. Vernerde, *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

103. Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:278–89, for these details.



members and of virgins from other women.<sup>104</sup> Robert established four separate cloisters, one for male priests, one for laymen, one for holy virgins, and another for “viduae et continentes,” widows and the continent. Pure women (virgins) were kept separate from the impure—that is, from those who had had sex at some time in the past. This tainted category included blameless widows and the *continentes*—women still married but who were now celibate, like Philippa, and former “concubines” whose marriages were not recognized by the church, such as Bertrada of Montfort. As Jacques Dalarun pointed out, many of these women were precisely those like Bertrada, whose status was threatened by the church’s reform of marriage.<sup>105</sup> Robert’s vision was disseminated by effective lieutenants, and within a few decades Fontevraud had scores of daughter houses.<sup>106</sup>

Itinerant preachers like Robert of Arbrissel were just one feature of the broad, variegated movement known as the Gregorian Reform. But almost all reformers agreed with Robert on the dangers and the polluting character of sexual appetite.

From the middle of the eleventh century, as agriculture and commerce boomed and literacy spread among the growing populations of the towns, a new understanding of Christian doctrine became available to literate townspeople. They insisted on a purification of the church, clamoring for, among other things, clerical celibacy. Over the centuries many authorities had recommended that priests not be permitted to marry, but this had never become a fixed doctrine. Many, perhaps most, local priests did marry, sometimes passing their parish and its lands on to their sons. But some now condemned this practice. In Milan beginning in 1057, an insurrectionary movement, the so-called “Patarines,” attempted to drive married priests out.<sup>107</sup> In the Patarines’ view, the sexual sins of priests rendered their rituals ineffective—a claim that would often crop up in the future. Reforming popes responded by outlawing clerical marriages, although the church also held, in the end, that a priest who sinned was still able to perform efficacious rituals. James Brundage speaks of a kind of “reign of terror” against the families of priests from the late eleventh through the early twelfth centu-

104. Lorraine M. Simmons, “The Abbey Church at Fontevraud in the Later Twelfth Century: Anxiety, Authority and Architecture in the Female Spiritual Life,” *Gesta* 31 (1992): 99–107.

105. Jacques Dalarun, “Robert d’Arbrissel et les femmes,” *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations* 39 (1984): 1140–60.

106. *Ibid.*; Linda Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c. 1100 – c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 244.

107. Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 93; Moore, *The First European Revolution*, 14.

ries.<sup>108</sup> Guibert of Nogent later recalled the “outburst of rage” against married priests in the years of his youth.<sup>109</sup>

Reforming popes were, if anything, less concerned with sexual misdemeanors and more concerned with purifying the church hierarchy of the polluting influence of lay lords. According to tradition, abbots, bishops, and popes were to be elected by an appropriate body of clergy. But for centuries, kings and territorial lords appointed persons to these offices in return for gifts—sometimes of money—and promises of loyalty. Attempts to root out “simony” (the “purchase” of clerical office) led to civil war in the Holy Roman Empire after Pope Gregory VII (1073–85) excommunicated and deposed German emperor Henry IV (ruled 1054–1106) in 1076. Gregory VII’s staunch support of reform was a turning point, hence the name “Gregorian” Reform.

An enthusiasm for asceticism also spread among lay people. Young men and women became convinced that the clergy were too wealthy and worldly. Even monks and nuns, they complained, wore luxurious robes and lived in ornate buildings. A new generation of men strove to imitate the early “Desert Fathers” by seeking isolated spots to spend lives of prayer and self-denial. Laywomen, staying closer to home, adopted some aspects of asceticism, sometimes living together in groups. To procure a minimum of food and clothing, male hermits and penitents sometimes traveled, preaching repentance and accepting alms. Most holy hermits operated beyond the reach of church supervision at first. But, rather than disciplining them, many prelates sought to collaborate with them. Peter Damian (1007–72) was drawn into the circle of reformers around the pope in the late 1050s. The bishop of Le Mans invited Henry of Lausanne (died 1145) to his town about 1116, although Henry was soon driven out for his heretical doctrines.<sup>110</sup> Robert of Arbrissel was welcomed by a number of bishops.

From the early twelfth century, new monastic orders made their appearance as well, imitating the hermits’ stricter conformity to poverty, preaching, and hard work. They preferred, at least at first, to found their houses in wilderness areas and rely on their own labor, rather than on the labor of tenants and serfs.<sup>111</sup> Most important of these was the Cistercian order. Their clothing was made of plain, undyed wool; and

108. Brundage uses this term in *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 216.

109. Guibert of Nogent, *Self and Society*, 51 (book 1, chap. 7); *PL*, vol. 156, col. 848C. On local conflicts, see Morris, *The Papal Monarchy*, 104.

110. Moore, *First European Revolution*, 16, 60, 106; Michel Roquebert, *Histoire des Cathares: Hérésie, Croisade, Inquisition du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 1999), 52.

111. Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978); Constance Hoffman Berman, “Medieval Agriculture, the Southern French

their buildings were devoid of ornament. Their spiritual leader, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), became the most influential voice of reform in his time, instructing kings and popes, chastising heretics, promoting the Second Crusade. His eloquence became legendary, and his sermons and letters won a large audience.

The early twelfth century also saw important intellectual milestones for the Gregorian Reform, as theologians and canonists sought to consolidate reform doctrine, weeding out contradictions and offering solutions to matters in dispute. Gratian's *Decretum* (about 1140) provided a large collection of episcopal and conciliar decrees, or "canons," along with commentary aimed at turning this diverse material into a coherent body of church law. The *Sentences* (1154) of Peter Lombard (1100–1160) attempted to settle many theological difficulties raised during the reform. Many came to regard it as definitive. Finally, a number of important Church councils met under papal supervision to resolve matters still in dispute, to condemn heresies, and ensure greater uniformity in the administration of church policies. The greatest of these was the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, called by Pope Innocent III (ruled 1189–1216), which offered definitive pronouncements on the sacrament of marriage, on the Eucharist, and on the duties of the faithful.

Characterized by popular piety, by wandering preachers who sometimes led their followers into heresy, by papal pretensions, ambitious asceticism, scholarly theology, and canon law, the Gregorian Reform period was anything but monolithic. Nonetheless, on the issue of sexual appetite, the reformers displayed a remarkable consensus. Most reformers were deeply impressed by the teaching of the fourth-century theologian Augustine of Hippo on sexual matters. Augustine's views had enjoyed great prominence since his own day, but until the Gregorian Reform, his writings had never been given such systematic scrutiny and endowed with such unrivaled authority.

Augustine taught that Adam and Eve, prior to their sin, had enjoyed complete mastery of their bodies. Their genitals obeyed their wishes in the same fashion as arms and legs. But part of the punishment for original sin was the weakening of the will and of reason and the strengthening of *libido*, that is, sexual appetite. *Libido* became so powerful that it could directly control the genitals. Just as Adam and Eve had disobeyed God in eating the forbidden fruit, now their genitals disobeyed them.

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Countryside, and the Early Cistercians: A Study of Forty-Three Monasteries," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, 76 (1986): 1–179.

Under the influence of original sin, lust (*libido*) “not only takes possession of the whole body, not only outward members,” said Augustine, “but also makes itself felt within and takes over the whole man with an affect that is joined to, and mixed with, carnal appetite such that a pleasure may follow which is greater than any other, such that, at that moment in time in which it is most extreme, the sharp edge and wakefulness of thought is overthrown.”<sup>112</sup> The shame caused by this loss of self-possession was so strong, Augustine believed, that no couple would copulate in public, and even brothels provided customers with private rooms. The modesty and shame that inhibit speech, Augustine taught, were constant reminders of the power of *libido*.

The heroic self-denial practiced by leaders of the ascetic movement—such as Peter Damian, Anselm of Bec (1033–1109), Robert of Arbrissel, Bernard of Clairvaux, and many others—aimed at a complete transformation of the self. Affects focused on earthly objects were to be suppressed as much as possible; affects focused on spiritual ones were to be encouraged.<sup>113</sup> Strict regulation of one’s bodily appetites was a prerequisite of entry into such a spiritual program. Hunger and lust were closely associated as the two appetites most easily abused.<sup>114</sup> The highest spiritual state was represented by the “gift of tears,” that moment of infinite remorse when one managed to see oneself and the whole of sinful, faithless humankind from God’s point of view, an achievement made possible by a pure, selfless love of God. These moments of ecstatic selflessness were also spoken of allegorically as the union of the soul (as bride) in marriage with Christ (as groom). Mary Magdalen, reformed prostitute, was seized on as an allegorical representation of the soul abasing itself at the feet of the savior.<sup>115</sup> The eroticism of the Old Testament *Song of Songs* was interpreted by Bernard of Clair-

112. This passage is paraphrased by John W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 117–18. Translation adapted by the author from Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), 2:31. The original passage is from Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate dei*, chap. 16, in *PL*, vol. 41, cols. 424–25: “Haec autem sibi non solum totum corpus nec solum extrinsecus, verum etiam intrinsecus vindicat totumque commovet hominem, animi simul affectu cum carnis appetitu conjuncto atque permixto, ut ea voluptas sequatur, qua maior in corporis voluptatibus nulla est; ita ut momento ipso temporis, quo ad eius pervenitur extremum, paene omnis acies et quasi vigilia cogitationis obruatur.” (Emphasis added.)

113. Damien Boquet, *L'ordre de l'affect au Moyen Âge: Autour de l'anthropologie affective d'Aelred de Rievaulx* (Caen: Publications du CRAHM, 2005), 51–114.

114. Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 80.

115. Piroska Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Âge: Un instrument spirituel en quête d'institution (V<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000), 257–67.

vaux as an allegory about the sublime ecstasy of the soul's devotion to Christ.<sup>116</sup>

The promoters of ascetic ecstasy were bound to regard with the most profound suspicion a form of this-worldly pleasure so intense that, according to Augustine, it could obliterate thought. According to Burchard of Worms writing early in the eleventh century, here summarized by Brundage, lust caused "spiritual blindness, inconsiderateness, shiftiness of the eyes, hatred of God's commandments, attachment to worldly things, misery in this life, and despair for the future."<sup>117</sup> The sexual urge was a defect, ruled Gratian in his *Decretum*. Orgasm was polluting even when it occurred against one's will. Women were more susceptible to sexual sin than men and could be led astray by talking, kissing, and embracing. Gratian's hierarchy of sexual offenses, in ascending order, was fornication, adultery, incest, unnatural sex (including, conventionally, by Gratian's time, masturbation, men and women coupling in unnatural positions, same-sex sexual touching, and bestiality).<sup>118</sup> But even fornication was a major offense that merited hell and should be punished as a crime.

For every good Christian, resisting sexual desire (*libido* or *concupiscentia*) was a daily struggle.<sup>119</sup> The reformers were the first to admit that they did not always win. After a life of rigorous chastity and self-denial, Peter Damian prayed to the Blessed Virgin as follows: "My glorious Lady, the image of virginal purity, the standard of all virtue, how I, miserable and unhappy, have offended you by my abominable, rotten flesh, and have violated in my body that chastity of which you, Mother, are the author."<sup>120</sup> Peter Damian condemned the less restrictive Roman method of formulating the incest prohibition as "an insidious cancer growing . . . in the entrails of the church."<sup>121</sup> He addressed these words to any man moved by desire-as-appetite: "Consider, soft man, or rather man without virility, look at the puss, smell the insupportable stink

116. Peter Dinzelbacher, *Bernard von Clairvaux: Leben und Werk des berühmten Zisterziensers* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1998), 175–86.

117. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 185, paraphrasing Burchard's *Decretorum Libri Viginti*, 19.6, in *PL*, vol. 140, col. 977.

118. On Gratian, see Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 245–51.

119. On the fourth-century origins of this notion of inner struggle, see Boquet, *L'ordre de l'affect au Moyen Âge*, 56–74.

120. Peter Damian, *De Bono Suffragiorum et Variis Miraculis*, in *PL*, vol. 145, cols. 566–67: "Domina mea gloriosa, virginalis munditiae speculum, et omnium norma virtutum, quam ego te miser, et infelix offendi per obscenam carnis meae putredinem, et eam, cujus tu mater, et auctor es, violavi mei corporis castitatem."

121. Quoted by Poly, *Chemin des amours barbares*, 370.

that she will soon become, and may the image of this future rot inspire you wisely to disdain the disguise of an apparent beauty."<sup>122</sup>

Peter Damian was vehement in all his opinions. But even the politic Anselm of Bec, archbishop of Canterbury, at the end of a long and chaste monastic life, lamented "There is one evil, an evil above all other evils, that I am aware is always with me." This evil was "the storm of lust that has smashed and battered my unhappy soul."<sup>123</sup> Abbot Guibert of Nogent admitted that as a young monk he succumbed to a fascination with the love poems of Ovid. "From the boiling over of the madness within me, I was carried along to words which were a bit obscene and composed some sort of little compositions . . . bereft of all decency."<sup>124</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux (died 1153) warned his followers, "To be always with a woman and not to have sexual relations with her is more difficult than to raise the dead."<sup>125</sup> One of Bernard's followers called an elegantly dressed woman a "sack of excrement."<sup>126</sup>

The polluting effects of orgasm made it impossible for a priest to marry, the reformers believed. In Peter Damian's view, a single lapse, a single sex act, permanently tainted the soul.<sup>127</sup> Given that the Redeemer chose to be born to a virgin and to be suckled and rocked by her as a baby, he remarked, "With what purity does he now wish to surround his body [the sacred host of the mass] as he reigns on high in the glory of the Father's majesty?"<sup>128</sup> According to Gratian's *Decretum*, a man or woman who had been married twice must be barred from the clergy, even if both spouses were dead. The taint of one past relationship might be tolerated in a priest or nun, but not two. Even a man whose wife had been married twice ought to be excluded.<sup>129</sup> In 1136 the Second Lateran Council declared that a marriage entered into by

122. Quoted in *ibid.*, 373.

123. Quoted by Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 186.

124. Guibert of Nogent, *Self and Society*, 87 (book 1, chap. 17).

125. Quoted in Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Famine: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 16, from *Sermones in Cantica canticorum*, Sermon 65, par. 4, in *PL*, vol. 183, col. 1091B.

126. Jean Leclercq, *La femme et les femmes dans l'oeuvre de Saint Bernard* (Paris: Téquy, 1983), 100, citing a text by Guillaume de Saint-Thierry; the woman was Bernard's sister, who was reportedly inspired by this reproach to take the veil.

127. Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 80–106.

128. Peter Damian, *De Caelibatu Sacerdotum, Ad Nicolaum Secundum Romanum Pontificem*, in *PL*, vol. 145, col. 384; cited and translated by Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 104. See also C. N. L. Brooke, "Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050–1200," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12 (1956): 1–21, esp. p. 3.

129. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 252.

a priest, deacon, or subdeacon “is no marriage.”<sup>130</sup> Gratian’s *Decretum* added that any woman who married a priest was inherently unclean. She and her children ought to be sold into slavery.<sup>131</sup> By the mid-twelfth century, priests’ wives had lost their status and their property, becoming concubines or “whores” in the eyes of good Christians.<sup>132</sup>

The reformers did not permit lust a role even within a Christian marriage. On the contrary, married Christians were just as much obliged to fight against lust as were the holiest monks and nuns. Christian marriage was to be a relationship in which the regular fulfillment of one’s marital duty, for purposes of procreation only and without consenting to any enjoyment it might accidentally bring, offered the best defense against lust. It was intended, as the apostle Paul indicated, for those lay persons who were too weak spiritually to imitate the clergy. The reformers were fond of repeating Jerome’s warning: “The wise man loves his wife with judgment not with affection. Let not the impulse of pleasure reign in him, nor the proclivity towards intercourse. Nothing is more foul than to love a wife as an adulteress.”<sup>133</sup>

Twelfth-century theologians debated the question whether it was ever possible for sexual intercourse to be free of sin, even in a proper marriage. Peter Lombard carefully reasoned: “And we say that concupiscence is always an evil, because it is foul, and the punishment of [original] sin; but it is not always a sin.” Jesus was known to take delight “according to the flesh” in resting after work, in eating when hungry; “nor is such enjoyment a sin, unless it is immoderate. And so it is with conjugal coitus.”<sup>134</sup> The zone of sin began, in Peter Lombard’s view, when enjoyment went beyond what was necessary for the procreation of children, just as it began when eating went beyond what was necessary to sustain the body. But even such unnecessary enjoyment, within Christian marriage, was only a slight sin. “To pay the conjugal

130. Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, 104.

131. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 251–52; see also Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 102.

132. Brooke, “Clerical Marriage”; Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier, “Réalité juridique et sociale du couple d’après les sources du Bas Languedoc avant 1100,” in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen Age: Accord ou crise?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 157–83.

133. Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, in *PL*, vol. 23, col. 281A–281B: “Sapiens vir iudicio debet amare conjugem, non affectu. Regat impetus voluptatis, nec praeceps feretur in coitum. Nihil est foedius quam uxorem amare quasi adulteram.” Quoted in Baldwin, *The Language of Sex*, 120.

134. “Et nos dicimus illam concupiscentiam semper malam esse, quia foeda est, et poena peccati; sed non semper peccatum est. Saepe enim delectatur vir sanctus secundum carnem in aliqua re, ut requiescendo post laborem, edendo post esuriam; nec tamen talis delectatio est peccatum, nisi sit immoderata,” in Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor*, in *PL*, vol. 192, col. 921. See Baldwin, *The Language of Sex*, 120.

debt," that is, to have coitus with one's spouse when asked, "is not sinful; to demand it beyond what is necessary for procreation, however, is a venial fault."<sup>135</sup> Peter Lombard only echoed an unquestioned assumption of the Gregorian Reform period in drawing a parallel between two appetites of the body: hunger and sexual desire.<sup>136</sup>

Later in the twelfth century Huguccio of Pisa insisted that sexual desire was inherently sinful and that "no conjugal coitus could be performed without sin, although [it could be] a venial sin." Still later, Peter the Chanter and Robert of Courson defended Peter Lombard's view.<sup>137</sup>

The reformers therefore preferred a form of Christian marriage that minimized the temptations of lust that marriage easily gave rise to. Because marriage was a lesser way to salvation than strict chastity, Christians must be permitted to make the choice of marriage freely, in full knowledge of what they were giving up. Opinions about the minimum age of consent varied, but by the late twelfth century the church settled on the ages of twelve for women and fourteen for men.<sup>138</sup> These ages were young enough that parental authority still weighed heavily on youthful decisions. But this was of no great concern; in fact, if the choice was for marriage, reformers preferred that parents select the partner. Otherwise, lust might influence the choice. The reformers rejected divorce partly on the grounds that the very possibility of divorce gave rise to temptation. The lure of new partners would besiege the wills of weak souls and batter them down.<sup>139</sup>

No clerical reformer acknowledged the existence of a personal (as opposed to appetitive) basis for attraction between sexual partners; lust alone was the cause. Lust was the only kind of sexual attraction; it was an appetite like hunger. Its urgings could be weak or strong. In the clerical view, if a person clung obsessively to a particular partner, it only showed that the flame of lust burned within that person with peculiar ferocity.

Because incest was one of the greatest sexual offenses and because the pollution of incest was especially foul, the reformers insisted on forbidding marriage between even distant kin, to the seventh degree.

135. "Reddere enim debitum conjugale nullius est criminis; exigere autem ultra generandi necessitatem, culpa est venialis," from Lombard, *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor*, col. 922.

136. Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 92–104.

137. "Numquam coitus coniugalis potest exerceri sine peccato, saltem cum veniali," quoted in Baldwin, *The Language of Sex*, 121.

138. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 238, 357.

139. *Ibid.*, 243–44; Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, 327–31; Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours*, 229–37.



In other words, persons could not marry if they shared an ancestor within seven generations.<sup>140</sup> Given the conditions of life in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this prohibition usually meant that it was not permitted to marry anyone within one's immediate face-to-face community and for great nobles to marry anyone within one's immediate region. This effect may have been comforting to reformers because it ensured that desire born of familiarity could seldom lead to legitimate marriage.<sup>141</sup>

Finally, the reformers insisted that marriage was a sacrament. Priestly intervention was necessary to sanction a marriage, and the church claimed sole jurisdiction over all questions involving marital validity and the fulfillment of marital vows. Bishops were empowered to rule over marital issues, with the possibility of appeal to Rome; a system of ecclesiastical courts was gradually established to handle the flow of cases.<sup>142</sup> Despite initial resistance, the broad claims of ecclesiastical jurisdiction gained increasing acceptance.

For all these reasons, the Gregorian reformers bear some resemblance to the sexologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like the sexologists of the nineteenth century, they were overwhelmingly concerned with sexual desire, a presumed natural appetite of the body. Concerned with sin rather than with degeneracy or illness, however, the twelfth-century reformers analyzed moral action, not diagnosable conditions. In addition, they defined "natural" sexual acts more narrowly than did the nineteenth-century experts. An important side effect of the doctrines of the Gregorian Reform was to make widespread features of social behavior appear to be deeply shameful, bearing the pollution of original sin as well as of personal sin. The doctrines of nineteenth-century sexologists had a similar impact, making much social behavior appear to display the shameful pollution of degeneracy. Sometimes the language was remarkably similar. As Mathew Kuefler has shown, twelfth-century clerics insisted that male same-sex desire caused the "unmanning of men" (*devirare vires*), a process that turned them into "effeminate" (*effeminati*). Gregorian reformers were thus

140. Poly, *Chemin des amours barbares*, provides a detailed history of the gradual expansion of the incest prohibition; see pp. 256–322.

141. According to David Herlihy, "The thrust of these rules seems to be that if I already live with a woman, whether kin or affine, in the same household, I cannot marry her." See David Herlihy, "Making Sense of Incest: Women and the Marriage Rules of the Early Middle Ages," in his *Women, Family and Society in Medieval Europe: Historical Essays, 1978–1991*, ed. A. Molho (Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1995), 96–109. See also Poly, *Chemin des amours barbares*, 40; Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, 331.

142. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 180–85.

pioneers in the stigmatization of same-sex interests.<sup>143</sup> But they did not discriminate against “homosexuals.” They expressed revulsion for all forms of sexual desire and sexual pleasure, whether marital or adulterous, whether natural or unnatural, whether the partners’ sex was the same or different. Even when praised in song, even as a cause of laughter—all manifestations of sexual enjoyment were sinful.<sup>144</sup>

Few of the reformers’ ideas were new. Clerical authors and prelates had been repeating similar views for centuries.<sup>145</sup> But prior to the eleventh century, caution had reigned in attempts to reform lay practice. At first, church leaders urged only modest alterations in Roman law. Augustine led a number of African bishops in petitioning Christian emperor Honorius II to outlaw divorce in 425 CE, but with no success.<sup>146</sup> Only very gradually, and partially, did the Germanic invaders give up their preference for first-cousin marriages or the Frankish elite their preference for multiple wives.<sup>147</sup>

But the Gregorian reformers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries systematized in an extreme form the doctrine that sexual appetite was an outgrowth of original sin.<sup>148</sup> On that cornerstone, they created in the end a set of sexual regulations of unprecedented clarity and coherence. Because of their progress in disentangling the church from surrounding society and in strengthening the authority of the papacy, the reformers were also able to enforce uniform doctrine throughout the church with much greater success than in previous ages. Of course these refinements of theology and canon law were probably not known to the vast majority of Christians or even to many clergy. Many hermits, penitents, and preachers of the early twelfth century doubtless gained the core of their knowledge secondhand, from the sermons of other hermits and preachers. But it is likely that sexual in-

143. Mathew Kuefler, “Male Friendship and the Suspicion of Sodomy in Twelfth-Century France,” in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, ed. Mathew Kuefler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 179–212, quotes pp. 195, 197, from the *Roman d’Énéas* (anonymous, ca. 1160) and Orderic Vitalis’s *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Libri Tredecem* (1141) respectively.

144. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 191, 203–4; John W. Baldwin, “The Image of the Jongleur in Northern France around 1200,” *Speculum* 72 (1997): 635–63. Georges Minois points out that Hildegard of Bingen condemned laughter as an effect of original sin; since the fourth century, theologians had regarded it with suspicion; see Georges Minois, *Les origines du mal: Une histoire du péché originel* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 105–6.

145. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 77–123; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Boquet, *L’ordre de l’affect au Moyen Âge*.

146. Poly, *Chemin des amours barbares*, 40–48.

147. *Ibid.*, 64–72, 90–130, 256–94.

148. Boquet, *L’ordre de l’affect au Moyen Âge*, 98–149.

dulgence was high on the list of sins against which they warned the faithful.<sup>149</sup>

At scores of churches constructed in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, depictions of original sin included Eve as an alluring nude with Satan nearby in the form of a serpent.<sup>150</sup> Another common theme was the personification of *luxuria* or *voluptas* as a naked woman with elongated breasts, sometimes with snakes hanging from them.<sup>151</sup> A remarkable sculpture program at the monastery church of Moissac, north of Toulouse, completed between 1100 and 1115, closely associates lust and gluttony—that is, the abuse of the sexual appetite and the abuse of hunger—as threats to salvation. In one panel, luxury is depicted as a naked woman with elongated breasts; snakes suckle at these breasts, and she is attacked by toads. Next to her is a devil with a pot-belly. Directly above is a panel illustrating the parable of Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16:19–31). The rich miser who refused to help Lazarus sits with his fat belly before pots of food. Another panel shows this miser being dragged down to hell after his death, while his widow is raped by devils.<sup>152</sup> These panels, all located on the left side of the church entrance, stand directly opposite a set of panels, to the right of the entrance, dealing with the life of the Holy Virgin, as if to underscore the contrast. In the nave of Saint-Marie-Madeleine at Vézelay, four of eight sculpted capitals deal with sexual transgressions (Potiphar's wife, Amnon and his half sister, Samson and Delilah, Herod and his daughter).<sup>153</sup> If these didactic images are any indication of the content of popular preaching, then a great number of the faithful must have repeatedly heard lessons associating the dangers of the bodily appetites of lust and hunger.

In comparison with their sweeping claim to regulate all sexual prac-

149. Etienne Delaruelle, "Les ermites et la spiritualité populaire," in *L'eremitismo in occidente nei secoli XI e XII: Atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1962), 212–41.

150. See, e.g., the floor mosaic, Cathedral of Otranto, Italy (1080–88); a capital with Adam and Eve at the church of Sainte-Madeleine (nave, north aisle, 4th pier), Vézelay, France (1104–1215); a fresco from the chapel of the Vera Cruz (ca. 1123), at the Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain; relief of Eve from a lintel originally part of Saint-Lazare church, Rolin Museum, Autun, France (ca. 1130); a relief of original sin on the façade of Notre Dame la Grande, Poitiers (late eleventh to mid-twelfth centuries).

151. See, e.g., a capital displaying luxury surrounded by demons (south transept, Porte des Comtes), Saint-Sernin church, Toulouse (ca. 1110); a capital showing *luxuria* with drooping breasts and a serpent (nave; north aisle; 2nd pier) church of Sainte-Madeleine, Vézelay (1104–1215); figure of luxury (jamb capital, west façade) of Saint-Trophime church, Arles (1170–80).

152. Ilene H. Forsyth, "Narrative at Moissac: Schapiro's Legacy," *Gesta* 41 (2002): 71–93.

153. Viviane Huys-Clavel, *Image et Discours au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Les chapiteaux de la basilique Saint Marie-Madeleine à Vézelay* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 35–44.

tices, the reformers' practical impact may have been slim. The church's parish clergy were often indifferent to doctrine or poorly educated. But these new doctrines became, nonetheless, a force to be reckoned with.

## Gregorian Reform and Aristocratic Marriage

The Gregorian Reform seems to have targeted both aspects of aristocratic culture examined above—the role of honorable violence in the validation of speech and the role of female inheritance and female charisma in the exercise of authority. Against the relation between aristocratic speech and rule-governed violence, many churchmen deployed a proliferation of written records, the codification of canon law, and an expansion of church jurisdiction. In addition, they sought to strictly regulate violence among Christians.<sup>154</sup> For many reforming clerics, a claim or gift approved once and written down ought to be good for all time, not subject to revision as the winds of strength and influence shifted from one year to the next.

Reformers likewise saw a threat to the church's autonomy in the loose, partly bilateral kin reckoning that offered so many openings for women to rise to prominence. Distant descendants on the male or the female side might resurrect inheritance claims long after a gift to the church was made. Church officials strove to acquire cosignatures from as many of the relatives of a donor as they could, paying for them when necessary.<sup>155</sup>

The differences between clerical and aristocratic outlooks should not be exaggerated.<sup>156</sup> Clerical attitudes toward written records were also frequently flexible. The clergy perpetrated thousands of forgeries to served God's purposes.<sup>157</sup> Nonetheless, in some respects clergy and the warrior aristocracy belonged to "two different cultures," as Martin Aurell has put it.<sup>158</sup> Many monks like Guibert of Nogent entered the church as oblates at a very early age and had little direct contact with

154. On the Peace of God movement, see Moore, *First European Revolution*, 6–11, 23, 57, 82, 86, 88, 102; Jane Martindale, "His Special Friend? The Settlement of Disputes and Political Power in the Kingdom of the French (Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Century)," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 5 (1995): 21–57; Malegam, "No Peace for the Wicked."

155. White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints*; Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme*, 518–41; Duhamel-Amado, *Génèse des lignages méridionaux*, 88–95.

156. John Howe, "The Nobility's Reform of the Medieval Church," *American Historical Review* 93 (1988): 317–39.

157. Fuhrmann, *Einladung*, 195–210; Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

158. Aurell, *L'empire des Plantagenêt*, 84.

the world outside. In reformed houses, *Latinitas*, erudition, and prayer were their daily bread. On some issues they veered very far from the prevailing values of the laity. The question of sexual partnerships was one of these issues.

The reformers wanted a church disentangled from its involvements with the world, but they also wanted all Christians to be disentangled from their involvements with the world. To reform marriage and kinship, to disentangle church property and offices from lay property and offices, some in the church began to insist that the flexible claims of aristocratic speech must give way to solemn, binding, and enforceable pledges. The church's new doctrine that marriage was a sacrament increased the solemnity of the marital pledge and implied that the clergy enjoyed sole jurisdiction over the marital bond. No one, they insisted, could marry or dismiss a spouse without church approval.

This stance went against long-standing tradition. Since Merovingian times, aristocrats had treated marriage as a lay institution; divorce and polygyny were common. The offspring of secondary wives were raised in the household. They might inherit the whole of a parental legacy in the absence of a "legitimate" heir.<sup>159</sup> "Bastard males," remarks Barthélemy, speaking of the eleventh century, constituted a kind of "reserve for the lineage." If all other children died, one of them could carry on. Great lords, he notes, were often "surrounded with bastards. To be 'rich' was to be able to provide oneself, through them, with a margin of maneuver."<sup>160</sup>

When a lord and lady celebrated a wedding with mutual promises of fidelity, these speech acts were no different from any other aristocratic claims. Shifting political conditions could easily break up a marriage just as they led faithful vassals to rebel and allies to turn on each other.<sup>161</sup> Marital dissolution was often motivated by the need for a male heir. Territorial lords rushed to induct their firstborn sons into office at their side and not just for training purposes.<sup>162</sup> When "turbulent"

159. Didier Lett, "Les épouses dans l'aristocratie anglo-normande des XI<sup>e</sup>-XII<sup>e</sup> siècles d'après l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* d'Orderic Vital," in *Le mariage au Moyen Âge (XI<sup>e</sup> - XV<sup>e</sup> siècles): Actes du Colloque de Montferand du 3 mai 1997*, ed. J. Teyssoit (Montferand: Association Il Etait une Fois Montferand, 1997), 15-27. Hartmann comments on this issue extensively; see Hartmann, *Königin*, 62, 69, 80-81, 91-92, 97, 111, 114-15, 131, 145; see also Poly, *Le chemin des amours barbares*, 256-322; Martin Aurell, "Stratégies matrimoniales de l'aristocratie (IX<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)," in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen Âge: Accord ou crise?*, ed. Michel Ruche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 185-202.

160. Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme*, 539-40.

161. For examples, see LoPrete, "Adela of Blois"; Struve, "Mathilde von Tuszien-Canossa."

162. Among eleventh- and twelfth-century rulers who "crowned" sons as co-rulers were William VIII of Aquitaine, Henry II of England, and Louis VII of France. Ermengard of Narbonne also attempted to control her succession, with less success; see Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*.

vassals saw a young, healthy son traveling with their lord or lady, co-signing charters, granting fiefs and offices, going out on military expeditions, they felt safer tying their fate to that of the ruling family. As a result, a marriage that produced no children, as year followed year, raised eyebrows. Daughters were better than nothing; they could be married to a man capable of taking over the lordship; in a pinch they could rule in their own name. But a marriage that remained childless was a fragile thing and subject to dissolution.<sup>163</sup>

Churchmen had long insisted that marriage was between one man and one woman and was indissoluble. Prior to the late eleventh century, enforcement of these principles had been confined to occasional spectacular cases, such as the papal denial of Lothar II's suit for divorce in 865.<sup>164</sup> In addition, until the early twelfth century, some churchmen continued to permit divorce in cases of adultery. However, in the late eleventh century, the papacy and reforming bishops began to insist with greater consistency on exclusivity and indissolubility. As marriages became more difficult to dissolve, the stakes of these relationships increased considerably, and the situation of married women worsened.

As noted above, the expansion of the incest prohibition to kin of the seventh degree permitted many aristocrats to justify marital dissolutions as "annulments" on grounds of a previously undiscovered consanguinity. For them, this was business as usual, relying on flexible kinship reckoning to assert or dissolve ties. In spite of rising church resistance, annulments on grounds of consanguinity continued to occur throughout the twelfth century.

By the early twelfth century, however, illegitimate children were no longer regarded as adequate heirs. The status of children born to "concubines" declined. David Crouch, speaking of the late twelfth century, notes the continued advantages of illegitimate children. "Bastards were a great asset for a baron," Crouch writes. "Girls could be used to form alliances with lesser families; boys made knights, clerks or stewards whose loyalty to their fathers had to be total."<sup>165</sup> But they could no longer inherit. William the Conqueror, himself illegitimate, successfully claimed the crown of England on grounds of kinship with Edward the Confessor in 1066. But in 1135 there was no question of William's illegitimate grandson Robert, earl of Gloucester, inheriting the crown.

163. For example, William VIII of Aquitaine's first two marriages; see Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:11, 43–46.

164. Stuard Airlie, "Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II," *Past and Present*, no. 161 (1998): 3–38.

165. Crouch, *William Marshal*, 69.

When marriages were indissoluble, concern over women's adultery naturally increased. It had always been the case that a wife's infidelity, if it became publicly known, might raise questions about her children. Now, however, a known adulteress could not be replaced, and her bad reputation permanently damaged the lineage. In addition, the expanding incest prohibitions, if respected, forced women to marry further from home. The wife's status grew ever more fragile. Isolated from her kin and her lands, under increased scrutiny by a husband whom she could not escape, the aristocratic wife might easily find her influence and independence—sanctioned by age-old tradition—greatly diminished. The courtly love ideal was born in this context.

### The First Troubadour

William, ninth duke of Aquitaine and seventh count of Poitou (1071–1126, ruled 1086–1126), is the earliest-known troubadour. That is, he is the earliest-known composer of songs displaying the characteristic features of courtly love. The genre of the troubadour song, and with it the basic elements of courtly love, seems to have arisen full-blown in his mind, ready to be imitated and elaborated by his many enthusiastic followers. Because he was one of the most powerful feudal lords in Christendom, a good deal is known about his life, and it is easy to see the impact on his life of the three aspects of the aristocratic world we have so far examined: (1) the relation between aristocratic speech and rule-governed violence, (2) flexible kinship reckoning and the independence and charisma of certain high-ranking women, and (3) the clerical reformers' obsessive fear of sexual desire.

The reformers' new hard line on marriage threatened William's very identity.<sup>166</sup> His father, William VIII (1024–86, ruled 1058–86), had terminated a first, childless marriage in 1058, on grounds of consanguinity, and decided to terminate a second when, after ten years, it had produced only a daughter. Again, consanguinity was cited as the grounds, and the local bishop, Isembert II of Poitiers, annulled the marriage. Nor did Isembert object to William VIII's third marriage of 1068 to Audéarde, daughter of the duke of Burgundy, who was related to him in the fourth degree. Nonetheless the reforming pope Alex-

166. On William IX's life, see Bond, "Introduction"; William IX of Aquitaine, *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*; Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, vol. 2.

ander II (1061–73) questioned the marriage. In 1073, when the great reformer Hildebrand ascended to the papacy as Gregory VII, he sent a papal legate to Poitou to preside over a council of bishops charged with ruling on the legality of William VIII's marriage. By this time William VIII's third wife had at last given him a son, born in 1071, who was duly named William. For William VIII, defending this marriage now became a high priority.

The council ordered by Gregory VII met southeast of Poitiers at the monastery of Saint-Maixent in 1075. Bishop Isembert II of Poitiers refused to attend. He sent a contingent of his knights to break up the council. Before they fled, the assembled prelates voted to condemn Isembert, but were not able to deliberate on the marriage of the duke of Aquitaine. By preventing the council from ruling, Isembert's knights gained a valuable delay of judgment for William VIII.<sup>167</sup> Gregory VII issued an excommunication of Isembert and summoned him to Rome. In January 1076, William VIII went to Rome himself (probably accompanying Isembert) to plead directly with the pope for the legitimation of his marriage. Gregory refused to recognize the marriage, but he did legitimate William VIII's young son. In return, William VIII promised to endow a new monastery at Poitiers and place it under the control of the reforming house of Cluny.<sup>168</sup>

William VIII was assiduous about endowing this new monastery, Montierneuf. In the founding charter of 1077, he employed one of his standard tricks to enhance the monastery's property. Three of his vassals, invited to "witness" the charter, discovered, on hearing it read, that they were signing away their own fiefs. In front of the assembled court, and under the duke's watchful gaze, they must have felt they had no choice. Many of William VIII's vassals were pressured into signing away possessions to Montierneuf, Maillezais, and other monasteries and churches; some of these gifts were later disputed. One wonders how many were never actually turned over. In 1082, William VIII took the abbey of Saint-Paul de Poitiers away from his vassal the viscount of Aunay and turned it over to Montierneuf. He demanded that Bishop Isembert sign away all his rights in this abbey as well, for earlier it had been taken away from the bishop and given to Aunay. To win Isembert's agreement, he turned over certain market dues to the cathedral

167. Isembert's orthodoxy was also in question at that time, giving him an additional reason to break up the council; but he and the duke were likely allies in this matter, according to Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:52–62.

168. See also, on William VIII's marital difficulties, Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:262.



chapter.<sup>169</sup> By such means, Montierneuf was quickly enriched and built, welcoming its new community of monks in 1181.

William VIII's son, young William, was empowered to inherit by Gregory VII's dispensation. The boy, although only five years old, began at once to appear at court and co-sign charters. But the duke's wife was reduced technically to the status of concubine, and her name disappeared from official documents. William was barely fifteen when he became seventh count of Poitou and ninth duke of Aquitaine in 1086. His questionable legitimacy gave his Poitevin barons a pretext to rebel. Showing a precocious grasp of his situation, he won some vassals over with generous concessions and with their aid was able to intimidate the rest.<sup>170</sup> Unlike his father, William IX was not generous toward the church and permitted his barons to despoil church properties with relative impunity.<sup>171</sup> His relations with a new reform-minded bishop of Poitiers, Pierre II, were strained.

When Pope Urban II issued the call for the First Crusade in 1095, William remained aloof. But when the crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099, plans for a second expedition to assist them were soon under way, and during a council of bishops in Poitiers in 1100, William took the cross. This was the same council that, with Bishop Pierre II's support, renewed the excommunication of Philip I of France for returning to the bed of Bertrada of Montfort. William, who was present at that session, opposed the excommunication of Philip but to no avail. Muttering threats, he stormed out of the council chamber, followed by certain bishops. Nonetheless, William persisted with his crusading plans, becoming one of the principal leaders of the 1101 expedition.<sup>172</sup>

The expedition proved to be a disaster. To better provide for forage and food, the crusaders divided into three groups as they crossed Asia Minor. Turkish forces successfully ambushed each of them, slaughtering the great majority. William and a few of his barons found their way to the coast and took ship near Tarsus for Antioch, now under Christian control, finally arriving in Jerusalem by Easter 1102. William may have participated in some of the inconclusive fighting of that summer; by October 1102 he was back in Poitiers.

Up to 1102, the church reform movement had meant only difficulty and humiliation for William: doubts about the legitimacy of his birth; a loss of status for his mother; conflicts with his vassals and with a re-

169. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:68, 92, 97.

170. *Ibid.*, 2:121–22.

171. Richard, *ibid.*, 2:139, quotes a 1094 letter of complaint from Urban II to William IX.

172. *Ibid.*, 2:159–67; Bond, "Introduction," xxxiii–xxxvii.

forming bishop; the excommunication of his lord, the king of France; and finally the disastrous crusade. One chronicler, William of Malmesbury, states that after his return to Poitiers William became skeptical of Providence. His life became a “sink of vice.” Another chronicler, Orderic Vitalis, states that after his abortive crusade he began writing “humorous songs.”<sup>173</sup>

William IX was particularly disparaging of Robert of Arbrissel’s movement, according to William of Malmesbury, who described a song William wrote ridiculing Robert of Arbrissel’s interest in reforming wayward women. In it William sings of having founded an “abbey” of prostitutes in the town of Niort.<sup>174</sup> Whether the song was written before or after Philip’s entry into Fontevraud is not known.

This song has been lost, but the lyrics of ten songs by William IX have survived. They form a curious series. Four are recognizably troubadour love songs, offering, in Reto Bezzola’s words, “an entirely new conception of woman and of love, new not only for the count of Poitou, but for the entire world.”<sup>175</sup> But the other six are starkly different—ribald, obscene, satirical. An early scholar of courtly love literature, Alfred Jeanroy, offered a biographical interpretation, linking the love songs to William’s installation of Maubergeonne, viscountess of Châtellerault, in his Poitiers castle in 1113. The ribald songs, Jeanroy reasoned, must date from before William IX fell in love with Maubergeonne. But there is no justification in the written record for such a dating.<sup>176</sup>

One of William’s six ribald songs, Song 5, is a satire aimed explicitly at the pretensions of the Gregorian Reform.<sup>177</sup> This song is a tall tale of sexual promiscuity. Two women hail a traveler “in the name of Saint Leonard,” guessing, by his dress, that he is a pilgrim. They invite him into their dwelling. The two women’s names (Agnes and Ernessen) are the same as two of William’s aunts, women who had gone into religious retreat in Rome in the 1060s, where they became close associates of Peter Damian and of Gregory VII. Some think William’s Aunt Agnes brokered the deal between his father and Gregory VII in 1076 that granted William his legitimacy. Saint Leonard was a local figure whose monastery north of Limoges was a well-known pilgrimage stopover

173. Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, vol. 2, quotes (p. 268) William of Malmesbury on William’s crisis of faith and (p. 269) Orderic Vitalis on his songs.

174. Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:293; Bond, “Introduction,” xxxix.

175. “Une conception toute nouvelle de la femme et de l’amour, nouvelle non seulement pour le comte de Poitou, mais pour le monde entier” in Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:274.

176. Bond, “Introduction,” xlix–l; Daniel Heller-Roazen, “The Matter of Language: Guilhem de Peitieu and the Platonic Tradition,” *Modern Language Notes* 113 (1998): 851–80, see pp. 868–69.

177. William IX’s songs are referred to here following the numbering of the Bond edition.

within William's domain. Thus the singer, a pilgrim, is being granted refuge by two nuns of the convent of Saint Leonard.<sup>178</sup>

Agnes and Ernessen ask the singer where he is from, but he responds only by babbling "barbariol, barbarial, barbarian." Here is a lucky break, one woman says to the other. Let us test whether he is truly unable to speak. If so, we can have our way with him, without fear of discovery. They remove his clothing, fetch a cat, and drag the cat across his back and legs. The cat, in fear, digs his claws deep into the traveler's flesh. But the traveler speaks not a word. Believing he is truly incapable of speech, the women have sex with him repeatedly over the next ten days, 188 times in all, the singer brags. By then, he was exhausted, and "a great sickness" overcame him. The song ends with a stanza commanding William's messenger to go sing his song for these very two women—revealing his trick. Holy priests, nuns, and pilgrims, Song 5 implies, are hypocrites.

The identification of the women as nuns gives added significance to the first two stanzas of the song:

<p>Farai un vers, pos mi sonelh E.m vauc e m'estauc al solelh. Donnas i a de mal conselh, E sai dir cals: Cellas c'amor de cavalier Tornon a mals.</p>	<p>I shall do a song, since I am dozing And riding and staying in the sun. There are ladies who are ill-advised, And I can say which: Those who turn a knight's love Into pain.</p>
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<p>Donna non fai pechat mortal Que ama cavalier leal, Mas si es monges o clergal Non a raizo! Per dreg la deuria horn cremar Ab un tezo.</p>	<p>A lady does not commit a mortal sin Who loves a loyal knight But if it is a monk or priest, She is in the wrong! By right one ought to set her on fire With a torch.<sup>179</sup></p>
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(LINES 1–12)

"A lady does not commit a mortal sin / Who loves a loyal knight." With these words William objected to the church's new theology of desire. He also articulated a view that must have seemed like common sense to aristocrats of previous generations.

178. I follow Rita Lejeune's reading of the song, in *Littérature et société occitane*, 121–40; see also Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:293–94.

179. William IX of Aquitaine, *The Poetry of William VII of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*, 18–23.

Two of the ribald songs vigorously denounce the close guarding of women. In Song 2, William complains that a woman he knows is too closely watched by her guardians. Every guard will fall asleep at some point, he warns. A woman who has been kept from men of worth will find satisfaction with any baseborn fellow at hand. The nuns of Saint Leonard may have been meant to illustrate the same point. In Song 3, he asks God, "The first man who guarded a cunt / Why did he not perish?" The nature of the cunt is such that "Although any other thing decreases, / If someone steals from it, the cunt increases." "The devastation is lamented wrongly," he concludes, "if there is no damage at all." These songs are demeaning, depersonalizing, implicitly violent.<sup>180</sup>

Turning to the love songs, one enters another world. In Song 9 William expresses his awe at his beloved's spiritual aura.

Anc mais no poc hom faissonar  
Cors, en voler ni en dezir

Ni en pensar ni en cossir;  
Aitals joys no pot par trobar,  
E qui be.l volria lauzar

D'un an no.y poiri 'avenir.

Totz joys li deu humiliar  
E tota ricors obezir,  
Midons, per son belh aculhir

E per son belh, plazent esguar;

E deu hom mais cent ans durar

Qui.l joy de s'amor pot sazir.

Per son joy pot malautz sanar,

E per sa ira sas morir

E savis hom enfolezir

E belhs hom sa beutat mudar

Never could anyone imagine  
(Her) body, neither by wanting or  
wishing,

Nor by thinking or meditating;  
Such joy cannot find its equal,  
And if someone wanted to praise  
it well,

He could not achieve it in a year.

Every joy should be humble  
And every wealth obeisant toward her,  
Milady, because of her beautiful  
welcome

And because of her beautiful, pleasing  
face;

And he would last another hundred  
years

Who could seize the joy of her love.

Through her joy a sick man can  
become well,

And through her anger a healthy man  
can die

And a wise man become foolish

And a handsome man lose his beauty

180. *Ibid.*, 6–13.

E.l plus cortes vilaneiar  
E.l totz vilas encortezir.

.....

Si.m vol midons s'amar donar,  
Pres suy del penr' e del grazir

E del celar e del blandir

E de sos plazers dir e far  
E de son pretz tenir en car  
E de son laus enavantir.

Ren per autruy non l'aus mandar,

Tal paor ay qu'ades s'azir;

Ni ieu mezeys, tan tem falhir,  
No l'aus m'amor fort assemblar;  
Mas elha.m deu mo mielhs triar,

Pus sap qu'ab lieys ai a guerir.

And the most refined become boorish  
And the most boorish become  
refined.

.....

If milady wants to grant me her love,  
I am ready to take it and be grateful  
for it

And to conceal it and to speak sweetly  
of it

And to say and do what pleases her  
And to hold dear her reputation  
And to promote her praise.

I don't dare send her any message  
through another,

I'm so afraid she might immediately be  
angry;

And I fear failing so much I don't dare  
Show her myself my love very much;

But she should select what is best  
for me,

Since she knows that with her I have to  
become well.<sup>181</sup>

(LINES 13–30, 38–48)

In this astonishing, original song, the beloved is said to possess surpassing beauty and grace. Body, face, manners—all are equally beautiful and equally inspire “joy” (*joy*), a term that in Occitan implied both enjoyment and happiness. “Through her joy” (*per son joy*) miracles are accomplished; the sick become well, the aged defy death. Her disfavor is equally powerful, changing wisdom into folly and refinement into vulgarity. William says that all should offer submission and obedience to his beloved. If she grants him her love in return, he promises discretion, gratitude, and praise. In the final lines of the song, William expresses an attitude he must have often seen among his own subordinates: the desire to ask a favor pitted against the fear of offending—a conflict that created painful, and perhaps obvious, uncertainty in a viscount, a *prévôt*, or other subordinate.

181. *Ibid.*, 32–35.

In Song 9, William directly contradicts the reformers' view of the elegant female as a "sack of excrement" and their view of desire as a polluting appetite strengthened by original sin. Song 9 makes the beloved into a source of spiritual power. Love of her is a sexualized counterpoint to the rigid asceticism of twelfth-century Christianity. It is anything but *libido*; it is the healing force of a kind of salvation. In making this claim, William transformed his beloved lady into an impossible ideal, elevating her to a spiritual status. His innovation was to reject the reformers' views by inverting them. A side effect of this inversion was to transform sexual partnership into a kind of spiritual partnership and to treat lovers' gendered markers of attraction as transcendent virtues.

A few years later, in 1126, a nun named Heloise, in letters to her beloved teacher Abelard, would express a very similar rejection of Gregorian doctrine.<sup>182</sup> Like William, Heloise would set her beloved on a high spiritual plane and thereby justify and purify her unlimited devotion to him. Although its existence was denied by Gregorian teaching, the longing for association remained real to many. Struggling to put this longing into language and to defend its ethical character, both of these lovers, William and Heloise, stumbled upon the same strategy: endowing the longing for association with a salvific spiritual force.

Where William IX's Song 9 draws primarily on spiritual conceptions, Song 10 relies on political ones, making the comparison of love to feudal submission. Spring is coming, William sings in stanzas 1 and 2 of Song 10, and he awaits impatiently a message from "the place which most pleases and suits me." The love he shares with a woman of that place, he assures in stanza 3, survives winter storms like the twig of the hawthorn which holds out, trembling on the tree, through rain and sleet. The last two stanzas explore the source of this strength, which appears to be an embattled loyalty, like that uniting vassal and lord.

Enquer me menbra d'un mati	I still remember one morning
Que nos fezem de guera fi	When we put an end to war
E que.m donet un don tan gran:	And when she gave me a gift so great:
Sa drudari'e son anel;	Her intimacy and her ring;
Enquer me lais Dieus viure tan	God let me yet live long enough
C'aia mas mans soz so mantel!	That I might have my hands beneath her cloak!

182. On Heloise's letters to Abelard, see C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 157–73.

Qu'eu non ai soing d'estraing lati  
 Que.m parta de mon Bon Vezi.

For I have no concern that hostile talk  
 Might separate me from my Good  
 Neighbor.<sup>183</sup>

(LINES 20–26)

The “estraing lati” in the first line of stanza 5 is, literally, “foreign Latin,” the language of the church. Relying on this hint, Rita Lejeune suspected that this song was about Maubergeonne. The “war” of the second line of stanza 4, according to Rita Lejeune, might in that case refer to Bishop Pierre II’s refusal to grant an annulment to William, his excommunication of William in 1114, and the clerical efforts to separate William and Maubergeonne over the following years.<sup>184</sup> Or it might refer to a dispute between William and Maubergeonne, following their realization that he would not be able to marry her. Whether this biographical reading is accurate or not, the political metaphors of the song remain salient. *Drudarie* (line 23) and its equivalents in Latin and old French referred to the special bond of love that united vassal and lord.<sup>185</sup> The beloved’s gift of a ring (line 23) is a symbol of investiture, the granting of land or office to a vassal.<sup>186</sup> In the ritual of homage, the vassal placed his hands between the lord’s hands, as a sign of submission and of the lord’s protection.<sup>187</sup> This moment is invoked with the double entendre of the lines “God let me yet live long enough / That I might have my hands beneath her cloak!”

In direct contradiction with the preaching of the Christian reformers, William IX equated the adulterous sexual caressing of his beloved (“my hands beneath her cloak”) not with lust but with a pledge of loyalty and with submission to her authority and protection, as well as with reverence before an apparition of great spiritual power.

Several scholars have regarded William’s ribald songs as revealing the misogynistic implications of his ideal of love. Whether degraded as “cunt” or idealized as a spiritual vision, women were rendered passive objects, while to men was reserved the power of desiring and acting. However, this reading of his songs does not square with his actions. William did everything he could to elevate Maubergeonne’s status. He

183. William IX of Aquitaine, *The Poetry of William VII of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*, 36–39.

184. Lejeune, *Littérature et société occitane*, 141–50; Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:292–316; Bond, “Introduction.”

185. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 235.

186. Lejeune, *Littérature et société occitane*, 117–19. See Jacques Le Goff, “The Symbolic Ritual of Vassalage,” in *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 237–87.

187. *Ibid.*

made his veneration of her public; a tower of his palace was set aside for her. Her daughter was married to William's heir, creating a lasting alliance between his kin and hers. As late as 1173, members of Maubergeonne's family, led by her son, Ralph of Faye, remained loyal to William's granddaughter Eleanor, duchess of Aquitaine, supporting her and her sons in their rebellion against her husband, Henry II of England.<sup>188</sup> Biographical or not, William's love songs are consonant with his actual treatment of Maubergeonne. In his life, she was anything but passive. Every step he took to make a place for her was damaging to his political fortunes. Explicitly or implicitly, she made demands on him and he obeyed. The result was a great advance for herself and her kin.

What the ribald songs do suggest is an acceptance, on William IX's part, of something like the church's doctrine of desire-as-appetite. They depict women with insatiable desires who, if they are cloistered, become slaves of desire and engage in coitus with anyone they can. Only if they are permitted freely to love good knights can women's desires be properly governed.

Whether praising women or denigrating them, William wrote with insouciance, with an audacity suggesting the impatience of a powerful man. In both the ribald songs and the love songs, the focus of that impatience appears to have been the same: not women, but the Gregorian Reform. Who in William's world first boiled everything down to sexual appetite? Who were the guardians of "cunt," if not the clerical reformers—or, perhaps, those husbands made jealous by marital indissolubility? Who, if not the reformers, believed that loss of virginity brought permanent damage? William was frequently forced to give in to them in practice; but in his songs he got his own way.

William IX, in his struggle against the church, stumbled upon a highly original conception of love as a counterpart to, and opposite of, the spiritual devotion of reformed Christianity. With intensity equal to any of Peter Damian's praises of Christ and the Virgin, he extolled the virtues of his beloved, and he promised her an obedient devotion equal in intensity to that of the champions of asceticism. But in his obscene songs he also stumbled on something new: a satirical, caustic, utterly brazen mockery of the excesses of sexual appetite. If William was the author of the first courtly love song, it appears he was also the author

188. Labande, "Pour une image véridique d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine": see pp. 204 and 210 for mentions of her mother's brother, Raoul de Faye; see also Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 3:96–120; and on "Ralph de Faye," Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 57; Nicholas Vincent, "King Henry and the Poitevins," in *La cour Plantagenêt (1154–1204): Actes du Colloque tenu à Thouars du 30 avril au 2 mai 1999*, ed. Martin Aurell (Poitiers: University of Poitiers, 2000), 103–35.



of the first fabliau—that genre of dirty stories that shamelessly turned clerical teachings on their head, treating *concupiscentia* as a subject of joking exaggeration.<sup>189</sup>

His voice was not misogynistic in the first instance; it was anticlerical. For women in general, his position was ambivalent: disgust for the nuns of Fontevraud or Saint Leonard, to whom he preferred prostitutes, and admiration and obedience for the charismatic lady. Obviously, such a categorization was far from neutral in its effects. But it was the Gregorian doctrine of desire that sparked William's opposition. He gave partial ground, conceding the power of sexual desire, but not its sinfulness. No one could resist desire, in effect, including the self-important guardians of virginity. But William himself claimed to feel a spiritualized sexual love whose grandeur outshone desire, for a lady whose grace and powers demanded homage of good knights.

Reconciled with the church by 1119, William loyally promised to crusade against the heathens one more time. With six hundred knights, he marched south and joined the king of Aragon in his successful spring campaign of 1120.<sup>190</sup> It is not known whether William was forced to have Maubergeonne removed from his ducal palace.

Viewed in the light of this reconciliation, William's songs embody the kind of trickery aristocrats so greatly admired. Writing songs might be a sinful pastime, but it was not sufficiently serious to be accounted heretical or to warrant excommunication. In the songs, he names no one by name; his beloved is "mon Bon Vezi," my good neighbor, or simply "midons," my lord. The proper names he throws in, such as the Agnes and Ernessen of song 5, are too common to be easily pinned down. The fictitious words of a sinful art form allow him to say what is most important, to pledge what he is not allowed to pledge publicly. Thus, the full subversiveness of the songs was not evident to those activist clergymen who blocked his plans for a resplendent new marriage.

Clerical chroniclers of the period were, in fact, oblivious to William's subversive attitude toward church doctrine and to his originality in describing love. They characterized William's offenses in the, by then, standard language of vitriolic denunciation peculiar to the reformers. William of Malmesbury, writing about 1125, said, "When he had driven away his legal wife, he carried off the wife of a certain viscount, for whom he burned so much (*quam adeo ardebat*) that he

189. On fabliaux, see chap. 3 for further discussion.

190. On William IX's campaign, see Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2:215.

vowed to engrave the image of the strumpet (*mulierculae*) on his shield, saying again and again that he would support her in battle just as she did him in bed."<sup>191</sup> The intensity of William's desire was, according to this chronicler, actively encouraged by Maubergeonne. William was "poisoned by the viperish hiss of this whore" (*viperio meretriculae infectus sibilo*). Another religious chronicler, Geoffrey of Vigeois called William a "vehement lover of women" (*vehemens amator foeminarum*); Ralph of Diceto lamented that he "replaced his wife with a concubine" (*uxorae suae pellicem superinduxit*).<sup>192</sup> Hildebert, archbishop of Tours (1056–1133), said William "burned with secret fires" (*secretis ignibus arsit*).<sup>193</sup> This language represented a common strategy of clerical authors for dealing with the new ideal of love. Courtly love required no special refutation, no doctrinal condemnation, because it was simply acute *concupiscentia*.

There is good reason to believe that William IX did not invent every convention of the love song that he, and those following him, employed. He wrote in Occitan, for example, a language that differed somewhat from the tongue of his native Poitiers. He used themes known from Ovid's first-century (CE) love poems. He may have heard, or heard about, Arabic-language songs in Antioch, Jerusalem, or al-Andalus expressing intense suffering from unrequited love. He may not have been the first to employ nicknames or to invoke spring as the season of love. But there is also good reason to agree with Reto Bezzola and Rita Lejeune that a preponderance of evidence suggests William IX invented or expressed with unique clarity a new understanding of love, an understanding that set up a polarity between the uplifting spiritual and political love of a lady, on the one hand, and the degrading lust of the reformers, on the other.<sup>194</sup>

191. William, monk of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, V, 439. Quote is from the excerpt provided in William IX of Aquitaine, *The Poetry of William VII of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*, 128–31, translation by Bond.

192. Bezzola, *Les origines*, Part II, 2:270, 271.

193. William IX of Aquitaine, *The Poetry of William VII of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*, 131–32.

194. Reto R. Bezzola, "Guillaume IX et les origines de l'amour courtois," *Romania* 66 (1940): 145–237; Lejeune, *Littérature et société occitane*, 101–50. On the possible influence of Arabic-language love songs of al-Andalus, see William D. Paden, "The State of Medieval Studies in Occitan and French Literature," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 105, no. 1: "The State of Medieval Studies" (January 2006): 137–55; George T. Beech, "The Eleanor of Aquitaine Vase, William IX of Aquitaine, and Muslim Spain," *Gesta* 32, no. 1 (1993): 3–10. But note that the Arabic-language love literature did not single out "lust" or sexual appetite as a problem to be managed or overcome by lovers; see, e.g., Michael Sells, "Love," in *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, ed. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 126–58.

In the shadows, William brought together admiration of a charismatic woman with denunciation of the Gregorian Reform. Courtly love was born in a parallel realm of silence, created by a merger of the silence of literature with the silence of aristocratic speech. In this shadowy space, it was possible to make pledges that the church could no longer permit, and it was possible to find an alternative spiritual fulfillment in loyal devotion to a charismatic woman lord.

## Trobairitz and Troubadours and the Shadow Religion

Lengua, non mais! que trop parlars  
Fai piegz que pechatz criminaus.

Tongue, no more: for speaking too much  
Is worse than a mortal sin. RAIMBAUT D'ORANGE<sup>1</sup>

As noted in the Introduction, a critical reading of the recent work in clinical psychology, psychosexuality, and neuroscience reveals researchers' growing acceptance that they are unable to identify a neural mechanism corresponding to what is commonly called "sexual desire." It is likely that there is no genetically programmed "appetite" or "drive" that can explain the widespread evidence, from many cultural contexts, of "the longing for association" with a sexual partner. These longings probably arise from a diverse array of characteristics—social, cultural—that attach to gendered persons as they are shaped by those contexts.

As we will see, "courtly love," as developed by William IX and his imitators, was the only tradition of the three examined here that justified love by its sublime, heroic contrast with desire-as-appetite. Only in Europe was love depicted as an emotion whose special characteristics

1. "Assatz sai d'amor ben parlar," Song 20, in Walter T. Pattison, *The Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut d'Orange* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952), 134–36, lines 54–55.

included a capacity to master desire-as-appetite and render desire innocent. Courtly love, in this respect, looks very much like a reaction to, a kind of dissent against, the Gregorian Reform doctrine that all sexual behavior, all sexual longing, all sexual pleasure was bound up with the realm of sin and profoundly dangerous to the soul.

There is nothing unusual about a particular tradition displaying unique features. But it is necessary to insist that the commonsense Western notion of sexual desire is one of the West's unique cultural features and nothing more. European Christian, and soon also Jewish, commonsense ideas about sexual desire changed radically in the twelfth century.<sup>2</sup> At that time, the Gregorian Reform imprinted a notion of sexual desire-as-appetite on a broad lay public.<sup>3</sup> This notion had been widely held by clergy and theologians for centuries but never accepted by the lay elite as a basis for behavioral norms. Only in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries did a new, more extreme, more public doctrine of desire-as-appetite become an enduring, unique feature of Western thinking and practice.

However, sexual partnerships among European aristocrats had long been shaped by complex, multidimensional longings in which considerations of status, honor, and fidelity could not easily be separated from those of personal appearance and manner. One can sense the emotional intensity of such relationships lurking behind the monastic chroniclers' accounts of the marriages of William, fourth duke of Aquitaine, to Emma of Blois in 967; Fulk Nerra to Elisabeth of Vermandois in 985; Almodis de La Marche to Ramon-Berenguer, count of Barcelona, in 1053; and of Philip I of France to Bertrada of Montfort in 1092. If such longings and attachments were common, it would be no surprise to discover that the Gregorian Reform's radical doctrine of desire was widely perceived, by lovers and others, as a poor match, a very inadequate conceptualization, of their own sexual relationships and the emotional significance these relationships possessed. It would

2. On courtly love in twelfth-century Jewish communities, see Joseph Shatzmiller, "Un mariage d'amour était-il possible au Moyen Age?" in *Le mariage au Moyen Age (XI<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles): Actes du Colloque de Montferrand du 3 mai 1997*, ed. J. Teyssot (Montferrand: Association Il Etait une Fois Montferrand, 1997), 11-14, and "Fromme Juden un christlich-höfliche Ideale im Mittelalter," *Kleine Schriften des Arye Maimon-Instituts* 10 (2008): 11-32. On the gradual acceptance of desire-as-appetite in Jewish moral thought, see Ruth Berger, *Sexualität, Ehe, und Familienleben in der jüdischen Moralliteratur (900-1900)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

3. As Poly puts it, the post-Gregorian church had the means to put in place "an efficient normative system which gradually found its mark." In the end, "a majority of the population had come to admit that nothing here below was without sin, and especially not sexual union, even when recognized, even when blessed." See Jean-Pierre Poly, *Le chemin des amours barbares: Genèse médiévale de la sexualité européenne* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 408-9.

be no surprise to discover that the unique new Western practices embodying the church's desire-as-appetite doctrine were soon countered by a unique new set of Western practices formulated on the belief that "desire" could not possibly capture or name all the sentiments and aspirations that brought sexual partners together. The courtly love ideal was this new set of counterpractices.

The kind of love that William IX wrote about and the genre of song he employed in praising the beloved—usually referred to as a *canso*—enjoyed a growing popularity, first in southern France, spreading from there to Iberia, Italy, and most of western and central Europe. The earliest songwriters in the new style can be linked to his court or the court of his son, William X (ruled 1126–37) and his wife Aénor (Mauger-geonne's daughter): Eble II, lord of Ventadorn; Marcabru and Cercamon; Jaufré Rudel, lord of Blaye (active 1130–50).<sup>4</sup> Bernart de Ventadorn (ca. 1150–ca. 1195) grew up at Eble's court; his mother was, according to later legend, a serf who worked as a cook in Eble's castle. These songwriters all wrote in a language of southern France sometimes called Provençal but more recently referred to as Occitan. In that language, a male songwriter was called a *troubadour*—literally a "finder," someone who found the words and melody of a song. Women songwriters were known by the female version of the same word, *trobairitz*.

When Eleanor of Aquitaine, William IX's granddaughter, went north to marry the French king Louis VII (ruled 1131–80) in 1137, at the age of fifteen, she may have brought troubadours in her train; some scholars would locate Bernart de Ventadorn and Marcabru at her court. The evidence for direct contacts between Eleanor and known troubadours is slim. But even a skeptical reading of the evidence leads to the conclusion that, after Eleanor's later marriage to Henry Plantagenet (son of the Empress Matilda and soon to be Henry II of England) in 1152, troubadours frequented "Eleanor's husband and sons, her daughters, her vassals and her enemies."<sup>5</sup> In addition, it is

4. Reto Bezzola, *Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en occident*, Part II, *La société féodale et la transformation de la littérature de cour*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1960), 2:316–31. Roy Rosenstein indicates Rudel was William IX's godson, but during the rebellion of 1113, William seized the family's stronghold at Blaye. See Roy Rosenstein, "New Perspectives on Distant Love: Jaufré Rudel, Uc Bru, and Sarrazina," *Modern Philology* 87 (1990): 225–38. See also Rita Lejeune, *Littérature et société occitane au Moyen Âge* (Liège: Marche Romane, 1979), 215.

5. Ruth Harvey, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Troubadours," in *The World of Eleanor of Aquitaine: Literature and Society in Southern France between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Marcus Bull and Catherine Léglu (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2005), 101–14, quote from p. 114. Compare Harvey's views to Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, esp. pp. 157, 407, 413. Martin Aurell mentions nine songwriters by name who referred to Henry II or his sons in their songs, and he argues, more generally,

widely accepted that she supported certain authors of early Arthurian romances.<sup>6</sup>

Thus numerous *troubairitz* and *troubadours*, and soon northern *trouvères* (men and women who wrote love songs in Old French rather than Occitan) and *Minnesänger* (those who wrote love songs in Middle High German), as well as authors of lengthy narrative romances, passed through the door William IX had opened, and they furnished the space he discovered with carefully crafted conventions and doctrines. Like him, they distinguished their love, which they came to call in Occitan *fin'amors* (refined love), from concupiscence. Like him, they idealized their beloveds. For them, as for William IX, spiritually transforming love inhabited that space of silence within aristocratic speech where de facto possession could be quietly enjoyed but not openly claimed. Like him, they loved without reference to marital status. In their view, when a lady and her knight came together in *fin'amors*, adultery was no sin.

What relation the Occitan lyric had to court practices on the one hand and to Christian morality on the other has remained unsettled. The question has been debated for over a century, each generation of scholars posing it in different ways and offering different answers. But a new kind of answer is possible, once one sets aside the notion that sexual desire is a universally acknowledged bodily appetite.

The resolution of the debates over *troubairitz* and *troubadour* song, in other words, can best be found outside the study of literature and outside Europe, through a comparative, ethnographic approach. In this chapter, we explore an ethnographic reading (rather than a literary reading) of the earliest texts of the courtly love tradition. Only an ethnographic reading opens up the multiple resonances between the silences and the violence of aristocratic practice, on the one hand, and the silences and abstractions of *troubadour* lyric, on the other. Only an ethnographic reading can identify the strong tradition of aristocratic women's (limited) participation in rule and uncover its relevance to courtly love.

Through this reading, one can glimpse how the longing for association was experienced in Occitan-speaking regions prior to the Grego-

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that the *troubadours*, *trouvères*, and other poets and songwriters played an important role in Angevin ideology and self-promotion; see Martin Aurell, *L'empire des Plantagenêt* (Paris: Perrin, 2008), 98–103.

6. For recent reevaluations of Eleanor of Aquitaine's role as literary patron, see Aurell, *L'empire des Plantagenêt*, 151–52, 161–62; Amaury Chauou, *L'idéologie Plantagenêt: Royauté arthurienne et monarchie politique dans l'espace Plantagenêt (XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2001).

rian Reform, how it was denied and outlawed by the Gregorian Reform, and how *fin'amors* permitted aristocrats to surreptitiously reformulate the longing for association as a feeling with a spiritual status equal to that of the spiritual emotions of the church's ascetic heroes. But an ethnographic reading entails an effort to grasp, at least provisionally, all aspects of the context that likely influenced habitual emotional responses.

### The *Canso* in Context: Twelfth-Century Occitan Society

In debating the origins of courtly love, many scholars have pointed to unique features of Occitan society that distinguished it from northern Europe. Trial by combat was rare or nonexistent in Occitania, it has been said, and southern knights did not engage in tournaments or jousts.<sup>7</sup> From this, some have concluded that they were less warlike than their northern peers. They were also, apparently, less religious. Great lords in Occitania did not have chaplains or rely on chanceries staffed with clerics to administer their holdings, rights, incomes, and expenditures. Hence the clerical presence in these courts was intermittent, limited to the visits of prelates seeking gifts or favors.<sup>8</sup> Occitania appears to have been tolerant of heresy as well.<sup>9</sup> Heretical preachers chased from the north found refuge there. After 1150, the Cathar heresy in Occitania grew into a full-fledged church. From such evidence there gradually emerges the plausible portrait of a twelfth-century Occitan courtier who was relatively worldly, if not irreligious, and relatively nonviolent, if not pacific, preferring to pass languid afternoons plucking at stringed instruments, devising elaborate rhyme schemes for his formalistic songs about abstract love.<sup>10</sup>

7. Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Les troubadours* (Paris: Seuil, 1971); Linda M. Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c. 1100–c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 77, 87.

8. Fredric L. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 123; Laurent Macé, *Les comtes de Toulouse et leur entourage, XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles: Rivalités, alliances et jeux de pouvoir* (Toulouse: Privat, 2000), 99–100.

9. Paterson carefully reviews the historiographical debate over the South's supposed special tolerance for heresy, in *The World of the Troubadours*, 320, 333–40. See also René Nelli, "Le vicomte de Béziers (1185–1209) vu par les troubadours," in *Paix de Dieu et guerre sainte en Languedoc au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Cahiers de Fanjeaux 4* (Toulouse: Privat, 1969), 303–14.

10. For example, Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours*, states, p. 87, "French ideals of chivalry made but a feeble impact on Occitan mentality. While there is some fusion of chivalry with native courtly ideals, and an individual attempt in *Girart de Roussillon* to enhance knighthood with reli-



However, present-day views of twelfth-century Occitania tend to be colored by awareness of what was to come, the extreme violence of the Albigensian Crusade. The crusade against the Cathar (or “Albigensian”) heretics in Languedoc, proclaimed by Pope Innocent III in 1208, brought armies of sworn warriors from northern France and Germany, inspired by the promise that the pope would deliver over to them the ancestral holdings of any Occitan lord who resisted them or offered protection to heretics. The inhabitants of Languedoc, Catholic and Cathar alike, who took up arms against them, met a series of dramatic defeats that left much of the province in the hands of the crusaders. Ideologically pure Cistercian monks were appointed to many Languedoc bishoprics, with the mission of rooting out heretical beliefs. One of them, Folc of Marseille, a former troubadour, helped found the Dominican order, under the leadership of the Spanish preacher Dominic, to aid the cause.<sup>11</sup> Normal court life was suspended for many years; a distinctive southern cultural configuration was destroyed. Many troubadours of Languedoc fled, often to northern Italy.<sup>12</sup>

Occitania’s deviation from the European norm, it is sometimes imagined, became so great that eventually the church and northern knights brought the storm of crusade down upon them.<sup>13</sup> By this view, the courtly love invented by Occitan troubadours was not so much “incommensurate” with the Gregorian Reform, as James Schultz puts it, as it was simply distant from and independent of wider European trends.<sup>14</sup>

But this *ex post facto* view of Occitan society is not supported by the historical record. A closer look reveals a society much like its northern neighbors, riven by warfare carried out according to the rules of the feud and profoundly changed by the Gregorian Reform. Aristocratic “turbulence,” the continued respect for high-ranking women lords, and the growing pressure of reformed Christianity were persistent features of life in twelfth-century “Occitania,” just as they were further north.

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gious ideology, there is also a certain resistance to the glorification of military values. The knightly rituals of tournaments and dubbing ceremonies are virtually absent.” She adds that “the French were inclined to despise the Occitans for their lack of martial spirit.”

11. N. M. Schulman, *Where Troubadours Were Bishops: The Occitania of Folc of Marseille (1150–1231)* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

12. Elaine Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility and the Albigensian Crusade* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2005), 32.

13. This is Michel Roquebert’s view; see his *Histoire des Cathares: Hérésie, Croisade, Inquisition du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 1999), 54–64.

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

### *Shifting Alliances and Aristocratic Speech in Twelfth-Century Occitania*

Pierre Bonnassie, Thomas N. Bisson, and others have traced the upsurge of feuding that coincided with the boom in castle building in Catalonia and Occitania, as elsewhere, in the late tenth and eleventh centuries.<sup>15</sup> The celebration of chivalric virtues and of allegiance to Christianity that spread in this region, as elsewhere, in the twelfth century must be understood in this context. For the aristocracy, to proclaim one's truthfulness as an honorable knight or one's loyalty as a submissive vassal or benevolent lord was not to pledge to conform one's behavior to such values. The celebration of such values is better thought of as the addition of a new dimension to the game of aristocratic silence and speech, in which it was permitted to enjoy certain rights *de facto* or to silently nurse wrongs across generations before complaining of them; in which it was permitted to make a claim by taking military action first and submitting to negotiation or arbitration second. But even this is not quite right, for the new values were not empty. The expectations of loyalty and generosity were real and strongly felt. Nonetheless, it remained permissible to conceal one's real loyalties in the face of overwhelming force and to proclaim one's real goals only when they were within reach.

A network of lord and vassal grew up around the new stone fortresses built in the eleventh century. These relationships were understood as regulated by an honor code that relied on trial by combat.<sup>16</sup> Duhamel-Amado notes the important role of the *batalia jurata* in the conventions agreed on in Languedoc in 1070 for regulating disputes among vassals. An elaborate protocol was foreseen for the trial by combat, requiring the parties to provide food and shelter for a numerous assembly and a hefty sum for their overlord. Rules governed the selection of arbitrators and champions. Duhamel-Amado sees, in the record of a trial by

15. Pierre Bonnassie, "From the Rhône to Galicia: Origins and Modalities of the Feudal Order," in *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 104–31; Thomas N. Bisson, "L'essor de la Catalogne: Identité, pouvoir et idéologie dans une société du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 39 (1984): 454–79; Claudie Duhamel-Amado, *Genèse des lignages méridionaux*, vol. 1, *L'aristocratie languedocienne du X<sup>e</sup> au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Toulouse: CNRS-Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 2001).

16. Pierre Bonnassie discusses trial by combat in nearby Catalonia in *La Catalogne du milieu du X<sup>e</sup> à la fin du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Croissance et mutations d'une société*, 2 vols. (Toulouse: Association des publications de l'Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1975–76), 2:728–32.

combat near Béziers in about 1100, the trace of a popular practice and of “the pleasure taken in combats and jousts in rural settings, carried out on foot, until one of the parties lay helpless on the ground, to be followed by new rounds by other combatants.”<sup>17</sup>

Twelfth-century Occitan politics were dominated by a century-long struggle between the counts of Toulouse and the house of Barcelona. Fredric Cheyette, who has carefully examined the main episodes of this struggle, summarizes the complex cross-cutting alliances as follows:

In the twelfth century, [the Mediterranean coastal] region was a battleground over which a handful of great lordly families attempted to assert their dominance. The counts of Barcelona gained the title of count of Carcassonne by purchase in 1067–68; they became counts of Provence by marriage in 1112 and kings of Aragon, again by marriage, in 1150; from the early twelfth century until the Albigensian Crusade in the early thirteenth, they maintained a tight alliance with the most important lordly families of the Occitan coastal plain: the viscounts of Narbonne, the lords of Montpellier, and the family we know as the Trencavels, viscounts of Albi, Béziers, Agde, and Nîmes and effective rulers of Carcassonne and the mountainous region to its south.<sup>18</sup>

With this alliance they sought to crush the counts of Toulouse, who also claimed a right of inheritance over Provence. But neither side could win a decisive victory. In this atmosphere of permanent menace, the occasional expeditions of William IX (in 1098 and 1113) and of his granddaughter Eleanor of Aquitaine (in 1141 and 1159) to assert their right of inheritance to Toulouse were little more than an irritant.<sup>19</sup>

Betrayal and opportunism marked the struggle. For example, about the same time that Douce, heiress to the county of Provence, married Ramon Berenguer III of Barcelona (ruled 1097–1131) in 1112, her younger sister Stephania married the lord of Les Baux, a powerful Provençal stronghold just south of the Durance River. When Eleanor of Aquitaine and her first husband, Louis VII, came south to besiege Toulouse in 1141, Alphonse Jordan (ruled 1105–49), the count of Toulouse, who had captured Narbonne in 1139, responded by compelling Ermen-

17. Duhamel-Amado, *Genèse des lignages méridionaux*, 170–71. For the text of a charter referring to a ca. 1100 trial by battle near Béziers, see Cl. Devic and J. Vaissete, *Histoire générale de Languedoc*, 16 vols. (Toulouse: Privat, 1872–1904), 5: cols. 789–91.

18. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 145.

19. On these expeditions to Toulouse, see Alfred Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (1903; Monein: Pyremonde/Princi Negue, 2003–8), 2:140–60, 199–206; Edmond-Réné Labande, “Pour une image véridique d’Aliénor d’Aquitaine,” *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l’Ouest*, 3e trimestre de 1952, 175–234, see p. 200; Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 260.

gard, heiress of Narbonne (ca. 1128–96), to marry him in 1142.<sup>20</sup> But Eleanor and Louis were soon forced to retreat, and Alphonse Jordan was chased out of Narbonne, the marriage annulled. Seeing a possible opening, Stephania and Raimond of Les Baux, “after decades of loyal service in the entourage of Alphonse Jordan,” decided to assert Stephania’s own right to inherit the county of Provence against her older sister. This bold move opened a new chapter in the conflict, one that was not settled until 1162, when Stephania’s sons were defeated and the fortress of Les Baux taken by a Catalan force aided by the Trencavel family as well as by forces commanded personally by Ermengard of Narbonne.<sup>21</sup> As noted before, twelfth-century Occitania was not unusually violent or disorderly, by contemporary standards. Claudie Duhamel-Amado remarks, “‘Southern disorder,’ a theme that has had a long life in works of history, is a prejudice.”<sup>22</sup>

Amid these ceaseless rivalries, participants such as Stephania might nurse secret claims, just as the Lusignan family did within the Angevine orbit, claims which could be deployed at opportune moments. Small castellans as well as great lords played the game.<sup>23</sup> As Walter Pattison noted, “When war broke out, the minor nobles had the choice of supporting either one or the other of the two major forces. Their decision was based on a definite principle: when the vassal dared, he joined the enemies of his own overlord (or if two suzerains were involved, the more remote and consequently less exacting). In this way he hoped to win freedom from feudal bonds and an increase of prestige or territory for himself.”<sup>24</sup> Women lords played prominent roles and their right to inherit and rule, although weaker than men’s and increasingly challenged, was often sustained.<sup>25</sup>

Laurent Macé’s recent study of the counts of Toulouse shows them to have been masters of aristocratic speech—the strategic deployment of silence, explicit claims, and occasional trickery—in the pursuit of their dream of an empire stretching from the Pyrenees to the Alps.<sup>26</sup>

20. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 14–22.

21. Fredric L. Cheyette, “Women, Poets, and Politics in Occitania,” in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 138–77, quote from p. 157.

22. “Le ‘désordre méridional,’ thème qui traîna longtemps dans les livres d’histoire, est un préjugé.” See Duhamel-Amado, *Genèse des lignages méridionaux*, 79.

23. *Ibid.*, 164.

24. Pattison, *Raimbaut d’Orange*, 7.

25. Elizabeth Haluska-Rausch, “Widows and Noble Remarriage in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Montpellier,” in *Medieval Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Jeremy Duquesnay Adams*, ed. Stephanie Hayes-Healy, 2 vols. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1:99–113.

26. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*.

For the counts of Toulouse, trickery did not exclude charges of heresy against one's rivals. To take a noteworthy example, Count Raimond V (ruled 1148–94) in 1177 wrote to the Chapter General of the Cistercian Order complaining of the pestilence of heresy that was spreading among some of his subjects.<sup>27</sup> He pointed the finger in particular at Roger II Trencavel's (died 1194) territory of Albi and at certain patrician families in Raimond's home city of Toulouse. But these were political opponents: Roger II, after an uneasy alliance in 1171, had recently turned against Raimond. The town officers of Toulouse, likewise, had been demanding greater autonomy.

The following year Henry of Marsiac, the Cistercian abbot of Clairvaux, along with a papal legate, Peter of Pavia, and other prelates, arrived in the area. They were greeted with jeering crowds, but Peter of Pavia organized preachers to combat heretical ideas. Roger II Trencavel, who was holding the bishop of Albi in prison due to a local dispute, was excommunicated. The bishop, clergy, and town officers of Toulouse were made to swear to turn over anyone they knew to be a heretic. Suspicion fell on the prominent townsman Pierre Maurand, who was compelled to abjure, after at first refusing. His fortified tower in Toulouse was destroyed and his property was seized, to be restored to him only after he had completed an arduous penance.

Both Fredric Cheyette and R. I. Moore believe that Roger II Trencavel and Pierre Maurand were singled out in 1177–78, not because they were heretics, but because they were foes of the count of Toulouse, who carefully manipulated the attention of the visiting prelates to punish them and weaken them.<sup>28</sup> The antiheresy mission was declared a success, but it left little enduring trace. Raimond V's surreptitious aims were soon frustrated as well. In 1179, Roger II Trencavel abruptly, but not surprisingly, switched his allegiance back to the king of Aragon. In doing homage to the king, Roger II offered an elaborate apology, explaining his homage to Raimond V in 1171 as a youthful error.<sup>29</sup> By 1180, Raimond's hopes of winning greater influence over Trencavel lands, Narbonne, and Montpellier had been frustrated; and within a few years, in

27. *Ibid.*, 31; Roquebert, *Histoire des Cathares*, 62–64.

28. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 294, 314–17; R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2000), 164–66. See also, on the maneuvers of the 1170s, Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 30–31; Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility*; Roquebert, *Histoire des Cathares*, 62–64. John Mundy, however, assembles circumstantial evidence that the Maurand family were indeed Cathars; see John Mundy, "Noblesse et hérésie, une famille cathare: Les Maurand," *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 29 (1974): 1211–23.

29. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 333–34; Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility*, 100.

1189, the city of Toulouse would rebel openly against him, forcing him to make major concessions to the town officers.<sup>30</sup>

Laurent Macé considers these and other episodes to be evidence that the counts of Toulouse were princes “without scruples” and that their pattern of breaking their word was far from the “courtly image” that they cultivated, an image founded on the chivalric values of high birth, valor, generosity, truthfulness, and lion-like courage.<sup>31</sup> But Macé’s dichotomy between chivalry and political realism is too simple. A better approach is to see the counts’ behavior in the more general context of the rule-governed violence of the feud, as discussed in the last chapter. The counts of Toulouse were hardly alone among twelfth-century territorial lords in relying on trickery or in manipulating religious, chivalric, and legal principles to secure their authority. In this way, through the business-as-usual of aristocratic speech, Raimond V of Toulouse took the first step in bringing the suspicion of heresy down upon Languedoc.

For all their betrayals, deceptions, and about-faces, Occitan warriors in the twelfth century were well behaved in comparison to the crusaders from the north who came to fight heretics in Languedoc in 1209. Those who answered the pope’s call felt themselves permitted to engage in summary executions, massacres, mass mutilations, and wholesale expropriations on a scale not seen before in medieval Europe. When the count of Barcelona took Les Baux in 1162, its rulers became his vassals. When the crusader Simon de Montfort (died 1218) took Béziers in 1209, in contrast, he massacred all the inhabitants of the town, orthodox and heretic alike, and imprisoned Béziers’s lord, Raimond Roger Trencavel (Roger II’s son, born 1185). Simon de Montfort then, with papal blessing, took Raimond Roger’s place as viscount of Carcassonne.<sup>32</sup> Within a few weeks, Raimond Roger died in his cell. The crusaders’ disregard for the ordinary rules governing aristocratic speech and violence helped to unite many inhabitants of the region—Catholic and Cathar—against them.

### *The Gregorian Reform and Occitan Society*

There is considerable evidence to suggest that, despite some local variations, the impact of Christian reform efforts was as great in Occitania

30. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 32.

31. *Ibid.*, 301–10, 324–29.

32. *Ibid.*, 35.

as anywhere else in Europe. This evidence supports the inference that troubairitz and troubadours—indeed anyone at court—must have been familiar with the basic sexual doctrines of the Gregorian Reform and must have recognized their far-reaching social and emotional significance.

As seen in chapter 1, the circumstantial evidence is strong that William IX of Aquitaine's new notion of love was conceived, in part at least, as a protest against the Gregorian Reform, which had motivated constant meddling into his personal affairs by reforming prelates. His was, as well, a notion of love that would easily explain his remarkable actions in favor of Maubergeonne of Châtelleraut, insofar as they can be reconstructed.

But what of the rest of the troubadours, his many disciples and imitators? In general there is far less information about their lives. As a result the question can be posed only in a general way. The troubadours were of diverse social backgrounds, including propertyless commoners like Peire Vidal (active 1180–1200), regional lords like Raimbaut d'Orange, and many levels in between.<sup>33</sup> But all had in common an active participation in the court life of the region. What can be said of the impact of the Gregorian Reform on that court life?

The following special conditions are sometimes cited: In Occitania, not only did aristocratic lords do without clerical chanceries and prelates among their courtiers, but, in addition, the reform of the episcopacy moved forward at a snail's pace.<sup>34</sup> New church legislation on marriage and sexuality was poorly enforced, even within the church.<sup>35</sup> The church's infrastructure—including the education and staffing of parish clergy—left much to be desired.<sup>36</sup> The Cistercians, elsewhere leaders of reform in the twelfth century, were relatively isolated and, in the end, embattled in the south of France.<sup>37</sup> This evidence appears to confirm the vision of the Occitan elite of the twelfth century as worldly and indifferent to religious issues.

33. *Ibid.*, 142–43, notes social heterogeneity of the troubadours, among whom there was, nonetheless, a very weak majority of a lesser aristocracy in decline; see also Martin Aurell, *La vielle et l'épée: Troubadours et politique en Provence au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 1989), 33–34.

34. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 99–101; Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, 312–20; Myriam Soria, "Des évêques malmenés: Innocent III et les violences anti-épiscopales en Languedoc," in *Innocenzo III, Urbs et Orbis: Atti del Congresso Internazionale, Roma, 9–15 settembre 1998*, ed. Andrea Sommerlechner, 2 vols. (Rome: Istituto Palazzo Borromini, 2003), 2:1008–30.

35. Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, 229–37.

36. *Ibid.*, 320–21.

37. *Ibid.*, 324–25; Marie-Humbert Vicaire, "Les clercs de la croisade," in *Paix de Dieu et guerre sainte en Languedoc au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 4 (Toulouse: Privat, 1969), 260–80.

Yet every major current of the Gregorian Reform made itself felt in twelfth-century Occitania, often in dramatic ways, usually accompanied by dramatic messages about the dangers of sexual *concupiscentia*. The very growth of a well-organized Cathar church in Languedoc is itself evidence of an enthusiasm for devotion and a widespread admiration of sexual abstinence that took root in the region and must be counted as an expression of the spirit of Reform. Substantial evidence is readily available.

### 1. The Eremitic Movement

The holy hermits of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries—one of the earliest manifestations of the Gregorian Reform—were well represented in Occitania. Many of these free-lance ascetics, when they were not living in forest huts, wandered from village to village and town to town preaching repentance and accepting alms. The more successful hermits attracted followers and were obliged to lay down rules for their disciples, so that hermitages began to cluster and generate affiliated communities. Jean Becquet, in a study of 1962, found traces of over a hundred hermitages in the area between the Loire and the Garonne alone. Among them were communities such as Grandmont, Dalon, and La Grande Selve, whose fame brought gifts from counts and kings.<sup>38</sup> Many of these communities, including Dalon and Cadouin, later affiliated with the Cistercian order.<sup>39</sup>

As preachers, the hermits were unsophisticated, spreading a message of repentance and salvation derived primarily from the Synoptic Gospels. The danger of unrestrained sexual appetite was high on the list of hermits' concerns and a frequent theme of their preaching, just as it was a frequent theme of church sculpture programs in Occitania, such as the one at Moissac (ca. 1100–15), discussed in chapter 1.<sup>40</sup>

Robert of Arbrissel was typical in this respect. As noted in chapter 1, Robert founded a community at Fontevraud, just south of the Loire, in 1101, creating four separate cloisters, to separate not only men from women but also virgins from nonvirgins. Robert's vision was dissemi-

38. Jean Becquet, "L'érémisme clérical et laïc dans l'ouest de la France," in *L'eremitismo in occidente nei secoli XI e XII: Atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1962), 182–204; see map, p. 203, and table, p. 204.

39. Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, 324.

40. Etienne Delaruelle, "Les ermites et la spiritualité populaire," in *L'eremitismo in occidente nei secoli XI e XII: Atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1962), 212–41; Giles Constable, "The Language of Preaching in the Twelfth Century," *Viator* 25 (1994): 131–52.



nated by effective lieutenants, and within a few decades Fontevraud had scores of daughter houses in the south.<sup>41</sup>

But Robert of Arbrissel was not the only wandering ascetic to stir controversy. In Aquitaine, the question of holy hermits was caught up in the doctrinal conflicts surrounding the papal schism of 1130–38 between two claimants, Innocent II and Anacletus II.<sup>42</sup> The papal legate in Aquitaine, Girard, bishop of Angoulême, favored Anacletus, a defender of the “old-guard” monasticism of Cluny. Girard gained the support of William X of Aquitaine. Together Girard and William began deposing bishops and excommunicating local lords who refused to join them. But in 1132–33 Bernard of Clairvaux sent the famous hermit preacher Geoffrey Babion to Poitiers to win William over to the party of Innocent II. William relented, but he wished to uphold the newly appointed bishops selected by Girard and himself. Geoffrey called for Bernard’s help. While preaching at mass in Poitiers, Bernard is said to have taken up a *palette* holding the sacred host, to have run towards William, saying the host was his God and he would not dare to despise it. William fainted. Later he gave in, reinstated deposed bishops, and worked to have Geoffrey Babion named archbishop of Bordeaux.<sup>43</sup>

Many of Geoffrey Babion’s sermons as archbishop (1136–58) have survived; they reveal a strong abhorrence for the sins of adultery and fornication. Clerical marriage was still widely practiced in the Bordeaux diocese, and he struggled to put an end to it. He was driven into exile for a time in 1145, but Bernard of Clairvaux came to the city and arranged a compromise.<sup>44</sup> This world, he warned his clergy, was like Sodom or Babylon, awash in avarice, pride, and concupiscence. Adultery by a lay person was bad enough. But a priest’s adultery soon led to even more serious sins. A sinful priest might congratulate a fellow adulterer during confession, daring to instruct his parishioner, “You were right because she is very beautiful, she is very courteous that lady.”<sup>45</sup>

Geoffrey Babion’s campaign to reform the Bordeaux clergy gained urgency from the fact that many lay persons were hungry for spiritual

41. Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, 243–44; Jacques Dalarun, “Robert d’Arbrissel et les femmes,” *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 39 (1984): 1140–60.

42. Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 182–84.

43. Richard, *Histoire des Comtes de Poitou*, 2:256–80.

44. Moore, *First European Revolution*, 18; Becquet, “L’érémisme,” 185, 188; Jean Hervé Foulon, “Le clerc et son image dans la prédication synodale de Geoffroy Babion, archevêque de Bordeaux (1136–1158),” in *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public, 22e congrès, Amiens, 1991, Le clerc séculier au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1993), 45–60.

45. Foulon, “Le clerc et son image,” 56.

instruction. Other prominent preachers, including Robert of Arbrissel, were sharply critical of the clergy's worldliness and neglect of pastoral care. This was a sensitive topic. Some preachers went too far, suggesting that a sinful priest's rituals were ineffective. But popular audiences responded more to the fervor of their words than to the nuances of their doctrine.<sup>46</sup> Two well-known "heretic" preachers, Henry of Lausanne and Peter of Bruys, found refuge, and audiences, in Occitania after being chased out of northern towns.

After his expulsion from Le Mans in 1116, Henry of Lausanne made his way to Toulouse and received a warm welcome there as well as in neighboring Périgord.<sup>47</sup> Henry preached that "no one should accept any gold or silver or wedding presents with his wife, or receive any dowry with her: the naked should marry the naked, the sick marry the sick and the poor marry the poor, without bothering whether they married chastely or incestuously."<sup>48</sup> Henry invited prostitutes to confess openly and encouraged young men to marry them. He never doubted the centrality of ascetism to salvation. But, unlike Robert of Arbrissel and the vast majority of reformers, he discounted the idea of a permanent taint of impurity that was said to arise from sexual touching. This was perhaps Henry's most blatantly heretical idea.

Peter of Bruys (died ca. 1140) also rejected the idea of sexual taint. In Saint-Gilles, in Provence, he preached against the efficacy of the Eucharist. He denounced the use of music and images in church ritual, as well as the requirement of clerical celibacy—commanding priests among his followers to marry. Scholars have noted the remarkable similarities between his ideas and those of later reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin.<sup>49</sup>

Toulouse and Saint Gilles were the sites of the count of Toulouse's most important palaces, where he was most often in residence. The count took no immediate action against these preachers. However, one cannot conclude from the tolerance they enjoyed that Occitania was unconcerned about heresy. Peter of Bruys was burned as a heretic in Saint Gilles in about 1140, after organizing a bonfire to destroy crucifixes. Several Provençal bishops asked the abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, to write a refutation of Peter of Bruys's teachings, to guide

46. Constable, "The Language of Preaching," 139.

47. Moore, *First European Revolution*, 16, 108–10.

48. Quote from Moore, *First European Revolution*, 106.

49. *Ibid.*, 107; Joseph Cowley Reagan, "Did the Petrobrusians Teach Salvation by Faith Alone?" *Journal of Religion* 7 (1927): 81–91; Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Ordomer et exclure: Cluny et la société chrétienne face à l'hérésie, au judaïsme et à l'Islam, 1000–1150* (Paris: Aubier, 1998), 187–88.

their efforts to stop their spread.<sup>50</sup> In 1145, the count of Toulouse invited Bernard of Clairvaux to come to Languedoc to refute Henry of Lausanne's doctrines. Bernard's denunciations may not have won much success.<sup>51</sup> But Henry of Lausanne was soon arrested by the bishop of Toulouse and died in prison.<sup>52</sup>

## 2. The New Monastic Orders and the Military Orders

Of the new orders that sought a return to the austerity of the early Christian ascetics, the Cistercian order was the most important. Under the leadership of Bernard of Clairvaux, its numbers swelled, and Cistercians rose to the status of cardinals and popes. By 1200, there were about five hundred Cistercian houses spread across Europe. Of these, forty-three houses were located in southern France.<sup>53</sup> Over half of them were pre-existing monasteries or hermitages that were incorporated into the order. Thirty Cistercian houses were incorporated or founded between 1140 and 1200, the period in which both troubadour lyric and the Cathar heresy flourished in the region. Canon law forbade monks to preach, but it appears that many monks did preach, especially the Cistercians, in imitation of their irrepressible spiritual head, Bernard of Clairvaux, whose collections of sermons reached a wide audience.<sup>54</sup> Their message, like Bernard's, was harsh in its condemnation of sexual pleasure, inside or outside of marriage, and uncompromising in its calls for repentance.

Cistercian foundations in Occitania received lavish donations from the viscountess of Narbonne, the count of Toulouse, and other great lords of the region, as well as many smaller donations and bequests.<sup>55</sup> As the principal benefactor of the Cistercian order in the region, it was logical for Raimond V of Toulouse to appeal to the General Chapter of the Cistercian Order for assistance in repressing the spread of heresy in his lands in 1177. His son, Raimond VI (ruled 1194–1222), frequently reiterated the special protection he wished to extend to church

50. Iogna-Prat, *Ordonner et exclure*.

51. Moore, *First European Revolution*, 110; Iogna-Prat, *Ordonner et exclure*, 131.

52. Roquebert, *Histoire des Cathares*, 52; Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 294.

53. Constance Hoffman Berman, "Medieval Agriculture, the Southern French Countryside, and the Early Cistercians: A Study of Forty-Three Monasteries," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, 76, no. 5 (1986): 1–179.

54. Constable, "The Language of Preaching," esp. 145; Jean Leclercq, *La femme et les femmes dans l'oeuvre de Saint Bernard* (Paris: Téqui, 1983); Peter Dinzelsbacher, *Bernhard von Clairvaux: Leben und Werk des berühmten Zisterziensers* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1998).

55. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 342; Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 101–2.

establishments. During the Albigensian Crusade, when he was under attack by northern crusaders, he appointed special *defensores* to protect churches and monasteries and to ensure restitution of goods when they were pillaged.<sup>56</sup>

The military orders that grew up in the aftermath of the First Crusade, the Templars and the Hospitallers, were communities of warrior monks, sworn to poverty, chastity, and obedience, who sought to protect pilgrims who were on their way to the Holy Land and to send soldiers and resources to help defend Christian territories there. To serve this end, they established houses in hundreds of European towns to provide shelter to pilgrims, manage their extensive lands, and funnel resources eastward. In Occitania, their establishments attracted substantial gifts from the lesser nobility and better-off townspeople. Etienne Delaruelle speaks of the “extraordinary rapidity” of their development in Languedoc and the surrounding region. Thirty-eight houses were founded in Languedoc alone by 1200.<sup>57</sup> The military orders refused to play any role in the Albigensian Crusade, but their neutrality can hardly be laid down to indifference to religion.

### 3. The Reform of the Episcopacy

Bishops of the late twelfth century in Occitania were often just as worldly in outlook and just as concerned with advancing the interests of kin and lineage as the bishops of the eleventh century, before the Gregorian Reform took hold. Pope Innocent III blamed the bishops of Languedoc for the spread of heresy there, calling them “blind men, dumb dogs who refuse to bark.”<sup>58</sup>

Doubtless, there were few bishops as devout and energetic as Geoffrey Babion of Bordeaux. But by the middle of the twelfth century, in most cases, territorial lords were no longer able to select bishops from their own families or those of their peers.<sup>59</sup> The Gregorian Reform empowered the canons (the upper clergy of each diocese) to elect bishops.

56. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 264–67.

57. Etienne Delaruelle, “Templiers et Hospitaliers en Languedoc pendant la Croisade des Albigeois,” in *Paix de Dieu et guerre sainte en Languedoc au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Cahiers de Fanjeaux 4* (Toulouse: Privat, 1969), 315–34; Henri Blaquièrre, “Les hospitaliers en Albigeois à l’époque de la Croisade: La commanderie de Rayssac,” in *Paix de Dieu et guerre sainte en Languedoc au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Cahiers de Fanjeaux 4* (Toulouse: Privat, 1969), 335–51; see map, pp. 338–39.

58. Quoted in Elaine Graham-Leigh, “Hirelings and Shepherds: Archbishop Berenguer of Narbonne (1191–1211) and the Ideal Bishop,” *English Historical Review* 116 (2003): 1083–112, quote, p. 1084.

59. Ralph V. Turner, “Richard Lionheart and the Episcopate in His French Domains,” *French Historical Studies* 21 (1998): 517–42, see p. 527.

Canons, in Occitania as elsewhere, usually preferred candidates of their own stratum, that is, “younger sons of castellans and village lords.”<sup>60</sup> The count of Toulouse and other rulers exercised considerable influence over the votes of these canons, by promising favors as well as by offering more concrete rewards. But every selection was now a complex compromise among competing factions. In spite of Innocent III’s fulminations, not all the bishops thus elected were incompetent in spiritual matters.<sup>61</sup>

#### 4. The Reform of Marriage, Inheritance, and Sexual Behavior

According to Magnou-Nortier, most of the parish clergy in Lower Languedoc had married and passed property to their children for centuries until the end of the eleventh century, when “the violent offensive of the Gregorians against what they called nicolaism [clerical marriage]” led to at least “some progress” of celibacy among them.<sup>62</sup> As Geoffrey Babion appreciated, even in the mid-twelfth century, many, perhaps most, diocesan priests and canons continued to marry or live with “concubines,” in Occitania.

Prior to the Gregorian Reform, marriage had been a matter left to the laity. Parents arranged for the matchups and carried out the rituals of betrothals, pledges, and gifts without interference or assistance of the church. These purely civil agreements could be dissolved when one or both parties deemed it appropriate. But, as noted in the previous chapter, during the Gregorian Reform the church declared marriage to be a sacrament of the church, indissoluble and subject to church jurisdiction. For the twelfth century, records are lacking to determine what proportion of the faithful complied with the reformers’ new rules. The majority of local clergy, who quietly dissented from the reformers’ insistence on clerical celibacy, may also have felt little enthusiasm for forcing new marriage customs on their flocks.

These conditions were not peculiar to Occitania. Clerical marriage remained very common in England and Normandy into the thirteenth

60. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 119; see also Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Naissance de la noblesse: L'essor des élites politiques en Europe*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 449–50; Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, 315.

61. Schulman, *Where Troubadours Were Bishops*, 66–67.

62. Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier, “Réalité juridique et sociale du couple d’après les sources du Bas Languedoc avant 1100,” in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen Age: Accord ou crise?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 157–83, quote from p. 174.

century.<sup>63</sup> As for reform of lay marriage, most of what is known stems from famous cases. It appears that many great ladies and lords, both north and south, continued to obtain dispensations, while others found they could ignore the new regulations or exploit their ambiguities with impunity.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, the anecdotal evidence available suggests that the Gregorian Reform had a substantial impact on aristocratic marriage in Occitania.

Count Raimond V of Toulouse, for example, married Constance (ca. 1128–90), sister of Louis VII of France, in 1154. Ten years later, Raimond sought to break with her. She had borne him three sons, mixing her royal blood with that of the Toulouse dynasty. In the meantime, Raimond's alliance with the king of France had soured and he was moving toward a partnership with Frederick Barbarossa, the German emperor. Constance wrote to her brother complaining that she was isolated in the Toulouse palace, that Raimond's courtiers paid her no attention, and that none of the servants would obey her. She was forced to seek shelter at one point with a knight who lived in the city. She also objected to Raimond's numerous lovers among the ladies at court.<sup>65</sup> Finally, in the summer of 1165 she fled Toulouse and returned to Paris. The following year Raimond V married Richilda, a cousin of Frederick Barbarossa and widow of the count of Provence. Through this marriage, with Frederick Barbarossa's support, Raimond hoped to take control of the county of Provence in his wife's name. Pope Alexander III quickly warned Raimond that such a marriage was illegal and sinful, since in the eyes of the church he remained married to Constance. But Alexander III had a rival, Pope Paschal III, elected by certain cardinals under the influence of Frederick Barbarossa. Paschal granted a dispensation to Raimond in return for Raimond's recognition of him as the legitimate pope.<sup>66</sup> Not long after, however, the Aragonese prevented Raimond

63. C. N. L. Brooke, "Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050–1200," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12 (1956): 1–21, see pp. 7, 11.

64. For example, Eleanor of Aquitaine's first marriage, to Louis VII, was within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, but no one mentioned this until the couple sought to separate from each other after the Second Crusade; see Edmond-Réné Labande, "Pour une image véridique d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine," *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest*, 3e trimestre de 1952, 175–234; see pp. 183–86. Henry II of England obtained a formal dispensation to allow his son, age five, to marry the daughter of Louis VII of France, age two, in 1160—despite their being too young to give consent and being within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity; see Lindsey Diggelmann, "Marriage as Tactical Response: Henry II and the Royal Wedding of 1160," *English Historical Review* 119 (2004): 954–64.

65. Devic and Vaissete, *Histoire générale de Languedoc*, 6:7–8; Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 58–59.

66. Devic and Vaissete, *Histoire générale de Languedoc*, 6:19–23; Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 29; Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, 192–97.

from taking control of Provence and he lost interest in Richilda and dismissed her.

Raimond V was not above accepting female rule when it served his purposes, as in 1172, when Beatrice, widowed countess of Mauguio, offered her daughter and heir in marriage to Raimond V's son by Constance, the future Raimond VI. Beatrice's aim was to ensure the passage of rule from mother to daughter, blocking the claim to Mauguio of her own son by a second marriage. Raimond's aim was to seize Mauguio for himself and his heir.<sup>67</sup>

After the death of this first wife, the future Raimond VI married the sister of English king Richard Coeur de Lion, Jeanne of England, in 1196. She brought the Agenais territory as her dowry. When the counts of Toulouse married princesses from royal houses, they emphasized their wives' high status. In court documents they were referred to as "Queen Constance," or "Queen Jeanne." But such emphasis did not translate into respectful treatment at court. In 1199, during Raimond VI's absence from Toulouse, Jeanne led a military expedition against the lords of Saint-Félix-Lauragais and laid siege to the castle of Cassés. But during the siege, her own soldiers betrayed her, secretly delivering provisions to the castle and finally setting fire to her camp. She was forced to flee. Seeking protection and perhaps revenge, she rushed to her brother Richard Coeur de Lion at Niort. But she found him dying of a battle wound. From there she found shelter with her mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, in Rouen, where she died in childbirth before the end of the year.<sup>68</sup> Female inheritance, female rule, and female military command were still real possibilities—even if opposition was growing—a fact worth keeping in mind when reading troubadours' elaborate expressions of homage to great ladies.

Holding exalted wives at arm's length in this way was part of the general strategy of the twelfth-century counts of Toulouse to establish a strict rule of primogeniture. All offspring except the eldest sons were also held at arm's length, including all "illegitimate" children, who would formerly have been regarded as a reserve of potential heirs, just

67. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 65–66, 199, 207; Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 266. Ermengard of Narbonne's strategy for retaining female rule was more successful; to block marauding lords like the count of Toulouse from abducting and marrying her, she married a minor nobleman from among her own vassals. But this strategy would not have worked without the reinforcing power of the new doctrine of indissolubility; see Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 14–25.

68. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 61; Labande, "Pour une image véridique," 229, on Jeanne's death in childbirth.

as in the north.<sup>69</sup> Younger sons and daughters were married to spouses from peripheral dynasties who could serve as allies but who were not in a position to vie for the inheritance of Toulouse itself. Like younger siblings, high-ranking wives were also suspect as potential rivals for power. Jeanne of England's forthright attempt to take command of a military force was just the sort of gesture the counts feared.<sup>70</sup> Duhamel-Amado shows that these strategies were replicated at lower levels of the Languedoc aristocracy.<sup>71</sup>

The Toulousain counts' new policy of primogeniture was in part a response to the Gregorian Reform's transformation of marriage. Land holdings were once conveniently assembled, disassembled, and reassembled through marriages, and divorces, within endogamous bilateral kin groups. But now, to avoid dispersal of lands among siblings who married distant, unrelated persons (because of expanded incest prohibitions), it was necessary to consolidate and protect blocks of dynastic holdings.<sup>72</sup> Required to possess only one wife, required to recognize only her children as potential heirs, the counts sought to underscore her prestigious birth at every opportunity, to acquire a male heir from her of undoubted legitimacy, and to acquire whatever territories she might bring as inheritance or dowry, while holding her away from the reins of power. Consolidation of territories under a single ruler, the dis-possession of women, and indissoluble monogamy went together. The wives and younger brothers of great lords, it is worth noting, shared similar grievances in relation to the drift toward primogeniture. This indirect effect of the reform of marriage had its effect, in turn, on the tone of voice of the troubadour *canço*. The conventional pose of the troubadour as a footloose lesser noble subject to a lady love who is his *domna*, or feudal lord, neatly glorified the positions of two figures who were big losers in the shift to primogeniture.

The counts of Toulouse were not the only lords of Occitania to have faced church condemnation of their marriage plans. A well-documented example is that of Guillem VIII, lord of Montpellier (ruled 1172–1203), who in 1191 betrothed his four-year-old son to five-year-old Tiburge, heiress of Aumelas, a territory that had been in the hands

69. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 197, gives the example of an Occitan lord passing his inheritance to an illegitimate son as late as 1208, when Hugues II, count of Rodez, ceded the county to his natural son Henri.

70. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 59–96, for the emergence of the policy of primogeniture.

71. Duhamel-Amado, *Génèse des lignages méridionaux*, 167–69.

72. Poly, *Le chemin des amours barbares*, 341–53.



of Guillem's ancestors three generations earlier. The arrangement soon ran into difficulties. Guillem's son Aymard was the offspring of Guillem's second marriage, to Agnes of Castille. By a first marriage to Eudocia Comnena, great-niece of Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus, he had had a daughter named Marie (1182–1213). Later he had dismissed Eudocia. In 1197, to prevent Marie from claiming Montpellier as her inheritance, he married her to Count Bernard of Comminges, who renounced, in her name, all rights to Montpellier.

But when Guillem sought papal legitimation of his children by Agnes in the late 1190s, he was refused. Innocent III ordered him to return to his first wife, Eudocia, and recognize Marie as heir. Marie had meanwhile returned to Montpellier, and Innocent III ordered Bernard of Comminges to take her back. Both Guillem and Bernard ignored Innocent's commands.

Then in 1199 Guillem's son Aymard died. To recover the territory of Aumelas, Guillem now negotiated a complex agreement with Aymard's former betrothed, Tiburge, and her sister Sibilde, both orphans. A detailed inquiry was made to establish the ages of the two sisters. At Agde, with two bishops presiding, seventeen witnesses (nine men and eight women) testified that Tiburge was thirteen and Sibilde twelve. Thus both were over the minimum age of consent for a legitimate marriage. Prior to this verification, Guillem had bought up mortgages on Aumelas totaling 57,400 sous. After their ages were verified, Guillem then bought Aumelas from them for a total price of 77,400 sous. Net of debts (which they now owed to him), this left each sister ten thousand in cash to serve as her dowry. These cash payments were accepted by two lesser lords as inducements to marry the two young girls.<sup>73</sup> Guillem, it appears, had learned a hard lesson from Innocent III's refusal to accept his second marriage. This elaborate, carefully documented transaction was in accord with the canons of the church in every respect.

In 1203, Marie succeeded her father as lord of an enlarged Montpellier. In 1204 she married Peter II, king of Aragon, who was seeking to advance his influence across the Pyrenees. (Her first husband, Bernard of Comminges, luckily, was an ally of Peter II. Bernard suddenly discovered a prohibited kinship tie to Marie that justified annulling the earlier

73. Claudie Duhamel-Amado, "Les Guillems de Montpellier à la fin du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Un lignage en péril," *Revue de langues romanes* 84 (1985): 13–25, with annexed documents, pp. 26–29; Johannes Vincke, "Der Eheprozeß Peters II. von Aragon (1206–1213)," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kulturgeschichte Spaniens*, vol. 5, ed. H. Finke (Münster: Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1935), 108–63; Elizabeth Haluska-Rausch, "Widows and Noble Remarriage in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Montpellier," in *Medieval Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Jeremy Duquesnay Adams*, ed. Stephanie Hayes-Healy, 2 vols. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1:99–113.

marriage.) At her marriage to Peter II, Marie agreed to pass Montpellier to their firstborn son, but if no son were born then it would revert to one of her cognatic kin. The following year, 1205, Peter II promptly broke this agreement. He betrothed their daughter, only months old, to the son of Count Raimond VI of Toulouse, to confirm an alliance with that prince that was a major change of strategy. At the time of the betrothal, the two princes agreed that Montpellier would pass to the count's son. Marie later claimed she was forced to accept this arrangement. But she apparently made her unhappiness known. Within a year, Peter II was asking the pope to annul his marriage to Marie. She opposed the annulment. Innocent appointed two legates to look into the matter. The case dragged on for years, during which time Marie, it is said, by a ruse managed to share Peter II's bed at least once and bore him a son in 1208. Now she fought on, not only to secure her claim to Montpellier and to Peter II as her legitimate husband but also to secure that her son, Jaume, would inherit both the Aragonese throne and the lordship of Montpellier.

In the cases involving the counts of Toulouse, the principles of consent, consanguinity, and legitimacy were manipulated to reinforce the principle of primogeniture. In the cases involving the Montpellier dynasty, Marie de Montpellier sought to use the new marital jurisdiction of the church to oppose her father's attempt to set her mother Eudocia aside and disinherit herself. Later, she used the church again to prevent Peter II from disposing of Marie's daughter (and thus of Montpellier) against her will. In both instances, Marie acted to shore up women's right to inherit and to rule directly in their own names. In her appeal to Innocent III, Marie reported she had raised her voice to Peter II, crying out "Why do you want to defraud me?" several times. Later she was compelled against her will to accept her daughter's betrothal to the future count of Toulouse, she said. Eventually Innocent III ruled in her favor.<sup>74</sup>

Some scholars have seen the Montpellier affair as signaling a new stage in the reform of marriage in Occitania. Marie claimed, for example, that Bernard of Comminges had two living wives at the time of her "marriage" to him; one of these, she said, subsequently returned to Bernard to live again with him as his wife. This charge can be read as a glimpse of the survival of earlier aristocratic attitudes toward marriage, including the possibility of polygyny among great lords.

Was Occitania a century behind northern Europe? Anecdotal evi-

74. Vincke, "Der Eheprozeß"; Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, 237–38.

dence cannot support a categorical conclusion of this kind. Northern rulers' marital arrangements were, perhaps, just as prone to scandal; it would in any case be very difficult to determine whose record is blacker. Henry II of England was anxious to divorce Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1175, after she had led his three sons in rebellion against him. But a papal legate refused to hear the case. As a next-best option, Henry had her held under guard in English fortresses where she languished until his death in 1189.<sup>75</sup> Henry did little to conceal his later relations with Alice of France, Philip II's sister, who had been betrothed to Richard Coeur de Lion, but whose marriage had been indefinitely delayed.<sup>76</sup> Philip II of France (ruled 1180–1223) desperately sought an annulment of his marriage to Ingeborg of Denmark, initially in 1193 and then continuously for twenty years in the face of Innocent III's unshakable opposition.<sup>77</sup> During those years he married another (illegally) and had children by her before her death opened the way for a reconciliation. It would be difficult to argue that these aristocrats were more committed to the church's new vision of marriage, or less inclined to manipulate it for their own purposes, than Count Raimond V of Toulouse or Guillem VIII of Montpellier.

## 5. The Overall Picture

Overall, then, the Gregorian Reform in Occitania followed a common European pattern. In the late eleventh century, a wave of popular devotion gave rise to wandering hermit preachers, who were soon followed in the early twelfth by the spread of new monastic orders such as Fontevrists and Cistercians. The struggle against lay investiture of bishops threw the selection process into the hands of cathedral chapters (that is, the canons of the diocese). At least some bishops began to display competence in administering to spiritual needs. Progress in imposing celibacy on parish priests and canons was slow, with occasional victories. Marital alliances of the prominent dynasties began to be subjected, episodically, to the scrutiny of bishops and popes. A much more systematic approach arose with Innocent III's elevation to the papacy

75. Labande, "Vers une image véridique," 212.

76. John Gillingham, "Royal Newsletters, Forgeries and English Historians: Some Links between Court and History in the Reign of Richard I," in *La cour Plantagenêt (1154–1204 : actes du colloque tenu à Thouars du 30 avril au 2 mai 1999)*, ed. Marc Aurell (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, Centre d'études supérieures de civilisation médiévale, 2000), 171–86.

77. John W. Baldwin, "La vie sexuelle de Philippe Auguste," in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen Age: Accord ou crise?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 217–29.

in 1198. Innocent's hard line against marital irregularities was felt as much by Philip II of France as it was by Guillem VIII of Montpellier or Peter II of Aragon.

However, Occitania also displayed a number of distinctive features in this period. Most especially: (1) the relative tolerance of heterodox beliefs, and (2) the relative absence of clergy in the permanent entourages of the princely courts.<sup>78</sup> Both of these distinctive features may be related to the presence in Occitania of ancient port towns on the Mediterranean coast, on major rivers, and other towns nearby. These communities had urban traditions stretching back to Roman times, traditions that may have sustained higher levels of literacy and legal expertise among other things. Greater familiarity with Scripture, especially the messages of the Synoptic Gospels, could easily lead on to skepticism about the aristocratic airs and luxuries of the upper clergy—as was the case for Peter Waldes of Lyon in the 1170s.<sup>79</sup>

Cathar attitudes toward sexuality were even harsher than the church's. For them, having children amounted to delivering new hostage souls to the evil force that created the material world. Marriage and sexual touching were simply deluded involvements with that evil force. Converts to Catharism at its height represented, it is said, no more than 10 percent of the population of Languedoc.<sup>80</sup> Of these, only a few followed the extremely ascetic way of life of the so-called *perfecti*. A Cathar *perfectus* could have preached a sermon calling for renunciation of the material world that would not have sounded so different from one of Robert of Arbrissel's or Geoffrey Babion's. Many in Languedoc were apparently inspired to show respect for the Cathar *perfecti* simply because they seemed to live as the apostles had done, in sharp contrast to the wealthy prelates and married priests.<sup>81</sup> Heresy was an offshoot of the spirit of reform.

At first, therefore, it may have been easier for the dissenting voices of trobairitz and troubadours to find expression in the lay-dominated

78. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 133–37; Thomas N. Bisson, "Unheroed Past: History and Commemoration in South Frankland before the Albigensian Crusades," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 281–308.

79. Lutz Kaelber, *Schools of Asceticism: Ideology and Organization in Medieval Religious Communities* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 129–73.

80. *Ibid.*, 197–98.

81. *Ibid.*, 200–201. As Schulman notes, the heretics "appeared to live like the apostles, in poverty, fasting, and utterly devoted to spreading the gospel." The papal legates, mostly Cistercians, travelled "with all their pomp and circumstance," a sharp contrast. The decision to preach apostolically in 1206, which quickly led to the founding of the Dominican order, was a "highly revolutionary move." See Schulman, *Where Troubadours Were Bishops*, 70–73.

courts of Occitania. But it would be difficult to conclude that Occitan courtly songwriters knew little of or were indifferent to the doctrines of the Gregorian Reform. It is not plausible that they traveled with the court yet did not hear sermons, see sculpture programs like the one at Moissac, witness the visits of Cistercian abbots displaying their piety and seeking gifts, or participate in the rituals surrounding their lord's endowment of a new monastery. They witnessed the reading of charters of donation, in which great lords admitted the enormity of their sins and expressed their hopes for forgiveness.<sup>82</sup> They heard plainchant and sometimes polyphonic hymns in the cathedrals and monastic chapels of the region extolling the virtues of ascetic saints and the glory of the Virgin Mary.<sup>83</sup> Surely they knew about Bernard of Clairvaux's famous 1147 sermon at Vézelay, calling for Christian knights to launch a second holy war for Jerusalem. (Jaufre Rudel's mournful love songs about that crusade became part of the standard repertoire.) They heard detailed stories of the great lords' informal sexual partnerships and marital troubles, met "illegitimate" children at court, and witnessed the isolation of grand ladies like Constance of France, brought in as wives from afar to avoid the expanded incest prohibition. Many troubairitz and troubadours may have been themselves daughters and younger sons who would have received a greater share of their parents' lands in earlier times but were now marginalized or excluded from inheritances.

Several troubadours entered monasteries as their health failed near the end of life, notably Bertran de Born, following a pattern common among the nobility.<sup>84</sup> Surely the well-known troubadour Folc of Marseille knew that his art was sinful before he joined the Cistercians. Later, he became an abbot, then bishop of Toulouse, and was commanded to preach in favor of the Albigensian Crusade. As he traveled, it is said, he would fast and do penance every time he heard one of his old love songs sung at court.<sup>85</sup> The world of the troubairitz and troubadours was a product of the Gregorian Reform.

82. Marcus Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970–c. 1130* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 164–66.

83. James Grier, "A New Voice in the Monastery: Tropes and *Versus* from Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Aquitaine," *Speculum* 69 (1994): 1023–69.

84. Bertran de Born entered the Cistercian monastery of Dalon in 1195; see Jean-Pierre Thuillat, *Bertran de Born: Histoire et légende* (Périgueux: Fanlac, 2009), 196. Bernart de Ventadorn also entered Dalon about the same time; see Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 141. For other examples, see Schulman, *Where Troubadours Were Bishops*, 37.

85. Schulman, *Where Troubadours Were Bishops*, 18.

## The *Canso* as Aristocratic Speech

Among the Occitan lords who attracted famous troubadours to their entourages were Raimond V, Raimond VI, and Raimond VII of Toulouse (ruled 1222–49), Ermengard of Narbonne, Roger II of Béziers, Baral of Marseille, Raimbaut d'Orange (ca. 1147–73), and Richard Coeur de Lion. The Aragonese king Alfonso II (ruled 1162–96) was also an active patron of the troubadours and participated in the composition of Occitan lyric.<sup>86</sup>

Over three hundred troubadours are known by name; over four thousand of their songs have survived. Far fewer in number are the known trobairitz, and their songs have all been published in one medium-sized volume.<sup>87</sup> The scarcity of identifiable women composers may be misleading, however.

Occitan courts, like northern courts, consisted of a more or less stable entourage of “the *familia* of [the lord's or lady's] household, his [or her] companions, advisers, servants, officials, clerks, household knights and followers, including entertainers.”<sup>88</sup> Among her or his companions, one or more of the lord's more prominent vassals might be found serving as confidential adviser(s). To these were added, on any given day, a range of visitors, clerical and lay, men and women, seeking favors, appointments, judgments, gifts. Many courts were itinerant for at least part of the year; as they moved, the vassals and agents of each area joined the court to demonstrate their loyalty, learn of the latest

86. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 138–42; Fredric L. Cheyette, “Women, Poets, and Politics in Occitania,” in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 138–77; Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, 92–99; Pattison, *Raimbaut d'Orange*, 9, 37; Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility*, 28. Aurell, *L'empire des Plantagenêt*, 87; Ernest Hoepffner, *Le troubadour Peire Vidal: Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961), 58, 82. On Alphonse of Aragon, see Aurell, *La vielle et l'épée*, 33–34; Ruth Verity Sharman, “Life of Giraut de Borneil,” in *The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil: A Critical Edition*, edited and with a translation by Ruth Verity Sharman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1–22, see p. 3.

87. On the number of known troubadours and trobairitz, see Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “Introduction,” in *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, ed. and trans. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, Laurie Shepard, and Sarah White (1995; New York: Garland, 2000), xv–li, see p. xv. Simon Gaunt reports 324 known troubadours; see Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 158.

88. Ruth Harvey, “Courtly Culture in Medieval Occitania,” in *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, ed. Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8–27, quote from p. 11. See also the detailed instructions for courtiers and descriptions of court activities in Arnaut-Guilhem de Marsan, *Ensenhamen d'Arnaut Guilhem de Marsan*, ed. Jacques Cauna, with a French translation by Gerard Gouiran (Pau: Pyremond/Princi Negue, 2007).

news and plans, plead for favors or judgments, or arrange marriages or successions.<sup>89</sup> They brought their wives, especially those wives with kin ties to the princely family.

The *Ensenhamen* of Arnaut-Guilhem de Marsan (ca. 1125–ca. 1185), an Occitan guide for courtiers, describes a great hall where the poet and his companion joined in games and song.

Ara nos en intrem  
 abdos, si co.ns volguem,  
 als escacx et a taulas,  
 a chansos et a faulas:  
 mil n’i avia tals  
 que non pessavo d’als!

Then the two of us began  
 to participate as we wished,  
 at chess and dice,  
 at singing and at storytelling:  
 there were a thousand people there  
 who thought of nothing else!

All then partake of a meal and go to sleep; at dawn the priest invites them to come hear mass.<sup>90</sup> As this passage suggests, courtiers did not disdain to sing or tell stories themselves, even if they had professional singers and poets who could offer more polished performances.<sup>91</sup>

Part of the luster of a court derived from the high quality of its luxuries and the refinement of its entertainments. Those who composed the best songs—who might be courtiers themselves or commoners who were paid for their services—were in great demand. The relative scarcity of women troubairitz known by name may reflect a resistance to noblewomen professing, or being paid for, any occupation. Because noble ladies could not travel as entertainers or pursue fame as the best troubadours did, their musical efforts were confined to amateur composing and singing.

Court songs were sung by a single voice, often accompanied by one or two stringed instruments. Melodies were solemn, stately, and might be highly complex. It is difficult to say how much latitude the performer enjoyed to interpret or alter the text. The final lines of many songs refer to the *joglar*, the professional singer, who is charged by the composer with taking the song to another court for a beloved or a friend to hear. These servants had to reproduce their masters’ songs accurately.

89. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*; Harvey, “Courtly Culture in Medieval Occitania.”

90. Marsan, *Ensenhamen*, lines 131–36 (quoted) and lines 137–50 (pp. 70–71); English translation by the author, relying on the French translation by Gouiran.

91. This was also true of northern courts; see John W. Baldwin, “The Image of the Jongleur in Northern France around 1200,” *Speculum* 72 (1997): 635–63; Christopher Page, “Listening to the Trouvères,” *Early Music* 25 (1997): 639–59.

*False Love and Aristocratic Speech*

One came to court to profess one's loyalty to one's lord. Affirmations of loyalty after a breach could be elaborate, as when Roger II Trencavel made homage to the king of Aragon in 1179. But even if perfunctory, affirmations of loyalty and of love were one of the main businesses of any court, and gauging the reliability of such expressions was a constant preoccupation of all present. It is not surprising that the distinction between true and false love became a favorite theme of courtly song. However, it was entirely new in the twelfth century for love lyrics to associate false love with desire-as-appetite. This association was an unintended side effect of the Gregorian Reform.

From early on songwriters were concerned about the false claims that could be used to mask lust and to deceive the unwitting. Two of William IX's early disciples, Cercamon and Marcabru (both active 1130–50), saw false lovers all around them. Cercamon, in "Ab lo Pascor," for example, denounced the men and women of the court who pretended to love when in fact they pursued only maximum satisfaction with the maximum number of partners.

II. Per qe d'amor an atretan  
li malvas, enoios savai,

con li meillor e.l plus prezan?  
Jovenz, e faigz, fraing e dechai.

E malvestatz a son luec pres  
en amistatz c'amics non es  
amatz ni d'amigua no.s jau.

.....

IV. Fals amador, al meu semblan,  
vostr'er lo danz, e no.n pueis mai:

de gran folor es acordan  
can l'us l'autre gali'e trai.  
Es pos vos o aves enqes,

drut, moiller et marit, tug tres,  
sias del pechat comunau!

.....

II. Why of love do they have as much,  
the bad ones, the boring ones, the  
cowards,

as the best and the most worthy?  
Enthusiasm, with prowess, is broken and  
discounted.

And cowardice has taken its place  
in love affairs where the lover is not  
loved and finds no joy in his beloved.

.....

IV. False lovers, it seems to me,  
punishment will be yours, and I can do  
nothing:

With great madness, she is in harmony,  
When one and the other trick and betray.  
And because it is you who have sought this  
out,

lovers, women, husbands, all three,  
Share the guilt of the same sin!

.....



VI. Non a valor d'aissi enan,  
 cela c'ab dos, ni ab tres, jai.  
 Et, ai! n'encor lo cor Tristan  
 qe Dieus tan falsa non fetz sai!

VI. She has no value from that point on,  
 she who sleeps with two, with three!  
 Alas, she wounds the heart of Tristan  
 for God does not make them so false  
 here below!<sup>92</sup>

(LINES 8–14, 22–28, 36–39)

Cercamon was quite explicit that his own true love was a married woman and their relationship adulterous.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, *fin'amors*, in its selfless devotion, was for him a feeling characteristic of the brave and loyal knight, rendering adultery innocent and good. The “false lover” is not the adulterer but the seducer who claims to love in order to have many partners. Cercamon’s false lover may be the first appearance of a Don Juan–like figure in Western literature. This person commits a sin and “is not / loved and finds no joy in his beloved.” The false woman lover, “she who sleeps with two, with three!” has “no value.” That *fin'amors* brought a higher type of joy than sexual contact based on false pretenses became a common theme in troubadour lyric.

Trobairitz were likewise keenly aware that men’s greater mobility and autonomy gave them many opportunities to be “false.” Lady Castelloza warned her beloved:

Mout avetz faich lonc estatge,  
 amics, pois de mi.us partitz  
 et es mi greu e salvatge  
 car me iuretz e.m plevitz  
 que als iorns de vostra vida  
 non acsetz dompna mas me.

You’ve stayed a very long time away  
 from me, my friend, since you departed,  
 and I find it harsh and grim,  
 because you pledged and swore  
 that all your days  
 you’d have no lady besides me.<sup>94</sup>

(CASTELLOZA, “MOUT AVETZ FAICH LONC ESTATGE,” LINES 1–6)

Gaucelm Faidit’s “Si anc nuills hom” contrasts his beloved, whom he fears to approach (much like William IX in Song 9), with another woman of easy virtue. Of his beloved he says,

que tan dopte s'onor e son paratge, for I fear her social prestige and her rank,  
 son gai joven e sa bella faitura. her gaiety and youth and her beautiful form.

(LINES 33–34)

92. Text from Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 167–71; translation by the author, based on Lejeune’s translation into modern French.

93. Cercamon, “Ab lo Pascor,” line 49, in Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 169.

94. Bruckner et al., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 22–25.

Of the latter, he says,

Q'ieu.n sai una q'és de tant franc usatge	For I know of one who is so
c'anc non gardet honor sotz sa centura—	'generous' in her customs
sieus es lo torts s'ieu en dic vilanatge!	that she never kept honor beneath
	her belt—
	it's her fault if I speak coarsely of
	her! <sup>95</sup>

(LINES 51–53)

Raimon de Miraval's (ca. 1160–early 1200s) Song 8, "Chansoneta farai," reports his disappointment that his beloved is interested in brutish casual adventures.

Mas, s'ieu saupes qui.lh fos leos,	Had I known who was going to act as lion
	to her,
ieu l'agra avut caval ferran,	I could have played the grey horse,
pus de lieys non es poderos	since no one can possess her
homs, si non es d'aital semblan.	unless he is of such [i.e., bestial] appearance. <sup>96</sup>

(LINES 17–20)

Raimon readily associates indiscriminate enjoyment of multiple partners with animal behavior. Appetite, which is natural and which humans share with beasts, focuses on a category of objects; any instance of the category can satisfy it. *Fin'amors* focuses on a unique person. Later troubadour interest in this theme remained strong. Uc de Sant Circ, active in the early thirteenth century, complains in his Song 9 of women's shifting desires:

Dompnas desconoissens	Indiscriminate women
ab lor leugiers talens	with their fickle desires
an tant faich qe amors	have made love seem
par als plus fis errors,	misguided in the eyes of the truest man
qe non podon tener	for they (the women) are unable to keep
un jorn ferm lor voler,	their will fixed on anything for so long as a day,
e par lor cortesia	whereas deception and falsehood
engans e falsetatz,	seem to them "courtesy,"

95. Quoted and translated by Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 95.

96. Song 8 in Raimon de Miraval, *Les poésies du troubadour Raimon de Miraval*, ed. L. T. Topsfield (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1971), 112–17; quoted and translated by Kay, *Subjectivity*, 98.

e lor nescis baratz  
 jois et bella coinda  
 (LINES 11–20)

and their ignorant trickery  
 joy and elegance.<sup>97</sup>

Uc does not say that all women are indiscriminate. His complaint is against those women whose indiscriminate desire masquerades as *fin'amors*.

The language used in these songs, of fickle desire, sin, bestial behavior, shame and dishonor, was perfectly compatible with the striking images of Moissac, where snakes suck on the elongated breasts of Luxury; with the language of Archbishop Geoffrey Babion or Bernard of Clairvaux, when they spoke about sexual transgressions. In these denunciations of promiscuity one sees Occitan aristocrats learning how to lust as well as how to love. They associate lust with disloyalty, broken promises, treachery, with the changing of masters in pursuit of personal advantage—here, empty pleasure. *Fin'amors* is for them like the fidelity and honesty that good vassals show to their lords. The terms for “love” between lord and vassal—*amors*, *drudarie*—were readily adopted to refer to *fin'amors* between lover and beloved. Changing sexual partners, “fickle desire,” was equated with *vilanatge*, literally, *villainy*, the conduct of low-ranking commoners.

Prior to the Gregorian Reform, aristocrats of Occitania and elsewhere often became jealous and even vengeful when a sexual partner took up with someone new or presumed that she or he had a right to multiple partners. Yet men and women of the aristocracy often pursued new sexual partners, both for passing interludes and for more enduring polygynous or polyandrous ties. In the atmosphere created by the Gregorian Reform, with its insistence on monogamous, indissoluble marriages and its utter condemnation of *concupiscentia*, an ideal of *fin'amors* offered a way to recast some of the older practices. *Fin'amors* gained an aura of sanctity because fidelity to the beloved involved disciplining sexual appetite. True love was thus sharply distinguished from sinful desire-as-appetite. The true lover was faithful, like a good vassal; the false lover betrayed his lord or lady, like a *felon* or traitor, and found only the lesser joy of appetitive pleasure.

Modern scholars have been right to point out how such rhetoric constrained women. Sarah Kay and Simon Gaunt, in particular, have eloquently argued the point. In response to the songs discussed above,

97. Uc de Sant Circ, Song 9, in *Poésies de Uc de Saint Circ*, ed. Alfred Jeanroy and J. J. Salverda de Grave (Toulouse: Privat, 1913); quoted and translated by Kay, *Subjectivity*, 87.

women had either to conform to an ideal or endure the condemnation of men—a condemnation that included within it the threat of disdain, even of rape.<sup>98</sup> Men also competed in a highly constrained environment, even if their sexual behavior was less restricted, less dangerous to themselves.

But toting up the advantages and disadvantages of normative gender roles should not distract one from attending to the whole context of courtly love's formulation. In the context of aristocratic speech, it was habitual to distinguish sharply between loyal knights and *felons*, between good and bad lords. Aristocrats were already accustomed to making grandiose claims about their loyalty and honesty, about their justice and generosity to their subordinates. They were accustomed to issuing harsh denunciations of the perfidy of their foes. They were already aware that such talk might sound hollow. Or rather talk was judged hollow or reliable on an entirely different standard from that which prevails today. A plausible willingness to fight, expressed by a warrior deserving of respect, made speech meaningful. Victory made it true.

Prior to 1050, aristocrats did not distinguish sharply between legitimate and illegitimate offspring; aristocratic men did not always distinguish sharply between primary and secondary wives; and both men and women were prepared to move on to a new partner when feeling and strategy dictated a change. With the Gregorian Reform, however, fidelity to one person of the opposite gender was gradually established as an ideal, first by the church in relation to marriage, then in reaction by the aristocracy in relation to any sexual tie, marital or not. If extramarital, the beloved became the object of a "refined," or true, love, sharply different from lust. No one else could be substituted without shame.

In both overlapping domains, the political and the sexual, the claim to love was made in a highly conventional manner.<sup>99</sup> It would be reasonable to guess, as well, that in both domains, aristocrats were aware that such pledges were often highly contingent and that their behavior often defied labeling as noble or base, as either strictly loving or strictly selfish. As persons who shared sovereignty, each aristocrat retained the right to retract or revise earlier pronouncements.

In one *tenso* (dialogue poem) attributed to a trobairitz, two women

98. Kay, *Subjectivity*, 84–131.

99. Many scholars have noted the similarities between trobairitz and troubadour professions of love, on the one hand, and the formulae of oaths of loyalty on the other; see, e.g., Cheyette, *Ermen-gard of Narbonne*, esp. pp. 233–47; Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 103–20.

discuss the following parable: a woman asks her two lovers to swear they will kiss and hold her but do no more if she takes them into her bed. The first refuses to swear. The second swears at once, thinking he will not keep his word. In the dialogue one woman approves the first lover, who respected the sanctity of the oath and rightly doubted his ability to obey it. The other woman approves the second who “knew how to increase his valor by taking everything that was most dear to him while love was available” (lines 46–48).<sup>100</sup> Sarah Kay reads this *tenso* as revealing a generalized mistrust of women’s judgment and a displacement of female desire.<sup>101</sup> But what is interesting in the present context is the explicit confrontation of two common aristocratic attitudes: the requirement of loyalty and honesty in dealing with others is pitted against the admiration of trickery and of the adroit use of speech to advance oneself. It is intriguing that the *tenso* offers no resolution to these contrasting attitudes. As we have seen, both were constantly present in the thinking of many aristocratic men and women.

Neither trobairitz nor troubadours were able to imagine a world in which men and women might enjoy full autonomy in the pursuit of desire.<sup>102</sup> Existing limitations were surely more oppressive for women than for men, and particularly oppressive for any formulation of desire that went against gender norms.<sup>103</sup> But as a standard, *fin’amors* was no harsher than the standard of Christian asceticism promoted by the church. As a positive ideal, it offered some individuals a procedure for enacting sexual partnerships that provided a partial refuge from the shame of Gregorian pollution talk. In this way, the longing for association could find covert expression and a kind of silent, subversive legitimacy.

### *The Art of Ambiguity*

From the point of view of an aristocrat singing or writing for the court, the song genre gave immediate cover. A song was understood to be an entertainment, a fiction.<sup>104</sup> Part of the entertainment lay in the delicious possibility that the songwriter’s feelings were real and the song-

100. Quoted in Kay, *Subjectivity*, 99.

101. *Ibid.*, 99–100.

102. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 122–79.

103. Matthew Kuefler, “Male Friendship and the Suspicion of Sodomy in Twelfth-Century France,” in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 179–212.

104. Brooke Heidenreich Findley, “Reading Sincerity at the Intersection of Troubadour/Trobairitz Poetry,” *Romance Quarterly* 53 (2006): 287–303.

writer's love reciprocated.<sup>105</sup> Songwriters often seem to be playing a game with the listener aimed at enhancing this kind of enjoyment. They make claims that suggest the identity of the beloved but do not say enough to confirm one's guesses.

Trobairitz Azalais de Porcairagues in "Ar em al freg temps vengut," for example, wrote

<p>Tant ai lo cor deseubut per qu'eu soi a toz estraigna, e sai que l'om a perdut molt plus tost que non gasaingna, e s'ieu fail ab motz verais d'Aurenga me moc l'esglais, per qu'eu m'estauc esbaida e.n pert solatz en partida.</p>	<p>My heart's in such disarray that I am estranged from everyone; I know that we have lost in less time than it took to gain. And if truthful words fail me, it's that my grief comes from Aurenga, and leaves me confounded, so I've nearly lost my comfort.</p>
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(LINES 9–16)

A lady errs to love too rich a man, too powerful a knight, Azalais continues, and that error has brought her grief. She has another, worthy lover who is not fickle, a lowly vassal. But she offers her love to the one of high rank.

<p>Bels amics, de bon talan, son ab vos toz iorz en guatge corteza e de bel semblan, sol no.m demandes outratge; tost en veirem a l'assai qu'en vostra merce.m metrai.</p>	<p>Fair friend, with good intent I am at all times promised to you, courteous and smiling as long as you ask of me no outrage. We'll soon see in the test: I'll put myself at your mercy.<sup>106</sup></p>
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(LINES 33–40)

The listener is invited to weave a story around these lines: to guess that Azalais had two aspirants, one a poor knight, the other, Raimbaut (ca. 1144–ca. 1173), the powerful lord of Orange (Aurenga). The poor knight is faithful, but Raimbaut is another matter. He is a writer of songs and may betray their secret. As lord of Orange, he can soon find another love if he wishes.

Among Raimbaut's songs, as Sarah Kay points out, there is one in

105. Cheyette, "Women, Poets, and Politics in Occitania," 138–42.

106. Azalais de Porcairagues, "Ar em al freg temps vengut," in Bruckner et al., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 34–37.

which he asks “Joglar” to go ahead and put him to the test (“per plans es-sais”). Raimbaut promises he will be so secretive about their relationship only his head will know.<sup>107</sup> Such allusions to or direct quotes of other songwriters’ compositions were quite common. But whether Azalais’s “trouble” in Orange is Raimbaut or Raimbaut’s “Joglar” is Azalais remains uncertain, and that is what both songwriters intended.

In cases where the songwriter was in fact moved by feelings for a real person, these conventions protected the beloved. They also piqued the curiosity of listeners. Suspicion of secret affairs was rife. Antoine Tavera argued that Occitan husbands were little inclined to raise objections to their wives’ love affairs so long as they were kept secret.<sup>108</sup> In the numerous biographical legends that became attached to troubadour names, called *vidas*, Tavera found only two references to violence on the part of jealous husbands. One is clearly fictional, based on a popular story called the *Lai d’Ignauré*. In the other case, a knight of Saint-Gilles is said to have cut troubadour Peire Vidal’s tongue for having hinted in public that he was his wife’s lover. Vidal’s tongue healed, we are told.

Two other tales Tavera examines suggest, however, that the limits to husbands’ tolerance were not predictable. Troubadour Peire Vidal was also said to have stolen a kiss from the sleeping wife of his friend and patron Barral, lord of Marseille. She awoke at once and called her husband. He told her no harm was done, as the man was crazy. Nonetheless, Peire, frightened, traveled for a long time and wrote three songs about the stolen kiss. Barral convinced his wife to forgive Peire, sent for him, and his wife freely granted him another kiss. In a second tale of this kind, Guillem de Saint-Leider loved the wife of his friend the count of Polignac, according to a *vida* examined by Tavera. But she said she would grant him no favors without her husband’s permission. Guillem then wrote a song in which a husband asks his wife to favor the man who says he loves her. The count claimed he liked the song and sang it to his wife. Silently, she said to herself, “Now I can no longer defend myself against him,” and they became lovers.<sup>109</sup>

In both stories, husbands prove accommodating. However, their ac-

107. Raimbaut d’Orange, Song 15, “Entre gel e vent e fanc,” in Pattison, *Raimbaut d’Orange*, 115–18. On the identification of “Joglar” with Azalais, see Bruckner, “Introduction,” xxxiii–xxxiv; Kay, *Subjectivity*, 105–6; Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 166.

108. Antoine Tavera, “Liberté et diversité des moeurs en pays d’Oc à travers les *vidas* des troubadours,” in *Amour, mariage et transgressions au Moyen Age*, ed. Danielle Buschinger and André Crépin (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1984), 133–59.

109. Tavera, “Liberté et diversité des moeurs,” 147–48.

quiescence was not at all a foregone conclusion, and the lovers proceeded with great caution.

In a separate tradition, Peire Vidal was said to have come into conflict with his patron, Raimond V of Toulouse, over the love of a noble lady of the Toulouse court, referred to by the *senhal*, or nickname, Na Vierna. Ernest Hoepffner in a 1961 biography of Peire Vidal showed how allusions in the troubadour's songs strongly suggested the occurrence of a real conflict, followed by Peire Vidal's exile from Toulouse in the mid-1180s.<sup>110</sup>

Laurent Macé also accepts the reality of this conflict, dating Peire Vidal's exile to 1184. According to Macé, Raimond V displayed a marked preference for troubadours who originated in Toulouse. Peire Vidal was just such an educated commoner of the city. He referred to Raimond as "Castiat," "the chaste one," in his songs. To be permitted to refer to the powerful count with a *senhal* was a mark of favor and intimacy. But when they became rivals for the love of Na Vierna, the count beat Peire with a baton—a punishment appropriate for a serf or a domestic. Implicitly, he reminded Peire Vidal of his commoner status in the most insulting fashion before banishing him from court. The troubadour wrote bitterly of this mistreatment. Over the next five years Peire Vidal was at the court of Aragon, then Marseille. His songs of that period painted a less than flattering image of his former friend, as he used his art to inflict revenge by tarnishing Raimond V's reputation. Finally, Raimond V softened and imposed a penalty more fitting to a nobleman, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, as a condition for reconciliation.<sup>111</sup>

Veiled allusions to the beloved's identity were thus part of a risky game. The higher the beloved's rank, the greater the credit that the songwriter gained from attracting such lofty interest. But if allusions to her love were too easily deciphered or were suspected to be more than a literary game, the beloved's honor, even her and her lover's life and freedom, could be put in danger. Whether true or invented, stories about songwriters relied on the listeners' understanding of aristocratic speech and silence. Like the songs themselves, they treated *fin'amors* as a terrain of rich possibilities for the admired courtly game of tricky speech, that game which encoded every aristocrat's right to a share in sovereign authority.

Scholars have carefully studied the veiled references that trobairitz

110. Hoepffner, *Le troubadour Peire Vidal*.

111. Macé, *Comtes de Toulouse*, 139–42, 269–71, 276–77, 324.



and troubadours made to their companions, their patrons, their beloveds, their surroundings with inconclusive results and frequent debate. But these allusions were meant to be difficult, and it is no surprise that they continue to defy scholarly consensus. In some cases, they have raised questions about the essential meaning of all Occitan song.

Jaufre Rudel, for example, is considered a master of the ambiguous allusion. Leo Spitzer believed that Jaufre Rudel's famous "far-away love" was intended figuratively, arguing that longing for an impossible love, such as Jaufre's, was the characteristic feature of troubadour lyric. If Spitzer were right, then troubadour lyric would be much closer in inspiration to the contemporary tradition of Arabic love songs, as practiced in al-Andalus and elsewhere, than is normally supposed. In the classic Arabic love songs of al-Andalus, intense unrequited love shaded imperceptibly into mystical devotion to God.<sup>112</sup> However, Rita Lejeune notes that Jaufre refers to himself, in "Lanquan li jorn," as "lechai / ni desiran d'amor de loing" ("lecherous and desirous of a far-away love"). By such remarks, Lejeune maintains, Jaufre showed that his spirituality was not absolute. "He feels for a real woman, who is far away in every respect, a love that he transcends by making it a far-away love, almost (but not completely) a love of the far-off."<sup>113</sup>

In "Qan lo rius," Jaufre explicitly contrasted his love and his sexual desire, in strange lines.

<p>De desir mos cars non fina vas cella ren q'ieu plus am; e cre que volers m'engana si cobezeza la.m tol; que plus es pongens q'espina la dolors que ab joi sana, don ja non vuoil c'om m'en plaigna.</p>	<p>I do not cease desiring the one whom I love most, and I believe my wanting her deceives me if concupiscence takes her away from me; for more piercing than the thorn is the pain which is healed by joy, so for that I don't want to be pitted.<sup>114</sup></p>
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(LINES 22–28. EMPHASIS ADDED.)

112. Michael Sells notes, "It has been characteristic of mystical poetry within Islam that the most loved poems are those that refuse to give away their referent and refuse to distinguish between earthly and heavenly longing"; see Michael Sells, "Love," in *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, ed. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 126–58, quote from p. 147.

113. Quote from Jaufre Rudel, "Lanquan li jorn," text as edited in Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 197–99, see lines 43–44. For Lejeune's comment, see *ibid.*, 219.

114. Jaufre Rudel, "Qan lo rius de la fontana"; text and translation from Rosenstein, "New Perspectives on Distant Love," 225–26; Rosenstein translates *cobezeza* (in line 25) as "lust," but "concupiscence" is substituted here, to underscore Jaufre's use of a theological term; lines 26–28 have been adjusted to more closely reflect the word order and syntax of the original.

For Jaufre, when concupiscence arises from love, concupiscence brings pain, to be sure, but a pain that is healed by joy—and therefore he is not to be pitied if his love is far away, not even if his desire drove her away. This was Jaufre's attempt to explain the fundamental, if odd, dualism of love and lust, a dualism which the trobairitz and troubadours invented. Jaufre attempts to explain how, as Anthony Giddens put it, "Love breaks with sexuality while embracing it."<sup>115</sup>

Jaufre Rudel's songs are redolent with difficulties and ambiguities; they are also thick with veiled allusions that have challenged the virtuosity of modern scholars. In "Qan lo rius," for example, Jaufre Rudel sings that he cannot resist "the lure of a sweet little love / in a garden or beneath the curtain / with the desired companion."<sup>116</sup> She is a Christian woman, Jaufre insists, not a Jewess or a Saracen ("Sarrazina"). Roy Rosenstein's examination of these confusing lines leads him to the conclusion that the far-off "Christian" woman must be an allegorical figure.<sup>117</sup> But Antoine Tavera insisted that the phrase "in a garden or beneath the curtain / with the desired companion" is "a prefabricated expression that one finds frequently used by the troubadours and which designates, without any possible equivocation, physical love practiced either in bed or in a garden."<sup>118</sup> If correct, Tavera's reading would appear to rule out an allegorical interpretation of the "Christian woman."

One's beloved was never named, except with a *senhal* or nickname that was supposed to pique curiosity but not satisfy it. William IX sang of his Bon Vezi, or Good Neighbor. Peire Rogier sang of Tort-N'avetz, or You Are Wrong, his lady of Narbonne. Was this Ermengard?<sup>119</sup> Raimbaut d'Orange sang of Bon Respeig, Good Respect, and of Mon Anel, My Ring, and Joglar. Giraut de Borneil celebrated Mos Socha, My Vine Stem. Arnaut Daniel sang of Mieills-de-Ben, Better-than-Good, and Lady Castelloza sang of Bels Noms, Beautiful Name; the Comtessa de Dia sang of Floris.<sup>120</sup>

One cannot assume that these nicknames referred to actual lovers. Use of a nickname was simply a convention, just as it was conventional to address songs to a beloved and to allude, intriguingly, to the

115. Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 40.

116. "ab atraich d'amor doussana, / dinz vergier o sutz cortina / ab desirada comapigna"; text and translation from Rosenstein, "New Perspectives on Distant Love," 225, lines 12–14.

117. Rosenstein, "New Perspectives on Distant Love."

118. Antoine Tavera, "Liberté et diversité des moeurs," 134.

119. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 138–40.

120. Bruckner, "Introduction," xxii.

beloved's identity without giving too much away. Nonetheless, allusion and ambiguity in these songs are best understood within the whole context of aristocratic speech. Aristocrats wished to make the most ambitious claims they could get away with. Songwriters, accordingly, wished to earn public admiration and an increase of honor by telling everyone about the high-ranking lover they attracted. But it was also folly to endanger something one enjoyed *de facto* by speaking too openly about it, whether this was the possession of a vineyard, stolen from a neighboring castellan, or a river toll usurped from a local monastery, or the favor of another woman's husband. Trobairitz and troubadours constantly tacked between these two opposing imperatives.<sup>121</sup>

### *Invoking God's Aid*

Another recurrent troubadour theme was the invocation of God's aid, as if there were no question that refined love was a sacred thing.<sup>122</sup> God was frequently asked to protect lovers against the hated *lauzengiers* (gossipers) and jealous husbands—persons whom songwriters invariably condemned with energy. Here again aristocratic speech showed the way: when claiming something outrageous (God's protection for adulterers), they pretended that it required no defense. Bernart de Ventadorn in "A la fontana," asks God's help against gossipers.

<p>Domna, pensem del enjanar lauzengers, cui Deus contranha, que tan com om lor pot emblar de joi, aitan s'en gazanha</p>	<p>Lady, let us devise a way to deceive the <i>lauzengeor</i>, whom God constrain! for every bit of joy stolen from them is so much gained.<sup>123</sup></p>
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Giraut de Borneil asks God's protection for the lovers in his well-known song "Reis gloriös, verais lums et clartz." The singer has been set as guard to watch over the place—a bedroom, a garden—where two lovers

121. Songwriters debated the role of allusion in their work. On the "trobar clus," "trobar planh" debate, see Sharman, "Life of Giraut de Borneil," 1–22, see p. 8; Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 287; Kay, *Subjectivity*, 162; Pattison, *Raimbaut d'Orange*, 23; James J. Wilhelm, "Introduction," in *The Poetry of Arnaut Daniel*, edited and with a translation by James J. Wilhelm (New York: Garland, 1981), xi–xxx, see p. xvii.

122. The readiness to invoke God's aid for lovers has been frequently remarked; see Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 1:7; Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 190; Wilhelm, "Introduction," in *Poetry of Arnaut Daniel*, xix–xxi.

123. Text and translation from Kay, *Subjectivity*, 28–30. Bernart de Ventadorn invokes God in twelve of forty-five songs; see Bernart de Ventadorn, *The Songs of Bernart de Ventadorn*, edited and with a translation by Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), glossary, p. 202.

have met in secret. He must protect them from discovery by a jealous husband.

Reis glorios, verais lums e clardatz,	King of glory, true light and brightness,
Dieus poderos, senher, si a vos platz,	lord God almighty, I beseech You to take
Al mieux companh siatz fizels ajuda;	my friend into Your loyal care;
Qu'ieu non lo vi pos la nuechs fon,	For I have not seen him since night fell
venguda	
E ades sera l'alba!	and the dawn will soon be here! <sup>124</sup>

(LINES 1–5)

Arnaut Daniel's Song 10 provides a finely worked invocation of divine aid:

Mil messas n'aug e.n proferi,	A thousand masses I hear and I proffer,
e n'art lum de cera e d'oli	And I burn a light with wax and oil,
que Dieus m'en don bon issert	So that God may give me a good outcome
de lieis on no.m val escrima;	From her where no shielding protects me;
e qand remir sa crin saura	And when I gaze on her blondish hair
e.l cors q'a graile[t] e nou,	And the graceful and young body she has,
mais l'am que qi.m des Luserna.	I love her more than one who'd give me
	Luserna. <sup>125</sup>

(LINES 8–14)

Passing references to God are common, as in the Comtessa de Dia's song, "Ab ioi et ab ioven m'apais":

Mout mi plai car sai que val mais	I'm pleased to know there's so much worth
cel q'ieu plus desir que m'aia,	in him, the one that I most wish would
	have me;
e cel que primiers lo m'atrais	I pray that God may bring him great joy
Dieu prec que gran ioi l'atraia.	to the one who first brought him to me. <sup>126</sup>

(LINES 9–12)

God's approval of joyful love was quietly assumed. Raimbaut d'Orange, in Song 27, urges his lady to give her love in secret. God will aid them

124. Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes*, 365–68.

125. Arnaut Daniel, *The Poetry of Arnaut Daniel*, ed. and trans. James J. Wilhelm (New York: Garland, 1981), Song 10, pp. 40–43.

126. Bruckner et al., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 2–3.

in keeping the secret, just as He aided Iseut when she gave herself to Tristan.<sup>127</sup>

In this casual way, the trobairitz and troubadours claimed something about God's view of sexual partnerships that the clergy would have insisted was blatantly false—as they well knew. But both they and their listeners were practiced in this kind of maneuver.

It is significant that these invocations of God's approval and prayers for assistance lack all theological specificity. They do not refer to the Trinity, to Christ, to the Virgin Mary, or the saints. They do not cite specific passages of sacred text, not even the *Song of Songs*, which could have been looted for sacred allusions to sexual joy. Any explicit reference to the details of Christian cosmology or doctrine threatened to call to mind the anti-Christian features of the doctrine of *fin'amors*. But by praying, lovers underscored their sense that their devotion to the beloved was spiritual in character, and that the joy they hoped for was something very different from appetitive pleasure.

### *Unrequited Love as a Test and a Cover*

From the atmosphere of the aristocratic court, fraught with uncertainty and mental reservations, and with suspicion about the fine words constantly in circulation, there soon arose, alongside the ideal of *fin'amors*, the notion of a test of love, the notion that true love must prove itself. Love could demand a kind of trial by ordeal, such as a descent into despair or a kind of ascetic self-denial modeled on that of nuns and monks.

Mere sexual appetite was indiscriminate (“desconoissen” as Uc de Sant Circ put it); it could be satisfied by any lover. *Fin'amors* focused all hope, love, and desire on one single individual. The more one suffered for her or him, the less one's motivations could be attributed to appetite. In stanzas 2 and 3 of “Lanquan li Jorn,” Jaufre Rudel imagines the joy he would feel if he were to arrive in his beloved's land as a pilgrim (*pelegris*, a word that could also mean “crusader”), able to ask her to take him in as a guest, for the love of God.

E, s'a lieys platz, alberguari  
Pres de lieys, si be.m suy de lonh.

And if it pleased Him, I would be lodged  
Close to her, however far I am now.

127. Raimbaut d'Orange, Song 27, “Non chant per auzel ni per flor,” in Pattison, *Raimbaut d'Orange*, 161–64.

In stanza 6 he returns to this idea, imagining being able to see her

Verayamen, en tals aizis,	In reality, in a place
Si que la cambra e.l jardis	Whose room and garden
Mi resembles tos temps palatz!	Would seem always like a palace to me! <sup>128</sup>

(LINES 17–18, 41–43)

One could not mistake Jaufre's intense imaginings of togetherness with just one far-off lady as the expression of some kind of base appetite. The closer these imaginings came to a kind of spiritual vision—and Jaufre brought them close enough to convince many careful readers—the more difficult it became to charge Jaufre with being motivated by concupiscence, even though he admits to feeling it.

Jaufre probably died in the Holy Land in 1148 or shortly thereafter. By the 1150s, a younger troubadour, Bernart de Ventadorn, was giving voice to a sharply contrasting vision of love. Bernart sought to distinguish his love from appetite, not by languishing for a far-away love, but by undergoing extremes of feeling. The joy of anticipated embrace, the sorrow of rejection churn within him as no appetite could. In his “Can vei la lauzeta mover,” which, as Simon Gaunt notes, is “perhaps the most famous *canso* of all,”<sup>129</sup> Bernart complains of the harsh suffering love has brought him.

Can vei la lauzeta mover de joi sas alas contral rai, que s'oblid'e.s laissa chazer per la doussor c'al cor li vai,	When I see the lark beat its wings for joy against the sun's ray until, forgetting itself and falling because of the sheer delight that goes to his heart,
ai! tan grans enveya m'en ve de cui qu'eu vey a jauzion, meravilhas ai, car desse lo cor de dezirer no.m fon. Ai, las! tan cuidava saber d'amor, e tan petit en sail! car eu d'amar no.m posc tener celeis don ja pro non aurai.	ah! then I feel great envy of those I see filled with happiness, I find it strange that instantly my heart does not melt from longing. Alas! I thought I was so knowing in love, yet I so little know! for I cannot refrain from loving her from whom I'll no profit show;

128. Text quoted from Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 186–88; translation by the author following Lejeune translation into modern French.

129. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 128.

Tout m'a mo cor, e tout m'a me,  
 e se mezeis et tot lo mon;  
 e can se.m tolç, no.m laisset re  
 mas dezirer e cor volon.

(LINES 1–16)

of heart and soul she has deprived me  
 and of herself and all the world;  
 and when she took herself she left me  
 only desire and a yearning heart.<sup>130</sup>

In despair, Bernart complains about all women and his beloved in particular for acting like a woman.

De las domnas me dezesper.  
 ja mais en lor no.m fiarai.  
 .....  
 D'aisso.s fa be femna parer  
 ma donna, per qu'e.lh o retrai,  
 car no vol so c'om deu voler  
 e so c'om li deveda, fai.

(LINES 25–26, 33–36)

I despair of women;  
 never will I trust them more.  
 .....  
 In this she shows herself a woman,  
 my lady, which is why I blame her,  
 that she wants not what she should  
 and she does what ought to shame her.<sup>131</sup>

Scholars have pointed out the apparent misogyny of these lines.<sup>132</sup> But Bernart's purpose is not like Cercamon's or Uc de Saint Circ's; it is not to condemn women for their loose behavior. It is to show us a lover so deeply committed to loving one woman that her rejection of him pushes him into despair. Misogyny is a feature of the despair. In despair, Bernart repeats the common doctrine of Christian theologians that women are unwise and unsteady.<sup>133</sup> But surely Bernart's deeper purpose is not to underwrite Christian theology. His express purpose is to give voice to his intense feeling. So intense is this feeling for a woman that it could not possibly be mistaken for a mere appetite. If such a feeling were possible, then the Reform doctrine of desire-as-appetite, including its characteristic criticisms of women, would have been reduced to rubble.

130. Text from Bernart de Ventadorn, *Songs*, 166–68; translation by the author, adapted from the translation of Kenneth Koch in *Troubadour and Trouvère Songs*, Russell Oberlin, countertenor, Lyricord Early Music Series CD LEMS 8001.

131. Text from Bernart de Ventadorn, *Songs*, 166–68; translation by Koch in *Troubadour and Trouvère Songs*.

132. For example, Kay, *Subjectivity*, 88, regards this stanza as displaying the troubadours' tendency to blame women's bad judgment on their mental weakness.

133. On the clergy's harsh judgment of women's characters, see, e.g., Jean Leclercq, *La femme et les femmes*; Alcuin Blamires, Karen Pratt and C. W. Marx, eds., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

Another of Bernart's songs, "Lo tems vai e ven e vire," is also filled with complaints about love:

Be deuri'esser blasmaire	I would blame myself
de me mezeis a razo,	and with good reason,
c'anc no nasquet cel de maire	no one has ever been born
que tan servis en perdo.	who would serve [his lady] without recompense.
E s'ela no m'en chastia,	If she doesn't correct me
ades doblara-lh folia.	my madness will be redoubled.

(LINES 15–20)

But in the last four stanzas he has a change of heart. He must not give up hope. One day of her favor is worth a hundred without it.

. . . causa de bon'aventura	. . . when it brings good fortune,
al us sols jorns mais de cen.	a single day is worth a hundred.

  

Ja no.m partrai a ma vida	I will never leave her while I live
Tan com sia saus ni sas	So long as I have sense and reason.
.....	.....
Dousa res ben ensinada,	Sweet lady so gracious,
Cel qu-us a tan gen formada,	He who gave you such a beautiful form
Me'n do cel joi qu'eu aten!	Will also give me the joy I await! <sup>134</sup>

(LINES 41–44, 57–59)

Bernart's rejection of love and women must be taken in context. The greater the urge to reject the suffering of love, the greater the spite felt for the unresponsive lady, the more admirable the lover's mastery of these negative feelings as he persists in loyalty to the beloved. Bernart continued to subscribe to the fundamental doctrine of William IX—the possibility that a certain kind of love, which was like the noble submission of a vassal to his lord, could purify desire, rendering sexual embraces innocent, as he makes explicit in "Pois preyatz me, senhor":

Ara cuit qu'e.n morrai	Now I think that I shall die
del dezirer que.m ve	of the desire that comes upon me

134. Song 30 in Bernart de Ventadorn, *Songs*, 129–31; translation by author, adapted from the French translation in *Les troubadours*, ed. and trans. René Lavaud and René Nelli, 2 vols. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1960), 2:60–64.



si.lh bela lai on jai  
 no m'aizis pres de se,  
 qu'eu la manei e bai  
 et estrenha vas me  
 so cors blanc, gras e le.

.....

Bona domna, merce  
 del vostre *fin aman*.  
 Qu'e.us pliu per bona fe  
 c'anc re non amei tan.  
 Mas jonchas, ab col cle,  
 vos m'autrei e.m coman.,

(LINES 30–36, 46–50; EMPHASIS ADDED)

if the fair one, there where she lies,  
 does not welcome me next to her  
 to caress and kiss her  
 and press to me  
 her white body, plump and smooth.

.....

Good Lady, show mercy  
 to your *true lover*,  
 for I pledge you in good faith  
 that never did I so love anyone.  
 Hands joined, head bowed,  
 I give and commend myself to you.<sup>135</sup>

Like Bernart, at least one trobairitz, Lady Castelloza, in “Ia de cantar non degra aver talan,” expressed feelings that brought her to the borders of despair and to denunciation of her beloved.

que plaing e plor  
 fant en mi lor estatge,  
 car en mala merce  
 ai mes mon cor e me  
 .....  
 Ai! bels amics, sivals un bel semblan  
 mi faitz enan  
 q'ieu muoira de dolor;  
 qe l'amador  
 vos tenon per salvatge,  
 car ioia no.m ave  
 de vos, don no.m recre  
 d'amar per bona fe  
 totz temps ses cor volatge.

(LINES 4–7, 10–18)

laments and tears  
 find their home in me,  
 for I have placed my heart, my self  
 where there's no mercy;  
 .....  
 Ah! Fair Friend, show at least one  
 gracious look  
 to me before I die of grief;  
 all lovers  
 consider you a beast,  
 for no joy comes to me  
 from you whom I don't fail  
 to love most faithfully  
 at all times, with no change of heart.<sup>136</sup>

Like Bernart, she saw no incongruence between calling her beloved a “Fair Friend” in one line, and a “beast” four lines later, or between call-

135. Song 36, “Pois preyat me, senhor,” in Bernart de Ventadorn, *Songs*, 145–46. Quoted by Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne*, 236–37.

136. Lady Castelloza, “Ia de cantar non degra aver talan,” in Bruckner et al., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 15–17.

ing her friend “evil, harsh, and false” (“mal e fellon e tric”) in line 4 of “Amics, s’ie.us trobes avinen” and declaring that “loving you . . . suits me well” (“vos amar . . . tant gen mi cove”) in line 26.<sup>137</sup>

The problem was how to give voice to a challenging intensity of pain, pain whose intensity and whose continued mastery were each a kind of litmus test of love. In reading such songs, outbursts of feeling should not be mistaken for doctrine. As Bruckner has noted of trobairitz and troubadour song in general, “whoever assumes the position of speaker within that lyric system, whether male or female, will appear to attribute the power of lordship or control to the beloved other.”<sup>138</sup>

Love that survived when it was not returned could not be mistaken for mere appetite. But there was an additional advantage to singing about unrequited love. To rejoice openly of success in love was to invite speculation, suspicion, attack. To insist that one’s love was not returned could be a way of protecting one’s beloved.

In “Assatz sai d’amor ben parlar,” Raimbaut d’Orange satirized the common theme of unrequited love in a revealing way. At first he complains that he can make no progress with his beloved:

Qu’a mi no val bes ni lauzors	For neither [speaking] good nor praising,
Ni los malditz ni motz avars.	Nor speaking ill nor hostile words are of any avail to me.

He does not want to love any longer:

Per so quar no m’a grad’amar;	Because I don’t like loving;
Que ja mais no.m vuelh castiar.	I don’t wish to instruct myself.

But in the last two stanzas, Raimbaut suggests a very different picture:

Non am ren, ni sai qu’es enquar!	[I] love nothing, and I don’t know what love is!
Mas mon Anel am, que.m ten clar,	But I do love My Ring which keeps me radiant,

137. Lady Castelloza, “Amics, s’ie.us trobes avinen,” in Bruckner et al., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 18–19.

138. Bruckner, “Introduction,” xxxiv. The editors of women *trouvère* songs agree; see Eglal Doss-Quinby et al., “Introduction: The Case for the Women *Trouvères*,” in *Songs of the Women Trouvères* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 1–72, see p. 11.

Quar fon el det . . . <i>ar son, trop sors!</i>	Because it was on the finger . . . <i>now sound,</i> <i>you come forth too much!</i>
<i>Lengua, non mais! que trop parlars</i>	<i>Tongue, no more: for speaking too much</i>
<i>Fai piegz que pechatz criminaus;</i>	<i>Is worse than a mortal sin;</i>
Per qu'ieu.m tenrai mon cor enclaus.	Wherefore I shall keep my heart unopened. <sup>139</sup>

(LINES 5–6, 35–36, 51–56; EMPHASIS ADDED)

“Speaking too much is worse than a mortal sin”: a certain woman wears his ring, but he dare not say who. Raimbaut’s words ought to condition all readings of troubadour longing and despair. From the point of view of aristocratic speech, it was a sin to make a claim one could not back up; even worse was to claim possession of something in such a way as to endanger one’s quiet, *de facto* possession of it.

Giraut de Borneil echoed Raimbaut’s views in his song “Ges de sobrevoler no.m tuoill.” The song begins with six stanzas of lament that his beloved shows him nothing but indifference. But in stanza 7, he strikes a different note. Here, “Linnaura” is Raimbaut’s nickname, and “Socha” (“Vine-Stem”) the nickname of Giraut’s beloved:

E pero veiatz en l’escuoil	And here you have, in the school
Linnaura vers de trobador,	of Linnaura, a <i>troubadour’s</i> verses,
E no.m n’aiatz per gabador	And don’t think I am boasting
Si tant rics motz mi passa.l cais!	If such a fine word passes my lips!
C’aitant m’atrais	So much am I attracted to
Mos Socha de son bel saber,	My Vine-Stem for her fair and courtly ways,
Per qu’ieu esper	That I hope that
Que s’ab mo ver dire bobanz,	If to speak the truth would be boasting,
C’a defendre.m n’aiut rasos.	My theme will help to defend me. <sup>140</sup>

(LINES 55–65)

“My theme,” that is, the theme of lament at a beloved’s indifference, “will help to defend me”—that is, will help him to conceal the truth, which truth would be “boasting.” The implication is that Giraut’s pursuit of his Vine-Stem has met with success. But to say so openly would invite jealousy and attack. The theme of lament is his defense.

139. “Assatz sai d’amor ben parlar,” in Lavaud and Nelli, *Les troubadours*, 2: 56–61.

140. Giraut de Borneil, “Ges de sobrevoler no.m tuoill,” in Sharman, *The Canos and Sirventes*, 154–58. Sharman (p. 158) identifies “Linnaura” with Raimbaut d’Orange, but she does not remark the parallel with Raimbaut’s “Assatz sai d’amor ben parlar.”

*Assembling the Heart*

The lamentations and bitterness of unrequited love, however popular, were not essential to the trobairitz and troubadours' vision. Ruth Verity Sharman, in her edition of Giraut de Borneil's songs, sees Giraut as a synthesizer who went beyond lamentation. Giraut tried to combine the spiritual remove of Jaufre Rudel with the extremes of feeling prized by Bernart de Ventadorn.<sup>141</sup> Two of Giraut's songs provide key statements of this ideal, Song 24, "Ans que veina.l nous frugz tendres," and Song 25, "Ges de sobrevoler no.m tuoill."

In "Ans que," according to Sharman, Giraut "resolves to love in the best and most fruitful way. The love he describes is single-minded devotion to one woman, based on physical desire, controlled by *sen* [thought] and *mesura* [moderation] and characterized by *joi* [joy] and *joven* [ebullience]."<sup>142</sup> Although spring has not yet begun, sings the poet,

Prec mon coragg'e l'amas	I entreat my heart and assemble it
Vas un'amor e l'asejn.	Towards one love, and assign it.
Si tot lo m'avi'espars	Although I had scattered it
Per mantas contradas lojn,	Over many far lands,
Vuil qu'era.s vir e s'arejn	I want it now to turn itself and align
D'atur'obr'e d'autre captejn.	From other campaigns and other captains.

(LINES 3–8)

For Giraut, love entails self-conscious effort, to organize and direct the heart's emotions to a single campaign. Emotion may be intense, but that is not enough.

C'Amors mi coz'e.m destrejñ;	For Love burns and constrains me;
E s.m n'er'estraysn ni pars,	And if it was once remote and distant from me
Eras pus sai vir et pojn,	Now that I turn and aspire [to this lady]
Covenra c'al seu sejn rejñ,	It will be fitting for me to submit to its ensign
E.ls autres torn en desdejñ.	And to scorn all others.

(LINES 20–24)

Rather than complain or lament, in the manner of Bernart de Ventadorn, Giraut, willfully aspiring to this lady, submits with a soldier's loy-

141. Sharman, "Cansos and Canso-Sirventes," in Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes*, 22–48, esp. pp. 27–37.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

alty to Love's banner. Giraut, probably alluding to Bernart, denounces those who wallow in sorrow and resentment.

E si.l malvatz crup-en-sendres	And if the craven cinder-squatter
S'enardis qu'en lais s'eslaixe,	Grows so bold as to burst out in abuse,
Vils sia tengutz o bas;	Let him be thought vile or base;
C'aixi desfil'e destejn	For thus does unbridled wooing unravel
Desafrenatz domneihars,	And discolor a man
Qui.l pretz no.i garda ni.l sojn.	Who pays no heed in love to reputation and caution.

(LINES 33–38)

Giraut will not go to this extreme, nor will he go to the other extreme of boundless cries of delight, if his lady accepts him:

E s'eu a mos precz avejn,	And if I succeed in my entreaties,
No vendra be qui be.m pejn.	Anyone who paints me well will not make a good sale. <sup>143</sup>

(LINES 39–40)

"No vendra be qui be.m pejn"—literally, "He will not sell well who well paints me"—is a typical troubadour feint. Unpacked, it means, "Anyone who paints me well, as I really am, will not have a good picture of me, because I will conceal my joy and protect my lady's reputation."<sup>144</sup>

"Ges de sobrevoler no.m tuoill" begins as a typical song of lament. Spring will soon bring back "a love which is beyond my reach." The singer asks his "Cor ses poder" ("heart without power," line 16),

E doncs per qe non o desvuoill,	And so why do I not renounce this desire
Puois aventura no.m n'acor?	since fortune grants me no fulfilment?
—Car anc non vi <i>fin amador</i>	—Because I never saw a <i>true lover</i>
Ab poder que d'amar se lais.	who could give up loving.

(LINES 19–22; EMPHASIS ADDED)

143. Giraut de Borneil, "Ans que veina.l nous frugz tendres," in Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes*, 150–53; translation by the author, adapted with minor adjustments from Sharman's translation.

144. Sharman adds the point in brackets: "i.e., because I will conceal my true feelings." As Sharman remarks of "Ans que . . ." "tresvoler, 'excessive desire' (v. 31), is harmonized with a higher spiritual aspiration by the implicit control of *temers* so that it may never become 'unbridled wooing.'" Sharman, "Cansos and Canso-Sirventes," 28.

The lament theme, which is pursued throughout this song, is justified here. But it is also undermined in the last stanza, with the promise (quoted in the previous section) that “my theme will help defend me.” Giraut will not speak the truth if speaking the truth is boasting. But in stanza 4 (lines 28–36), Giraut also reminds himself of all the benefits he has gained from love, even if it remains unrequited. Rather than berate the god of love for causing his suffering, he insists, he “should be bound to him in gratitude” (“Aisso.l dei eu en grat tener,” line 33) for bringing love of a lady “of such quality that merely to have aspired to her should bring me honor for a thousand years” (“Tal amiga que de mil anz / M'onres sola la sospéisos,” lines 35–36).<sup>145</sup>

Both songs, “Ans que” and “Ges de,” insist on the duty of the true lover (“*fin amador*”) to contain and direct his feelings, keeping his love and desire fixed on the lady he has decided to love and concealing from all the slightest hint of who she is or whether she has accepted his homage. Both songs end with a hint that the lady may have, after all, been kind. Those who listen to his song, he assures us, will never know.

“In his depiction of the ‘folly’ of excessive love,” writes Sharman, Giraut is “often close to Bernart de Ventadorn. Robbed of self-control and inner stability, he is like a tempest-tossed ship,” as in Song 12, “Qan lo freitz,” lines 35–39.<sup>146</sup> But Giraut is, nevertheless, “more persistently rational than Bernart.”<sup>147</sup>

In Song 40, “Qui chantar sol,” Giraut adopts an explicitly didactic tone.

E des c'om vol	But once a man desires a thing
So que l'adui	That will bring him
Grant be,	Great happiness
Deu doncs esser clamanz	Should he then complain
D'un qal qe desenanz?	About any petty disadvantage?
Anz es lo mescaps granz	On the contrary, it is very damaging
E.l tortz e la follors	And wrong and foolish
C'om de don de seinors,	If, for the gift of lords,
Des qe.n sera qasatz,	Once he is their vassal,
Si fassa trop cochatz.	He presses too much.
Mas esper e mercei;	But let him continue to hope and ask for mercy,

145. Giraut de Borneil, Song 25, in Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes*, 154–58.

146. Sharman, “*Cansos and Canso-Sirventes*,” 32.

147. *Ibid.*, 33.

C'us fols ab son agrei,	For a fool who is quarrelsome
Qe.s nauga e.s tartaila,	And unpredictable often finds
Ve.i pro vetz qe nuaila	By experience that his behavior brings to naught
Valers e gratz e dos,	Help and thanks and gifts
Qar es sobrecochos.	Because he makes too many demands. <sup>148</sup>

(LINES 49–64)

Not only are demands and complaints self-defeating, Giraut warns, they deprive the lover of one of the principal benefits of love, its effects on the self:

Qe, cal qe part m'estei,	For, under no circumstances am I
Vas l'Amor non vanei,	Flippant and untrue toward Love
Qe.m soiorn'e.m m'entailla	Which both torments and gives me repose,
D'un adreg cors gingnos	If it sculpts and chisels for me the fair features
Sas avinenz faissos.	Of a person perfect in courtly skills and virtues. <sup>149</sup>

(LINES 75–80)

By containing his sentiments and resisting complaint, by respecting the strictest secrecy about his lady's response, he permits love to chisel on himself the features of a perfect courtier.

Finally, for Giraut, quiet and faithful suffering could be the prelude to a greater joy than any noisy, promiscuous lover could ever know, as he explains in Song 27, "Can creis la fresca fueil'els rams."

E puois del mal no.m fui l'afams	And since my hungry desire will not set me free from harm
E conosc cals seria.l bes,	And I see what happiness would be mine [if it did],
Car no m'en tuoill, fail? — Tu, non ges!—	Am I wrong not to cut myself off from it?—No, not at all!—
E com? —la.m semblari'enianz	And why is that?— Because such an inclination—
Aitals balanz	To love truly and not to suffer—
C'on ben ames e non sofris.	Would make me in my own eyes a cheat.
E tu ia dis	And you once said
Que.l mals aiuda.l ben cen tanz,	That suffering aids happiness a hundredfold;

148. Giraut de Borneil, "Qui chantar sol," in Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes*, 233–40.

149. *Ibid.*

Donc non soanz	So never scorn
So que plus vols ni t'en feingnas iratz;	What you most desire, nor pretend to be angry about it;
Car soven tol guerra so qu'adutz patz!	For war often steals the fruits of peace! <sup>150</sup>

(LINES 45–55; EMPHASIS ADDED)

Giraut teaches an ethic of courtly love as a form of self-discipline and self-improvement. The lover will know strong desire, fear, and suffering. Suffering, as line 45 makes clear, derives in part from resisting *afams* (“hungry desire”). But a true lover does not turn away from these. The true lover balances his occasional losses against his gains (as in Song 40, “Qui chantar sol,” lines 108–12).<sup>151</sup> His gains are considerable. This is true, whether he wins the beloved’s favor or not. But should she deign to accept his love, he will find joy a hundred times greater than if he had loudly complained or cut and run at the first sign of rejection, for “suffering aids happiness [*ben*] a hundredfold.” Disciplining appetite is a condition of love’s fidelity and patience.

Among the trobairitz, the Comtessa de Dia, like Giraut, insists that she is content with herself merely for having chosen a worthy knight and remained faithful to him.

Mout mi plai car sai que val mais cel q'ieu plus desir que m'aia,	I'm pleased to know there's so much worth in him, the one that I most wish would have me;
.....	.....
Q'ieu n'ai chausit un pro e gen per cui pretz meillura e genssa, larc et adreig e conoissen, on es sens e conoissensa;	For I've chosen one who's brave and noble in whom worth becomes ennobled: openhanded, agile, knowing, full of knowledge and good sense. <sup>152</sup>

Like Lady Castelloza, when she grows angry with her lover, she still trusts that her “fins coratges” (“true heart”) will be of help in winning him back.<sup>153</sup>

150. Giraut de Borneil, “Can creis la fresca fueil'els rams,” in Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes*, 162–67.

151. Giraut de Borneil, “Qui chantar sol,” in Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes*, 236, 238.

152. Comtessa de Dia, “Ab ioi et ab ioven m'apais,” in Bruckner et al., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 2–3, lines 9–10, 25–28.

153. Comtessa de Dia, “A chantar m'er de so q'ieu no volria,” in Bruckner et al., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 6–7, line 30.



*The Beauty of the Canso*

Lust, as appetite, was indiscriminate. Any willing sexual partner could satisfy this hunger. *Fin'amors* was personal, specific—only she, only he could quench the longing in one's heart. Unsatisfied lust led only to frustration. Unrequited love left one disconsolate, despairing of life, but also, perhaps, spiritually improved, as Jaufre Rudel and Giraut de Borneil suggest. Lust was like the hunger for self-advantage of the traitor. *Fin'amors* was like the loyalty of the vassal for her or his lord. Songwriters developed and mixed these ideas in a variety of ways. As they did so, they worked out an accommodation between aristocratic speech and the distinction between true love and desire-as-appetite that came to possess tremendous commonsense appeal.

The trobairitz and troubadours insisted *fin'amors* tolerated no hypocrisy. But the rhetoric they developed became so familiar over the years that anyone could use it to advance their ends, just as aristocrats routinely sculpted claims of many sorts to suit the needs of the moment. This misuse of the language of *fin'amors* in turn sparked an escalating effort to find an expression, a turn of phrase, so striking it could not possibly be insincere.<sup>154</sup> The trobairitz and troubadours claimed that the spiritual quality of their love shone through their lyrics. The beauty of a *canso* became itself a kind of proof of the genuineness of the feelings that inspired it. The test of poetic skill was yet another test of love. By the same token, poetic eloquence was, in itself, a disproof of the theology of desire. The pursuit of beauty—in poetry as in sexual love—was no mere aesthetics. Bernart de Ventadorn made this assumption explicit in his “Non es meravelha s'eu chan.”

Non es meravelha s'eu chan	It is not surprising that I sing
melhs de nul autre chantador,	better than any other singer,
que plus me tra.l cors vas amor	for my heart draws me more towards love
e melhs sui faihs a so coman.	and I am better fashioned to do its bidding.
Cor e cors e saber e sen	Heart and body, knowledge and wisdom,
e fors' e poder i ai mes.	strength and ability have I put into it.
Si.m tira vas amor lo fess	The rein so draws me towards love
que vas outra part no.m aten	that I pay attention to nothing else. <sup>155</sup>

154. Kay points out troubadour awareness of the problem of hyperbole. Arnaut de Marueilh, for example, “thanks [his competitors] for creating a climate of mendacity which allows the ‘truth’ of his own songs to pass unnoticed by the general public” (Kay, *Subjectivity*, 18–26, quote from p. 19).

155. Song 31, in Bernart de Ventadorn, *Songs*, 132–34; quoted and translated by Gaunt, in *Gender and Genre*, 140–41.

The quality of Bernart's song reflects the depth, the wholeheartedness of his devotion to love.

Giraut de Borneil's poetic style also displayed, in his view, the transformative, self-disciplinary quality of his feeling. As Sharman notes, for Giraut, "Just as the poem that gradually unfolds its meaning is worth more when finally understood, so for the reflective poet, joy withheld in love is greater than the immediate gratification of desire."<sup>156</sup> Peire Vidal offered a variation on this theme in his song "Tan me platz." If he were loved, he laments, he would write perfect little songs with great ease; at present, his "marvelous words" come only with great effort.<sup>157</sup>

### *The High Price of Success: Gender Differences in Fin'amors*

The trobairitz and troubadours admitted the existence of sexual appetite, conceiving of it very much as the Gregorian reformers did. They willingly admitted to feeling desire. But they denied desire's empire over their wills. They likewise insisted that their spiritually exalted beloved was capable of very real sexual embraces. The subordination of desire to true love rendered sexual intercourse innocent. Heroic tests, such as suffering in silence, could prove one's love were true, as could the sincerity and beauty of one's songs. Such tests, once passed, assured the lovers that their pleasure was not an end in itself, but only an adornment of their mutual devotion. When carried out in secrecy, and in spite of great danger, loving embraces themselves became heroic, as in alba or "dawn" songs like Giraut's "Reis glorios."

Whatever her rank, troubadours found their beloved to be worthy of their feudal submission and obedience because of her beauty, grace, courtesy, mesmerizing eyes, and sweet smiles. They longed to embrace her plump body and smooth skin. While trobairitz also admired their beloved's appearance and courtesy and longed for his embrace, they did not emphasize plumpness, smoothness, sweet eyes. Instead, they often noticed his knightly prowess and courage.

Eyes, in particular, were salient in troubadours' thoughts of their beloved's beauties. As Bernart de Ventadorn wrote,

Anc non agui de me poder  
ni no fui meus de l'or en sai

Over myself I've had no power  
nor have I been mine, since the hour

156. Sharman, "Cansos and Canso-Sirventes," 38.

157. Quoted in Hoepfner, *Le troubadour Peire Vidal*, 63.

que.m laisset en sos olhs vezer                    she let me look into her eyes  
 en un miralh que mout me plaï.                    in a mirror that brought me blisses.<sup>158</sup>  
 ("CAN VEI LA LAUZETA MOVER," LINES 17–20)

Does the reference to a mirror in this passage reduce the beloved to a nonentity? More likely Bernart sees in her loving glance an implicit recognition on her part that he is her equal, in noble feeling, if not in noble status. Giraut de Borneil agreed,

Quan sos bels huels remir                    When I see her beautiful eyes  
 Amoros e rizens,                    Loving and smiling,  
 Tan soi sobreiauzens                    I am so overjoyed  
   E dezirans                    and desiring  
 Qu'ieu muer!                    That I die!<sup>159</sup>  
 ("SOL QU'AMORS ME PLEVIS," LINES 43–47)

Note the pairing, in Giraut's lines, between *sobreiauzens* and *dezirans*—"overwhelming enjoyment" and "desiring." Her loving and smiling eyes bring intense joy as well as desire. With or without sexual fulfillment, this loving joy is perfectly compatible with desire, because it holds desire in firm subordination.

The beloved's extraordinary qualities included everything the troubadour could imagine appropriate to a woman. Consider Giraut de Borneil's Song 10:

Ma dompna chausida,                    For my lady is merciful  
 Franch'et issernida,                    And noble, distinguished  
 De bella paria,                    And a gracious companion  
 Ab cui estai                    And in her dwell  
 lois ab cor gai,                    Joy and a cheerful heart  
 Enseignamens ab pretz verai,                    Learning and true worth  
 Sens et cortesia.                    Wisdom and courtliness.<sup>160</sup>  
 ("AB SEMBLAN MI FAI," LINES. 42–48)

But, in stark contrast to Christian notions of merit, the God-given perfections of the troubadour's lady did not prevent her from granting

158. Bernart de Ventadorn, *Songs*, 166–68; translation by Koch, *Troubadour and Trouvère Songs*.

159. Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes*, 57–61; Sharman's translation reads: "I am so overwhelmed / by joy and desire," but the original clearly separates the concepts of joy and desire.

160. *Ibid.*, 83–87.

sexual embraces. In Bernart de Ventadorn's "Pois preyatz me, senhor," cited above, the singer feared he would die from the intense desire he sometimes felt to press his beloved in his arms. In the concluding lines of Bernart's "Lo tems vai e ven e vire," however, the singer expresses confidence that, just as her beauty is God-given, so God will bring her to his arms.

Dousa res ben ensinada,  
 Cel que.us a tan gen formada  
 Me.n do cel joi qu'eu n'aten.

(LINES 57–59)

Sweet noble creature,  
 He who gave you such a beautiful form  
 Will also give me the joy I await!<sup>161</sup>

Her "beautiful form" is one aspect of her conformity to a gender ideal, and this conformity is, by implication, crucial to her worthiness to inspire a spiritual love. Both trobairitz and troubadours participated in this idealization of gender differences and for the same reason. It was integral to the polemic against the degrading theology of desire-as-appetite. The Comtessa de Dia, for example, in "A chantar m'er de so q'ieu no volria," pleads with her beloved to recognize her as "la plus fina" ("the finest, or truest") even as she praises his masculine valor.

Proessa grans q'el vostre cors s'aizina  
 e lo rics pretz q'avetz m'en ataina,  
 c'una non sai loindana ni vezina  
 si vol amar vas vos no si aclina;  
 mas vos, amics, etz ben tant conoissens  
 que ben devetz connoisser la plus fina,  
 e membre vos des nostres covinens.

(LINES 22–28)

The great valor that dwells in your  
 person,  
 and the high rank you have, these  
 trouble me,  
 for I don't know a woman, far or near,  
 who, if she wished to love, would not  
 turn to you;  
 but you, friend, are so knowing,  
 you surely ought to know the truest one,  
 and remember what our agreement  
 was.<sup>162</sup>

Like the troubadours, the trobairitz also understood that high qualities were not in conflict with intimate embraces, as in the following lines by Comtessa de Dia:

161. Bernart de Ventadorn, *Songs*, 129–31.

162. Bruckner et al., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 6–9.

Ben volria mon cavallier	I'd like to hold my knight
tener un ser <i>en</i> mos bratz nut,	in my arms one evening, naked,
q'el s'en tengra per ereubut	for he'd be overjoyed
sol q'a lui fezes cosseillier.	were I only serving as his pillow. <sup>163</sup>

("ESTAT AI EN GREU COSSIRER," LINES 9–12)

It is worth noting that the Contessa de Dia here wishes to be soft and pliable, a *cosseillier* ("pillow") in her knight's embrace. In contrast, an anonymous trobairitz dreams of taking the active role:

Hail amics, valenz e bos,	Ah, worthy [valorous] and good friend,
car es lo meiller c'anc fos	for you're the best that ever was,
.....	.....
Dieus prec c'ab mos bratz vos segna	God, I pray that I may press you in
	my arms
c'autre no.m pot enriquir	for no one else can so enrich me. <sup>164</sup>

("PER IOI QUE D'AMOR M'AVEGNA," LINES 25–26, 39–40)

Either way, these trobairitz saw, in their beloveds, warrior qualities that they did not claim for themselves.

*Fin'amors*, in its most developed form, combined the sublimity, patience, and loyalty of Jaufre Rudel's love from afar and the intense suffering of the songs of Bernart de Ventadorn and certain trobairitz under an umbrella of high ethical purpose. This love was heroic and the satisfactions it offered were a "hundredfold" greater than the satisfaction of mere desire. Among the heroic gestures each lover embraced was a determination to live up to that particular ideal of perfection appropriate to her or his gender, no matter what suffering or limitation it might entail. As Matilda Bruckner has noted,

It is perhaps one of the great paradoxes of *fin'amors*, as elaborated by troubadours and trobairitz, to have focused on the powerful and disordering force of love, operating independently of social constraints, though not necessarily adulterous by definition, and to have elaborated that notion of love not as a malady (as in the classical conception), but as an emotion that can be channeled into a whole set of socially useful actions (courtliness in the largest sense), an emotion to be analyzed and explored with reference to principles of right and wrong.<sup>165</sup>

163. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

164. *Ibid.*, 26–29.

165. Bruckner, "Introduction," xxxi–xxxii.

The beloved's conformity to the courtly ideal, which included certain clearly delineated gender distinctions, was always extraordinary, evident at first glance. As described by troubadours, the ladies who inspired their love were also almost "superhuman" in their embodiment of beauty, grace, benevolence, and self-restraint. *Fin'amors* involved a "love of courtliness," as James Schultz has argued, but it was courtliness carried to a heroic extreme.<sup>166</sup> Such qualities inspired *fin'amors* in the first instance, and the effect of *fin'amors* on the lover was to redouble her or his own striving to conform to, or rather to outdo, the gendered norms of courtliness. Men became better knights; women better ladies.

The rise of the courtly love ideal, which the trobairitz and troubadours launched, therefore may have encouraged an intensified cultivation of gender differences that was already under way—differences of dress and manner, of gesture and word, and of feeling. As noted in chapter 1, Merovingian noblewomen cursed and commanded like their men; from the late eleventh century at the latest, however, women sought distinction by aspiring to more affability, more elegance, more sweet restraint; they tried to get out ahead of men in the cultivation of *cortezia*.<sup>167</sup> In the new songs, men and women were invited to strive for a self-presentation likely to inspire love that was true and enduring. In this respect, gender difference was not just accentuated; it was infused with a new moral content. The possibility of true love as a life goal worth pursuing encouraged heroic conformity to strict gendered standards covering dress, personal presentation, and the cultivation of specific skills. These differences were not aimed at inspiring mere desire; they became, through the care, refinement, and delicacy they expressed, markers of spiritual superiority, earning God's aid in the pursuit of love.

When they gloried in gender differences, the trobairitz and troubadours ceded ground to trends that tended to exclude women from direct rule—including the church's reform of marriage and tightened incest regulations as well as the revival of Roman law. They also implicitly accepted the equation that many twelfth-century clerical writers expounded between male same-sex desire and the "unmanning of men" (*devirare vires*) that turned them into "effeminate" (*effeminati*).<sup>168</sup>

166. Schultz, *Courtly Love*, 17–28, emphasizes the broad similarities of masculine and feminine beauty in Middle High German love literature of the period; his observations apply to Occitan literature as well, but with the gender distinctions pointed out here.

167. Bond, "Introduction," xlv.

168. Kuefler, "Male Friendship and the Suspicion of Sodomy," 195, 197, quoting the *Roman d'Énéas* and Orderic Vitalis, respectively.

When they defended adultery, the trobairitz and troubadours implicitly accepted the indissolubility of marriage. They thus inadvertently helped to build the foundation for a new “woman’s sphere.” This new sphere was still political and public, still fraught with uncertainty, hierarchy, and power—because still located in the aristocratic court. But it was nonetheless gradually separated from the expanding bureaucratic, legal, and military activities that centered on courts, especially princely courts, in this period. A woman who was not free to leave her husband and to bring her patrimony with her was unable to command the kind of interest or deference that her mother or grandmother had enjoyed. Urraca of León-Castile fought a successful series of campaigns for independence from her husband, Alfonso I of Aragon, in 1109–17 and subsequently had two children with a designated consort. But subsequent chroniclers “blamed her immorality for destroying peace in her day.”<sup>169</sup> Fifty years later, Eleanor of Aquitaine tried to tear her native duchy away from English rule in 1173. When she failed and was imprisoned by her husband, no churchman came forward to defend her. Constance of France in 1165 and Jeanne of England in 1199 faced a similar lack of support when they abandoned the court of Toulouse.<sup>170</sup>

The troubadours (but not the trobairitz) even, at times, appeared to accept clerical misogyny—the whole litany of complaints about women’s nature: their unruly desires, their fickleness, their skill in deception. At times, as Sarah Kay has pointed out, it almost seems as if women were divided into two genders—the ladies who were worthy of love and the mere women who hypocritically pursued sexual gratification.<sup>171</sup>

This division reflected the difficulty encountered by trobairitz and troubadours alike in accepting that desire-as-appetite existed while holding out for the possibility of a very different kind of longing for association between true lovers.

169. Therese Martin, “The Art of a Reigning Queen as Dynastic Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain,” *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1134–71, see p. 1135.

170. See also Peggy McCracken, “Scandalizing Desire: Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Chroniclers,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 247–63; RáGena DeAragon, “Wife, Widow, and Mother: Some Comparisons between Eleanor of Aquitaine and Noblewomen of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin World,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 97–113.

171. Kay, *Subjectivity*, 84–131.

## Conclusion

*Fin'amors* arose in a world in transformation. It was being transformed by the persistent conflicts of regional lords whose resources were steadily expanding. It was being transformed by the many-sided impact of that bundle of currents known as the Gregorian Reform, including wandering preachers, new, more strictly ascetic monastic orders, popular interest in piety and hostility toward clerical wealth, the disentangling of the church hierarchy from temporal involvements, and the church's strenuous efforts to gain control of marriage and reform all sexual conduct. All these currents, including the Cathar heresy, agreed in regarding sexual pleasure as sinful and polluting.

It was easy, both then and now, to see courtly love not as a direct response to this assault on sexual pleasure but as a secondary development. By this view, courtly love was little more than a symbolic sop offered to women who knew that the Gregorian Reform of marriage and sexuality was damaging their relative status. But that would be to forget that courtly love was actively promoted by a generation of great women lords like Eleanor of Aquitaine, Marie of Champagne, and Ermengard of Narbonne, who ruled directly and were not afraid to go to war against their husbands when necessary. For them, there was nothing symbolic or compensatory about the praise, admiration, or love of admiring male protégés.

As recent scholarship has underscored, *fin'amors* represented a harsh standard in its own right. It established an ideal of behavior that restricted both women and men, but women more than men. This ideal facilitated condemnation of women by some men and contempt and mistreatment of women by still others. It contributed, as well, in the longer run, to women's exclusion from what had been a more closely equal position for men and women within aristocratic affairs. Its contribution in this respect was minor, however, in comparison to the impact of the Gregorian Reform. *Fin'amors* was expressed in a form of literature that grew out of aristocratic speech and aristocratic violence. But it was also an ideal that, in the shadow of aristocratic silence and under the cover of literary fiction, defied the church's claim that all interest in sexual partners arose from sinful appetite. Just as some may have found the effects of the fashion for courtly love damaging for their aspirations, some others may have found a welcome refuge in its moral guidance. Still others may have found it provided rules for a



game that was often cruel and disappointing, but, on balance, worth playing.

The game of *fin'amors* must have seemed especially worth playing to those twelfth-century men and women who could not recognize their own experience of "sexuality" in the church's harsh theology. For them, sexual partnerships had always been built from multidimensional features, within networks of complex, shifting alliances. For them, the longing for association was a multifaceted emotional orientation to a potential partner in lordship; as such it was a crucial element of the intensely involving game of shared sovereignty, played according to the slippery rules of aristocratic speech. The clergy's obsessive concern with sexual pollution and sin represented a challenging complication of the alliance game, which was already a demanding, life-long preoccupation.

Trobairitz and troubadours offered annoyed and confused men and women one way to accommodate within their world "lust," that is, desire-as-appetite, as described by Peter Damian, Peter Lombard, Bernard of Clairvaux, or Geoffrey Babion. They showed aristocrats that lust could be integrated as yet one more motivation for fickleness and betrayal. Fickleness and betrayal were matters they already knew a great deal about. They showed their fellow aristocrats that, in this way, lust could be associated with the shame of the loser and the commoner. But this accommodation of shameful lust with shameful betrayal, defeat, villainy, and subjection required elaboration of an opposite kind of sexual feeling, the (sexualized) feeling of the good and loyal vassal for her or his lord, the elevated feeling of devotion toward a spiritual figure. *Fin'amors* was this feeling.

Trobairitz and troubadours' consistent treatment of *fin'amors* as something different from desire sets their lyrics apart from all the texts and practices that have been brought forward over the years as possible origins of courtly love. They drew upon the aristocratic life of their own contexts, to be sure. But their originality derived from their modification of Gregorian doctrine. Their equation of the motivation of lust, or *concupiscentia*, with false promises and disloyalty anchored their distinction between *fin'amors* and lust in the everyday world of aristocratic speech. This distinction played no role in the development of courtliness in European courts prior to the twelfth century, no role in the poignant longing of al-Andalus love songs.<sup>172</sup> The dangers of op-

172. Neither Jaeger's material nor the Arabic texts discussed by Sells, Menocal, and others appear to draw a distinction between love and lust. See C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civiliz-*

portunistic professions of love, in turn, led them to the idea of the test of love, an idea that completed the development of *fin'amors* into a heroic ethic of courage, self-denial, self-discipline, and devotion to the beloved every bit as demanding and rewarding as the spiritual career of Christian asceticism. Such a test was easily integrated into the emerging code of chivalry. As laid out by Giraut de Borneil, as understood by Lady Castelloza, *fin'amors* became a full-fledged shadow religion with a morality and a ritual all its own, inhabiting the space of aristocratic silence and offering lovers a justification for coming together safe from the prying eyes of priests and jealous husbands.

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*ing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); Sells, "Love"; Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Les troubadours* (Paris: Seuil, 1971). The Cathar link, suggested by Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (New York: Fawcett, 1958), has found few supporters.

## Narratives of True Love and Twelfth-Century Common Sense

"Rois Marc," fait il, "qui te conselle  
Tel outrage si fait mervelle;  
Certes," fait il, "sil se desloie.  
Tu es legier a metre en voie."

"King Mark," says he, "whoever advises you  
[To do] such an ignominious thing, acts in a scandalous way;  
Surely," said [Arthur], "he acts very disloyally.  
You are easy to convince."

KING ARTHUR TO KING MARK, IN BÉROUL'S *TRISTRAN*<sup>1</sup>

As trobairitz and troubadours worked out their vision of *fin'amors* in song, other writers began to compose longer verse narratives that dramatized a love modeled on trobairitz and troubadour lyric. The idea of a test of love proved especially fruitful; plots were made to turn on the passing of tests by both male and female lovers. Because these early courtly love romances have been subject to a wide variety of interpretations, just like the songs and poems of Occitania, this chapter will explore the depiction of courtly love and of the emerging ideal of chivalry

1. Béroul, *Tristan and Yseut: Old French Text with Facing English Translation*, edited and with a translation by Guy R. Mermier (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 208–9, lines 4141–4144.

in certain late twelfth-century romances and in the early thirteenth-century version of the Tristan myth by Gottfried von Strassburg. In addition, this chapter examines evidence from the 1180s and after which indicates that, by the close of the twelfth century, aristocratic men and women were relying on the conventions of courtly love to guide practice and that even clerical chroniclers had begun to understand the sense of such action.

In the romance narratives, men and women passed tests that were appropriate to their gender. The men's tests involved tasks such as rescue, trial by combat, or patient waiting or wandering. Scholars of courtly love sometimes call this the love "service" offered by a male aspirant to his beloved. But the service gained much of its meaning from the distinction it invited one to make between the lover's devotion and mere appetite. One does not risk one's life or accept the duty of a lengthy quest simply to indulge an appetite. Women lovers also face tests in the romances. Their tests may not be so obvious at first inspection, consisting of quiet fidelity, the persistent rejection of a captor's advances, or the overcoming of restrictions put in place by jealous husbands or domineering fathers. Nonetheless, by rising to these challenges, women, like men, proved their selfless devotion, proved that, in their hearts, desire, fear, and the obligations of conventional female duty were utterly tamed and subordinated to the higher duty of love. In the romances, as in Occitan lyric, for both men and women lovers, well-disciplined desire-as-appetite might be fulfilled at the proper moment, should it come, resulting in a joy much greater than desire by itself could ever provide.

The writers of these romances often claimed to be retelling old Breton or Welsh tales. Telling stories from long ago served several purposes. The author could invite comparisons between fictional characters and real lords and ladies while relying on the "legendary" quality of the material to provide deniability, should any question arise about the real identities of the characters. Legendary knights and ladies were also more readily idealized and stories about them made into lessons. The long-ago in romance operated in a fashion similar to the abstractions, *senhals*, and veiled allusions of trobairitz and troubadour lyric—providing cover and creating models. The didactic tone apparent in some trobairitz and troubadour songs became, in certain romances, even more explicit. As Z. P. Zaddy and others have noted, the most famous of the twelfth-century romances, *Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart* (ca. 1177), by Chrétien de Troyes's (active ca. 1160–ca. 1190), provided

a virtual manual of the emerging code of chivalry that good knights were supposed to obey.<sup>2</sup>

Courtly romance authors, including Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France (active ca. 1150–ca. 1180), and Bérout (active ca. 1150–ca. 1195), also preached against the evils of jealousy and in favor of honorable silence. Gottfried's version of the Tristan myth added nuance to didacticism, however, showing more sympathy for the plight of the jealous husband and lifting the love triangle to the status of fateful tragedy. But even Gottfried's fictional lovers, like William Marshal, adhered to a code of aristocratic speech, supported by the rule-governed violence of the feud and of trial by combat. This code of speech lies constantly in the background, guiding lovers in the conduct of their relationships and providing the space of silence within which true love, sometimes, flourished without disrupting the social order.

By the end of the twelfth century, besides romances, other textual genres began to rely on courtly love concepts. As illustrations, two "real" love stories of the late twelfth century, drawn from the Latin chronicles of clerical historians, will be considered here. Like the stories of William Marshal and of Walter of Fontanes discussed in chapter 1, these two episodes display the elements of loyalty, secrecy, test, and rescue found in the plots of the courtly love literature. A satirical fabliau that shows acceptance in popular vernacular storytelling of the doctrine of desire-as-appetite is also examined. In this story the impulse of desire provides occasions for both trickery and self-deception, and the claims of courtly lovers are unmasked as hypocritical. The spread of such humor points unmistakably to popular acceptance of the love-lust dichotomy as a yardstick for measuring human heroism and for ridiculing human shortcomings.

## The Source Material of Arthurian Romance

Much of the material used in the new romance genre was linked to the legendary court of King Arthur, a Briton said to have lived in the sixth century. Arthur supposedly rallied the forces of indigenous Britons to

2. Z. P. Zaddy, "The Courtly Ethic in Chrétien de Troyes," in *The Ideals and Practices of Medieval Knighthood III: Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1990), 159–80; see also Sally North, "The Ideal Knight as Presented in Some French Narrative Poems, c. 1090–c. 1240: An Outline Sketch," in *The Ideals and Practices of Medieval Knighthood: Papers from the First and Second Strawberry Hill Conferences*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1986), 111–32.

resist the invasions of the Saxons. The vogue for Arthurian material was greatly enhanced by Geoffrey of Monmouth's (active ca. 1130–ca. 1150) *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain), completed by 1139, a peculiar text that presented itself as a chronicle but was packed with ingredients derived from folk traditions as well as from Geoffrey's own imagination.<sup>3</sup> One finds in its pages tales of giants and sorcerers and a long section of mysterious "prophecies" that circulated separately. Geoffrey's *Historia* contains nothing resembling courtly love. However, as with some other Welsh folk stories and saints' lives of the tenth and eleventh centuries, the *Historia* includes stories in which women, by their striking beauty, drive men into sometimes destructive courses of action.<sup>4</sup> A brief look at some of these stories makes it easy to see why they were regarded by some mid and late twelfth-century authors as good raw material for narratives that idealized courtly love.

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, for example, Arthur's birth resulted when King Uther Pendragon, at a court gathering, first laid eyes on Igera, the most beautiful of the wives of his vassals. Geoffrey of Monmouth's text provides no details of Igera's appearance and says nothing of her behavior, feelings, or intentions. Seeing his extreme lovesickness, the sorcerer Merlin gives Uther certain herbs that will make him look like Igera's husband, Gorlois. While Uther's forces attack Gorlois, Uther makes his way to the castle where Igera is staying and is admitted into her chamber, where they make love, conceiving Arthur. Gorlois is soon killed in the fighting, and Uther and Igera are united in marriage.

Later, Arthur meets his death due to another disorderly sexual attachment. When Arthur is campaigning against the Romans in Gaul,

3. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of "De gestis Britonum"* [*Historia Regum Britanniae*], ed. Michael D. Reeve, with a translation by Neil Wright (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2007). There is substantial historical and literary scholarship dealing with this work. As starting points, see Martin Aurell, *La légende du roi Arthur, 550–1250* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 103–64; Paul Dalton, "The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*: History, Prophecy, Peacemaking, and English Identity in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 688–712; Amaury Chauou, *L'idéologie Plantagenêt: Royauté arthurienne et monarchie politique dans l'espace Plantagenêt (XII–XIII siècles)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2001); Geoffrey Ashe, "A Certain Very Ancient Book: Traces of an Arthurian Source in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*," *Speculum* 56 (1981): 301–23; Valerie I. J. Flint, "The *Historia Regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth: Parody and Its Purpose, a Suggestion," *Speculum* 54 (1979): 447–68; Jean Markale, *Le roi Artur et la société celtique* (Paris: Payot, 1976).

4. Of the Welsh material, consider, for example, the story of Kulhwch (or Culhwch) and Olwen, perhaps recorded about 950 CE; the *Life of Saint Cadoc* of about 1075; and a *Life of Saint Gildas* written prior to 1155. See, for the relevant passages in these works, in translation, Richard White, ed., *King Arthur in Legend and History* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 10, 13–14, 19–20. On Kulhwch and Olwen, see Aurell, *La légende du roi Arthur*, 44–66.

he leaves his nephew Modred and his queen Ganhumara (Guinevere) to rule in his stead in Britain. But Modred and Ganhumara are soon involved in an adulterous relationship, and Modred plans to usurp the throne. Arthur returns, defeats and kills Modred, but is wounded in the fighting. Ganhumara takes refuge in a convent, promising to live chastely, while Arthur is taken to the island of Avallon, where he turns the crown over to his relative Constantinus. As with all other characters in the *Historia*, the motives of Arthur, Modred, and Ganhumara are presented without elaboration or explanation; characters do what they are going to do, as if driven by a higher plan.<sup>5</sup> There is no place for the longing, contemplation, or inner dialogues typical of Occitan troubairitz and troubadour songs.

Geoffrey also provides one of the earliest descriptions of a tournament.<sup>6</sup> This tournament was part of a celebration at court when King Arthur was at the height of his powers.

So noble was Britain then that it surpassed other kingdoms in its stores of wealth, the ostentation of its dress and the sophistication of its inhabitants. All its doughty knights wore clothes and armor of a single color. Its elegant ladies, similarly dressed, spurned the love of any man who had not proved himself three times in battle. So the ladies were chaste and better women, whilst the knights conducted themselves more virtuously for the sake of their love.

When at last they had had their fill at the banquets, they separated to visit the fields outside the city and indulge in varied sports. The knights exercised on horseback, feigning battle. The ladies, watching from the battlements, playfully fanned the flames in the knights' hearts into furious passion [Mulieres in edito murorum aspicientes in furiales amores flammis more ioci irritant].<sup>7</sup>

5. Markale, *Le roi Artur*, notes the "fatalistic" tone of much Celtic folklore, p. 36; see also Aurell, *La légende du roi Arthur*, 128.

6. On early descriptions of tournaments, see Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000), 265. Galbert of Bruges mentions tournaments performed in Flanders by 1127; see Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*, trans. James Bruce Ross (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 92; a good edition of the Latin original is *Histoire du meurtre de Charles le Bon, comte de Flandres (1127–28)*, ed. Henri Pirenne (Paris: Picard, 1891), see p. 9. A tournament was held at Rouen, as part of the celebration for the marriage of Geoffrey of Anjou and the Empress Matilda in 1128; Henry I also knighted Geoffrey prior to the wedding; see Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139–53* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1996), 12. According to Richard Mortimer, the earliest reference to a German tournament dates from 1127; see Richard Mortimer, "Knights and Knighthood in Germany in the Central Middle Ages," in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood: Papers from the First and Second Strawberry Hill Conferences*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1986), 86–103, esp. pp. 99–100.

7. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 211–16. On this passage, see Aurell, *La légende du roi Artur*, 139.

Women's admiration of warriors is not mentioned in any other context in Geoffrey's text. But in this case, women's admiration incites men to more virtuous conduct, and the attendance of ladies at a simulated battle spurs knights' passions. In the later verse romances, pursuit of a lady's favor would be glorified as a central motivating factor in the making of a great warrior, but Geoffrey was not prepared to go this far. In fact, almost as soon as he brings it up, Geoffrey drops the idea that ladies could excite warriors to greater effort. Immediately after the tournament, Cadur, duke of Cornwall, remarks, "When military expeditions cease, and their place is taken by dice, love affairs, and other pleasures, then it is certain that the prowess, honor, boldness, and renown of former days is tainted by slackness." ("Quippe ubi usus armorum uidetur abesse, aleae autem et mulierum inflammationes ceteraque oblectamenta adesse, dubitandum non est ne id quod erat uirtutis, quod honoris, quod audaciae, quod famae, ignauia commaculet.") Because the Britons have indulged in such preoccupations for five years, Cadur insists, it is now necessary for them to be "tried with war."<sup>8</sup> As in the past, love is associated with slackness, not testing.

In another passage of the *Historia* that seems to presage courtly romance, Arthur sets out to rescue a damsel from a giant. However, in a surprising twist—surprising at least for readers nurtured on the narrative expectations of later romances—the lady is already dead when Arthur arrives. She expired in shock at the giant's first attempt to embrace her; she is survived by an elderly servant, whom the giant now routinely rapes. Arthur kills the giant anyway. His main purpose, it appears, is to encourage his own men, by showing them that not even giants can stand in their way.<sup>9</sup> As these passages suggest, there is no mistaking the *Historia Regum Britanniae* for a piece of courtly love literature. Obsession with a beautiful woman sometimes derails kings and other leaders. But—except for Arthur's birth and the later tournament at his court—love operates only as a distraction to the proper work of men, the work of combat, loyal service, and leadership.

The immediate context for the composition of the *Historia* was the civil strife of the late 1130s, after the Empress Matilda and Stephen of Blois began contending for the throne of England. Geoffrey's work argues that internal divisions among the Britons brought the punishment of God in the form of the Saxon invasions and that later divisions among the Saxons brought their downfall at the hands of the

8. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 216–17.

9. *Ibid.*, 224–27.



Normans. Now, he implies, divisions among the Norman conquerors seem to threaten them with a similar fate.<sup>10</sup> In fact, during a rebellion in Wales of 1136–37, a Welsh rebel briefly claimed the title of king, as Geoffrey and many of his readers were doubtless aware. Geoffrey's work apparently generated intense interest and was widely read in the 1140s.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after the end of the conflict in 1153, the *Historia* was being read in still another way. When Henry II was crowned the following year, his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine became queen of England, bringing knowledge of Occitan literature and love doctrine—if not actual troubadour protégés—to the English court. From this point forward, Henry II may have hoped to block the use of the Arthur legend by Celtic rebels within his realm, especially in Brittany and Wales.<sup>12</sup> By 1155, a cleric named Wace had completed a rather free translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* into Old French verse, dedicating it to Eleanor, under the title *Le Roman de Brut*. In Wace's verse adaptation, Arthur was transformed from authoritarian ruler and bloody warrior into a feudal lord full of consideration for his vassals. Wace removed the troublesome prophecies of Merlin that had inspired Welsh and Breton rebels. In Wace's hands, Arthur became "the paragon of the chivalrous king," as Martin Aurell puts it.<sup>13</sup> Henry II granted Wace a living as reward for his work and charged him to write a similar verse history of the dukes of Normandy.<sup>14</sup>

Small differences between Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace are often telling. Wace apparently originated the idea of the Round Table, for example, symbolic of the equality Arthur wished to establish among himself and his men as fellow knights. Wace presented the Round Table as Arthur's invention, designed to silence disputes over precedence among his barons: "Each one thought he was the best and recognized

10. Dalton, "Topical Concerns," points out that the clergy of England were involved in intense peace efforts in late 1138 and early 1139.

11. Aurell, *La légende du roi Artur*, 126–28; Dalton, "Topical Concerns," 690.

12. On Henry II's use of Arthurian legend, see Martin Aurell, "Henry II and Arthurian Legend," in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2007), 362–94, and *L'empire des Plantagenêt* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), esp. pp. 31, 100, 115, 148–54, 158–69; Dalton, "Topical Concerns"; Emma Mason, "The Hero's Invincible Weapon: An Aspect of Angevin Propaganda," in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood III: Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference, 1988*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1990), 121–37.

13. Aurell, *L'empire des Plantagenêt*, 160. See also Aurell, "Henry II and Arthurian Legend."

14. Judith Weiss, "Introduction," in Wace, *Wace's Roman de Brut, A History of the British*, edited and with a translation by Judith Weiss, rev. ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), xi–xxix, see pp. xii–xiii.

no superior,” (“Chescuns se teneit al meillur, / Ne nuls n’en saveit le peiur,” lines 9749–9750.)<sup>15</sup> This represents a typical strategy of aristocratic speech. By avoiding explicit claims, one permits each person to silently enjoy what each thinks is hers or his. Here silence is represented as a crucial instrument of rule; without it, contention would disrupt Arthur’s court and his realm. The Round Table idea, which nicely embodied the concept of shared sovereignty, was to have a rich future. Wace’s ideal of equality among knights resembled the *paratg*, “equality,” that Count Raimond V of Toulouse consistently sought to display, in those same years, according to the troubadours of his court.<sup>16</sup>

In the passage in which Arthur slays the giant, Wace embellished the old maidservant’s explanation of her terrible captivity. Asked why she did not leave, after her mistress’s death, she explains:

Li gaianz me fist ci remaindre	The giant made me stay here
Pur sa luxurie en mei refraindre;	To assuage his lechery.
Par force m’ad ci retenue	By force he kept me here
E par force m’ad purgeüe.	And by force he raped me.
Sa force m’estuet otreier,	I have to yield to his strength,
Ne li puis mie defforcier.	I cannot prevent him.
Jo nel faiz mie de mun gré,	I do not consent to it—
A guarant en trai Dampnedé.	I call God to witness. <sup>17</sup>

(LINES 11,425–11,432)

In Geoffrey of Monmouth’s version, the maidservant insists she is raped against her will, but Wace has her repeat the point four times over. In the passage concerning Modred and Guinevere, similarly, Wace makes it explicit that Arthur’s queen was complicit in Modred’s usurpation, rather than being taken against her will, while Geoffrey had left the matter ambiguous.<sup>18</sup> These are small differences, but perhaps represent one of the conduits by which the idea of desire-as-appetite, along with the crucial theological concept of consent of the will, spread to everyday thinking (as when Wace, in line 11,426, quoted above, directly borrowed the term *luxuria* from the Latin of the theologians).

The possibility of reworking this kind of material to suit the new

15. Wace, *Wace’s Roman de Brut, A History of the British*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss, rev. ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 244–45, translation by the author.

16. Laurent Macé, *Les comtes de Toulouse et leur entourage, XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles: Rivalités, alliances et jeux de pouvoir* (Toulouse: Privat, 2000), 308.

17. Wace, *Wace’s Roman de Brut*, 286–88.

18. *Ibid.*, lines 13,010–13,222, pp. 326–33.

ideas about *fin'amors* may have been apparent to Eleanor as well as to certain of the men and women charged with entertaining the court.<sup>19</sup> One only had to imagine a lover saving his beloved from captivity by killing a giant, a dragon, or an evil knight in order to devise an interesting test of true love. Among the first authors of Arthurian courtly love romances were Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes, both of whom may have spent some time at Eleanor's court.<sup>20</sup> Chrétien later claimed to have enjoyed the patronage of Eleanor's daughter, Marie of Champagne, and of Count Philip of Flanders.<sup>21</sup>

Henry II, who claimed descent through his mother from native British kings, certainly regarded Wace's translation of the *Historia* as favorable to his rule. The French kings, with the help of the monks of Saint-Denis, had been equipped with an origin myth, linking the establishment of the French crown to the arrival in Gaul of Trojan warriors who had fled the fall of Troy. While Henry II did not explicitly claim the Arthurian legend as founding myth for his dynasty, his sons were prepared to do so. Shortly after Henry II's son Geoffrey, duke of Brittany, died in 1186, for example, his widow gave birth to a son to whom she gave the name of Arthur. Richard I later claimed to possess King Arthur's sword, Caliburn. His brother John claimed to own Tristan's sword and carried it at his coronation.<sup>22</sup>

### Reading Chrétien's "Lancelot"

From 1150 on, Marie de France, Thomas of Brittany (active ca. 1150), Béroul, and Chrétien de Troyes—all authors who likely enjoyed Angevin patronage—drew on Breton and Welsh legend, including Geoffrey of Monmouth's material on King Arthur, to depict *fin'amors* in a new world of dramatic possibilities.

Chrétien's earliest romance, *Erec et Enide* (written about 1170), is worth mentioning for the way it foregrounded a woman's heroism. Af-

19. Eleanor's court may not have been the first circle to consider such a possibility. Rita Lejeune has assembled a number of references to Arthurian material in troubadour songs written prior to 1155; see Rita Lejeune, *Littérature et société occitane au Moyen Âge* (Liège: Marche Romane, 1979), 225–36.

20. Aurell, *L'empire des Plantagenêt*, 161–62; see also Chauou, *L'idéologie Plantagenêt*, 84, 95–98.

21. Aurell, *La légende du roi Arthur*, 253–304, 375; John F. Benton, "The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center," *Speculum* 36 (1961): 551–91.

22. On the legendary swords, see Mason, "The Hero's Invincible Weapon"; Aurell reviews the efforts inspired by Henry II to locate Arthur's tomb, in *L'empire des Plantagenêt*, 148–77. See also Chauou, *L'idéologie Plantagenêt*.

ter winning his beloved Enide in a difficult combat and marrying her, Erec spends so much of his time with her that rumors begin to spread about his disinterest in warfare and in deeds of prowess. When Enide finally reports these shameful rumors to him, Erec is offended by her implicit criticism. He commands Enide to march ahead of him as he proceeds to wander through alien territory. Erec specifically orders her not to warn him of any danger that she may see in the path ahead. Consistently, however, she disobeys him, helping Erec to defeat a series of attempts to capture her. In the end, Erec tells Enide that he is sure of her love, because she did not hesitate to risk his disapproval in order to warn him of danger. The long period of wandering is revealed as a series of dual tests. Enide proves that her devotion to Erec's well-being overrules all other considerations; Erec proves that protecting his beloved inspires him to unequalled feats of knightly virtue. In this story, marriage is neither the end point of romantic love nor an impediment to it; it is an outward ceremony, a public institution, that cannot be decisive by itself as a mark of true love.

The most influential of the early Arthurian verse romances was Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart*, written about 1177.<sup>23</sup> Maurice Keen notes the early articulation of the values of chivalry in Chrétien's works and the reliance on the Lancelot figure by later authors of manuals of chivalry such as Lull.<sup>24</sup> Modern critics have granted Chrétien's *Lancelot* "a privileged place," Simon Gaunt notes, "as if it provided the key to the meaning of love in French medieval literature."<sup>25</sup> But scholars have not agreed on the meaning of Chrétien's *Lancelot*. Some, like Zaddy, read it as a eulogy of chivalry and love; others such as John F. Benton have read it as an ironic critique of adulterous *fin'amors*.<sup>26</sup>

Recent scholarship informed by gender and sexuality studies has added substantially to our understanding of Chrétien's *Lancelot*. As with troubadour lyric, so this Arthurian romance has been criticized for relying on a highly abstract love ideal that imposed extreme gender differences, demoted women's subjectivity, and displayed a permissive attitude toward violence against women. Kathryn Gravdal and Peggy McCracken have examined the primacy of male desire, male violence,

23. On 1177 as the date of composition, see Charles Méla, "Preface," in Chrétien de Troyes, *Le chevalier de la charrette ou le Roman de Lancelot*, ed. Charles Méla (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1992), 9–30, esp. pp. 9–10.

24. Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 2, 10–12.

25. Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97–98.

26. Zaddy, "The Courtly Ethic"; Benton, "The Court of Champagne."

and male symbolism in Chrétien's vision.<sup>27</sup> Chrétien's romances, according to Roberta Krueger, place women in a "contradictory position of privilege and displacement: seemingly at the center of the courtly dilemma, they are marginalized from the action. They may appear to wield power, but their autonomy is threatened and appropriated by the plot of chivalric honor."<sup>28</sup> The idealization of women in Chrétien's romances conceals a strongly negative judgment of them, according to Simon Gaunt. Because Chrétien, like many other romance authors, was a member of the clergy, he could not help but regard women as weak and changeable. Heroism in the service of women, therefore, could not help but appear foolish to such authors. "Masculinity in romance is problematic from the outset," remarks Gaunt, "because it is constructed in relation to femininity, an unpredictable, unreliable ingredient from the clerical writer's point of view; it remains problematic because clerical writers systematically undermine chivalric heroic models within the genre."<sup>29</sup>

*Lancelot* is therefore a text that must be carefully weighed. Recent scholarly readings are often correct as far as they go. Chrétien's text is ironic; its gender norms are extreme and abstract. Its attitude toward violence is permissive.

But *Lancelot* is also an effective polemic, folded into a fictional ruse, against the Gregorian theology of desire-as-appetite. Like the troubairitz and troubadours' songs, Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot* rejected the sexual doctrines of the Gregorian Reform. Read in the context of Gregorian sexual regulation, its radical challenge to church doctrine is apparent.

Three features of the work and its context are worth underscoring. First, Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot* was intended for the very same circle of Angevin-linked aristocrats that, if we are to believe the *History of William Marshal*, shared rumors about William Marshal's affair with Margaret of France in 1182. Second, Chrétien appears perfectly at home with the rules of aristocratic speech that we have seen in operation in the *History of William Marshal*. These rules give shape both to the behavior of Lancelot and Guinevere and other characters and to

27. Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 42–71, and "Chrétien de Troyes, Gratian, and the Medieval Romance of Sexual Violence," *Signs* 17 (1992): 558–85; Peggy McCracken, *The Curse of Eve, the Wound of the Hero: Blood, Gender, and Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

28. Roberta L. Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34.

29. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 103.

the structure of the plot. The impact of these rules must be taken into account when one attempts to evaluate the ironic tone of the romance. Third, the passivity of women in *Lancelot* and in all of Chrétien's romances is not so great as has been sometimes claimed. The behavior of heroines in his work, just like that of heroes, displays and teaches the same mastery of appetite. Keeping within their sphere (just as men kept within theirs), women were nonetheless very active participants in the unfolding drama. They shaped events just as decisively as the male figures. They submitted to tests different from those which male lovers faced, but which could be every bit as harsh. Like the female friends of nineteenth-century Britain, recently studied by Sharon Marcus, the damsels and female companions in romance frequently mediated the heroine's choice of male partner.<sup>30</sup>

Chrétien's *Lancelot* reflects the same kind of rearguard action represented in the lyrics of troubairitz and troubadours. Like them, Chrétien accepted the Gregorian doctrine of desire-as-appetite. Like them, he nonetheless held out for the existence of a kind of love that could take over one's heart entirely, taming desire-as-appetite, rendering sexual enjoyment innocent, and bringing a marvelous joy.<sup>31</sup>

### ***The Context of Chrétien's "Lancelot": Marie of Champagne's Role as Patron of Courtly Love Literature***

Chrétien de Troyes wrote for an aristocratic public that included the very same Angevin court circles within which William Marshal earned his reputation as a model of knighthood. Evidence of Chrétien's link to the Angevin court is indirect but substantial. Chrétien's writings reveal familiarity with Angevin court rituals and Angevin lands. His familiarity with Arthurian material was likely mediated by the Angevin court.<sup>32</sup>

Chrétien names Countess Marie of Champagne as his patron and claims that she dictated to him the form that the story of Lancelot should take (lines 1–29).<sup>33</sup> This claim has sparked scholarly speculation that Chrétien, as a member of the clergy, was uncomfortable with

30. See Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

31. For this description of love, see Chrétien de Troyes, *Le chevalier de la charrette, ou, Le roman de Lancelot*, edited with a modern French translation by Charles Méla (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1992), lines 4661–4678 (pp. 322–24); English translation, *Lancelot, or, the Knight of the Cart*, translated by Ruth Harwood Cline (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 129–30.

32. Chauou, *L'idéologie Plantagenêt*, 96–99.

33. Méla, *Le chevalier de la charrette*, 46.

the story's favorable treatment of adultery. Some have argued that the ironic tone of the poem is satirical, because Chrétien really intended it, not as a manifesto, but as a critique of courtly love. As John F. Benton asserted several decades ago, given the centrality of Chrétien's *Lancelot* to the development of Arthurian romance, if its ironic treatment of love is intended to undercut and discredit courtly love, then perhaps courtly love is itself a figment of the scholarly imagination. "If 'courtly love' is not to be found at the court of Champagne," Benton concluded, "where then did it exist?"<sup>34</sup> In the wake of Benton's argument, Marie of Champagne's role in sponsoring Chrétien's romances has attracted further investigation.

Marie of Champagne (1145–98), Eleanor of Aquitaine's eldest child by Louis VII, was countess of Champagne from 1164. According to Theodore Evergates, she "seems to have been close to her half-brothers [Eleanor's sons by Henry II] Geoffroy Plantagenet, for whom she dedicated an altar in Paris, and Richard the Lionheart [Richard Coeur de Lion], with whom she shared Adam of Perseigne as confessor, as well as with her half sister Margaret [Louis VII's daughter by Constance of Castile, young Henry's wife from 1160, and William Marshal's supposed lover]."<sup>35</sup> Evergates also concludes that Marie played an active role as a literary patron. She read vernacular and probably Latin and possessed a personal library. Gace Brulé, one of the earliest *trouvères* (that is, composers of love songs in the troubadour manner who wrote in Old French), stated he wrote at her request. Perhaps also *trouvères* Conon de Béthune (whose work shows the influence of Bertran de Born) and Huon d'Oisy enjoyed her patronage. Evergates finds it plausible that a collegiate chapter she founded provided a living for Chrétien de Troyes and his continuator Godfrey de Lagny.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1140s, at the time of Marie's birth, her mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, was quietly contending with Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis to sustain her influence over her first husband, Marie's father, French king Louis VII. In 1141, for example, she convinced Louis to lead an army south to Toulouse, to reassert her inherited right to rule as countess there. But the expedition was a failure. At a tense meeting in 1144, Bernard of Clairvaux scolded Eleanor (who was still childless at that time) for her domineering ways, promising her she would bear children if

34. Benton, "The Court of Champagne," 551–91, quote from p. 590.

35. Theodore Evergates, "Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 75–110, see p. 79.

36. *Ibid.*

she would conform to the wishes of the church, and behave more like a dutiful wife.

Marie was conceived soon after Bernard's visit.<sup>37</sup> Did Marie share her mother's apparent distaste for Bernard? It is intriguing that two of the clerical authors known to have frequented Marie's court in Champagne (Nicholas of Clairvaux and Etienne of Provins) were avowed enemies of Bernard of Clairvaux.<sup>38</sup> The Angevin courtier Walter Map reports a scurrilous story about Bernard of Clairvaux that he must have picked up in Champagne.<sup>39</sup>

June Hall Martin McCash has carefully reviewed the circumstantial evidence that Marie maintained contact with her mother and the Angevin court.<sup>40</sup> McCash recalls that Marie's husband Count Henri le Libéral provided military support for the rebellion of Eleanor and her three sons against Henry II in 1173–74. McCash's inventory of clues includes the obvious influence of Bernart de Ventadorn on one of Chrétien de Troyes's songs. McCash carefully reviews charter evidence suggesting that Margaret of France, following the death of her husband, young Henry, in 1183, made a visit to Marie in 1184 that lasted several months and another visit in 1186 prior to Margaret's remarriage to King Bela of Hungary. Both women were recently widowed at the latter date. In 1191, Marie's surviving son Thibaut was betrothed to Blanche of Navarre only months after Eleanor helped with her son Richard Coeur de Lion's betrothal to Blanche's sister Berengaria.<sup>41</sup> Imprisoned by German emperor Henry VI on his return trip from the Holy Land in 1193, Richard Coeur de Lion wrote a song of complaint about the slow progress of efforts to collect his ransom; in it he praised his half sister Marie. "Sister countess," he wrote, "may he to whom I appeal [i.e., God] because I am captive save and guard for you your sovereign worth."<sup>42</sup>

It is not unreasonable to assume that these documentary traces are just the tip of an iceberg. A copy of Chrétien's *Lancelot* could well have been transmitted to Margaret by Marie and read to young Henry's entourage soon after it was written in the late 1170s. Listening to this

37. Edmond-Réné Labande, "Pour une image véridique d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine," *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest*, 3e trimestre de 1952, pp. 175–234; on the events of 1141–1145, see pp. 178–80.

38. Benton, "The Court of Champagne," 556, 599.

39. *Ibid.*, 576.

40. June Hall Martin McCash, "Marie de Champagne and Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Relationship Reexamined," *Speculum* 54 (1979): 698–711.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 710.

42. Translation from Benton, "The Court of Champagne," 568.



story of a vassal's adultery with his queen might have sparked discussion of Walter of Fontanes's adultery with Elisabeth of Vermandois and his resulting death at the hands of Philip of Flanders in Saint-Omer in 1175. It is not inconceivable that Marie of Champagne or someone she knew imagined Lancelot as an amalgam of Arthur's cousin Modred and Walter of Fontanes and commissioned Chrétien to do a work on this theme.<sup>43</sup>

John F. Benton agreed that Marie of Champagne was a major patron of literature in her period, outdoing the royal court.<sup>44</sup> Benton conceded that major courtly love texts by Chrétien de Troyes (such as *Lancelot*) and Andreas Capellanus (the Latin *De Amore*) have been linked plausibly to her court. However, Benton regarded these texts as so deeply ironic that they undercut their own words of praise for adulterous love. Many scholars have agreed with him. In Simon Gaunt's view, for example, as mentioned above, Chrétien's irony represented a clerical rejection of chivalric ideas.<sup>45</sup> For Benton, Chrétien's irony vetoes any serious reading of his love doctrine or of Marie of Champagne's patronage of love literature. "The reader who takes Chrétien and Andreas seriously and sees no irony or satire in their work," concludes Benton, "may reasonably conclude that Marie was a great social innovator."<sup>46</sup> But for Benton the evidence in favor a satirical reading is overwhelming. If a doctrine favoring adulterous love had actually been "openly proclaimed" at the court of Troyes, Benton reasons, orthodox clerical authors of the time would certainly have denounced Marie of Champagne as a heretic.<sup>47</sup> But not only do these authors fail to denounce her; when they mention her, they uniformly praise her orthodoxy and piety.

However, any reading of irony in twelfth-century romance must recognize that patrons such as Marie of Champagne may have preferred to promote courtly love only in covert ways. Chrétien's stories indicate he was perfectly familiar with the use of language found in the *History of William Marshal*. He was familiar with the admiration of trickery and with the complex relation between aristocratic claims and silence, on the one hand, and rule-governed violence, on the other. Benton and other scholars have failed to reckon with these characteristic features of aristocratic speech. Chrétien's satirical tone and the topsy-turvy at-

43. Markale reviews the evidence on Chrétien's sources, indicating the originality of the Lancelot figure.

44. Benton, "The Court of Champagne."

45. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 103.

46. Benton, "The Court of Champagne," 587.

47. *Ibid.*, 588.

mosphere of the world of *Lancelot* might be explained as part of a protective ruse.<sup>48</sup>

Don Monson, in a recent study of Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore*, argues that the work reveals a consistent and serious concern with moral issues, despite its paradoxical structure. Monson points out that books 1 and 2 of the *De Amore* are an attempt by Andreas to reconcile the troubadour ideal with Christian morality, an attempt that failed. In book 3, Andreas gives a novel twist to standard clerical antifeminism when he states that women are not actually capable of true love. What makes Andreas's antifeminism novel is that he grants, if only inadvertently, the possibility of true love. Reciprocity of sentiments is extremely rare, Andreas concludes. The vast majority of love affairs are therefore tainted by a predominant, if often covert, sexual appetite, by desire for the *extremum solatium* of coitus.<sup>49</sup> By this reading, Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore* was a unique work, the only attempt to explore explicitly the yawning chasm that separated *fin'amors* and the Church's theology of desire. For Andreas, however, in the end—if Monson is right—all who pose as true lovers are Don Juans at heart. If Monson is right—and his reading is not that distant from Benton's—the book has been misread from very early on as an apology for courtly love. It was condemned as a heretical work in 1277 by the archbishop of Paris, for example.<sup>50</sup>

### *Irony and Aristocratic Speech in "Lancelot"*

Chrétien's irony is another matter, however. Unlike Andreas Capellanus, he does not renounce his own assertions. Every episode of the narrative informs the reader in simple rhyming verse of Lancelot's admirable characteristics, exemplary sufferings, or heroic achievements. Chrétien's romance also offers a picture of Guinevere as an activist, mobilized to defend herself and advance her honor in the face of constant threats to her life and to her sexual autonomy. Both Lancelot and Guinevere pass the tests that the god of love poses for them and finally enjoy one brief night together before facing still more tests. Like the trobairitz and the troubadours, Chrétien wished to make a distinction.

48. On the topsy-turvy character of *Lancelot*, see David J. Shirt, "Le Chevalier de la Charette: A World Turned Upside Down?" *Modern Language Review* 76 (1981): 811–22.

49. Don A. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), see esp. pp. 122–66, 287–343. A comparison of love with thirst is mentioned on p. 311; see p. 308 for quotation of "extremum solatium."

50. For a discussion of the text of the condemnation, see Alain Libera, *Penser le Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 189–211.

He conceded the existence of lust, of a sexual appetite that was powerful and dangerous. But he insisted that another emotion, a special kind of love, could also bring sexual partners together.

In comparison with the Arthur-Modred-Ganhumara love triangle of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Chrétien's tale completely reversed the sign of Lancelot's adultery with the queen from negative to positive, making it an index not of betrayal but of loyalty. Lancelot's political significance is the reverse of Modred's, as well, in every respect. Where Modred as adulterer is a traitorous usurper whose rebellion brings Arthur's reign to an end, Lancelot as adulterer is servant and defender of Arthur and liberator of Arthur's subjects from foreign captivity. Ganhumara's victimization, likewise, contrasts with Guinevere's unshakable commitment to her own sexual and political autonomy.

At the beginning of the story Arthur's Queen Guinevere is abducted by an evil knight named Meleagant, who also holds many of Arthur's subjects in captivity. Arthur and his knights seem strangely impotent in the face of Meleagant's defiance.<sup>51</sup> Lancelot places his duty to rescue Guinevere above everything. After a moment of hesitation, he even sacrifices his own honor. A strange dwarf promises to tell him of Guinevere's whereabouts if he submits to the humiliation of riding in a cart like a criminal. Love's command overrides the dictates of Reason (lines 360–378) as Lancelot steps into the cart.<sup>52</sup> While traveling toward Guinevere's place of captivity, Lancelot faces several more tests. Some of these tests reassure the reader that Lancelot's sense of honor remains undimmed in spite of the ride in the cart. He irritably insists on sleeping in a bed which, one hostess tells him, he is unworthy to occupy. The guardian of a ford knocks him from his horse because he is daydreaming of Guinevere. But he angrily attacks and quickly subdues the guardian, sparing his life at the request of a (very active) mysterious damsel. Lancelot is combative and courageous but also generous. The knight's strong sense of honor, although subordinate to Love's command, remains his guide in all other respects.

During his search for Guinevere, Lancelot tells no one his name. Self-promotion is not honorable. Nor is it advisable to encourage gossip about his motivation in seeking to rescue Guinevere.

Other tests Lancelot faces reveal his complete indifference to any woman but Guinevere. Lust is dead within him except in regard to her person. One hostess, for example, informs Lancelot that she will give

51. See Shirt, "A World Turned Upside Down?"

52. Méla, *Le chevalier de la charrette*, 66–68.

him refuge only if he promises to share her bed. She orders her men to feign a sexual assault on her, stripping her to the waist, so that Lancelot must rescue her, and then she explains that he has won the right to sleep with her, according to the "custom of Logres." Kathryn Gravdal has pointed out the titillating quality of this episode. The reader is invited vicariously to enjoy as well as to fear the rape that is about to occur, before discovering it is a subterfuge. The attackers are revealed to be servants of the victim, acting at her command. She must be held responsible for her own victimization.<sup>53</sup> Chrétien allows us to blame the victim, in effect, and Gravdal is right to point out the unsettling implications of Chrétien's use of such a gambit.

But one must not lose sight of the episode's outcome, which underscores Lancelot's exceptional state, induced by love. The reader may feel stirrings of reluctant desire at the lady's carefully staged enticement, but Lancelot does not. Lancelot is simply annoyed by the whole affair. With obvious displeasure, he complies with the hostess's demand to occupy her bed, lying next to her in discomfort until she gives up and retires to another room. Appeals to desire will extract nothing from Lancelot, even when women disrobe in front of him and grant him rights over them. The next day Lancelot finds a comb lying on the path, with strands of Guinevere's hair entangled in it. The mere sight of this token is enough to make him swoon, and he almost falls off his horse again. Lancelot simply feels no attraction to any woman but Guinevere.<sup>54</sup> After his night with the "Amorous Hostess," Lancelot is a walking refutation of Bernard of Clairvaux's famous quip that "To be always with a woman and not to have sexual relations with her is more difficult than to raise the dead."<sup>55</sup>

Lancelot's love for Guinevere makes rescuing her his paramount duty; answering love's call, in turn, makes him into a better knight. His first trial by combat with the evil Meleagant is to determine whether Guinevere will go free. Lancelot's love makes him a more formidable opponent, especially after he sees that Guinevere is watching the duel. He catches sight of her thanks to the cries of a mysterious, very active damsel, a companion of Guinevere's, who calls out to Lancelot twice during the fighting, instructing him to look up at the tower and see his queen. Lancelot soon gains the upper hand, but when Guinevere indicates that she does not want Lancelot to kill Meleagant, Lancelot ceases

53. Gravdal, "Chrétien de Troyes."

54. Marcus, *Between Women*, 3.

55. Quoted in Carolyn Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Famine: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 16.

fighting at once, while Meleagant disloyally continues hacking at him. Far from being passive, Guinevere and her damsel direct the duel.<sup>56</sup>

For Guinevere, Lancelot makes himself ridiculous. Benton and others regard Lancelot's love symptoms as comic. He rides in a cart, he falls into a stream, he almost falls from a window, he swoons over a comb. But there is a didactic aim behind the humor. The reader is invited to look beyond appearances. Lancelot may seem ridiculous at times, we are taught, but when his reactions matter he is the best knight, indomitable, touchy about his honor, but also loyal and generous. When he rescues Guinevere, he also sets free his fellow Logrians held captive in a foreign land. Arthur could not ask for better service.

Chrétien also provides lessons about Guinevere, whose conduct in the face of great danger is just as a queen's should be. After first defeating Meleagant and winning access to Guinevere, Lancelot finds to his dismay that she refuses him. Later she explains that she had heard that Reason made him hesitate for a moment before getting into the cart; his devotion to Love was less than perfect. This rejection has puzzled many scholars. Roberta Krueger sees in this act "a gesture of feminine resistance to an ideology that circulates women as objects"; Guinevere "opposes chivalric values."<sup>57</sup> But Lancelot has no interest in asserting his rights under the "custom of Logres," whether over Guinevere or over anyone else. He accepts Guinevere's refusal of him without demur. The ideal of courtly love required that both lovers make a willing gift of self. Guinevere's initial rejection of Lancelot seems designed to underscore this facet of true love. Lancelot, by his quest and his victorious combat, may appear to have won certain rights. But both he and Guinevere agree: no one has rights over Guinevere.

The queen, however, soon relents. Guinevere and Lancelot's night together, when it finally comes, is treated as a sacred ritual, yielding ecstasy, not mere satisfaction. Lancelot kneels at her bed as if it were an altar before joining her. In their mutual embrace they find

une joie et une mervoille	a joy and a wonder
tel c'onques ancor sa paroille	such that nothing like it
ne fu oïe ne seüe.	has ever been heard or known. <sup>58</sup>

(LINES 4677–4679)

56. Lines 3475–3898; in Méla, *Le chevalier de la charrette*, pp. 252–76.

57. Krueger, *Women Readers*, 60–61.

58. Méla, *Le chevalier de la charrette*, 324. Translation by the author.

But Lancelot had cut his fingers breaking into her room. In the dark he does not realize he is leaving blood on her sheets. In the morning, her captor, Meleagant, sees the blood and accuses Guinevere of adultery, charging she shared her bed with one of Arthur's captive knights, Kay, who has wounds that will not heal. Some scholars have read a judgment against adultery into the discovery of the bloody sheets. Peggy McCracken sees the predominance of male concerns in Meleagant's accusation. "This episode," she states, "identifies men's blood as the sign of sexual possession, and Meleagant's accusation defines the possession of the queen as an overt contest between knights: Guenevere cannot have bled in her own bed, the blood on her sheets is evidence of the queen's adultery with Kay, and Meleagant will do battle with Kay to prove the adultery, and to prove his own right to the queen's sexual favors."<sup>59</sup> McCracken's critique of the male-centered character of blood symbolism is revealing. The sharply contrasting characteristics of male and female and the primacy of male preoccupations are found throughout twelfth-century romances.

But one should also consider that the accusation of adultery does not come from Guinevere's husband, Arthur. He is the only party who has a legitimate interest in the matter. Instead it comes from her evil captor, Meleagant. Although under his power, she has resisted his advances. It is she alone who laid down the rules of how she would be treated in captivity; Meleagant's father, King Bademagu, compelled his son to obey her (lines 4058–4065).<sup>60</sup> Now, Meleagant takes up the bloody sheets as a desperately needed rhetorical wedge to challenge her virtue and to humiliate her. It would be hard to contrive a clearer narrative strategy for underscoring the charisma of a ruling lady and, at the same time, for condemning jealousy. Jealousy, as performed by Meleagant, is revealed in all its ugly selfishness. Arising from desire and from a selfish eagerness to possess, jealousy is a base feeling, no part of true love.

Because of Meleagant's accusation of adultery, Guinevere needs a champion. Just as with William Marshal and Margaret of France, a trial by combat is the proper response to a charge of adultery or to any insulting claim. Kay denies the charge and wishes to defend his lady and himself, but his wounds are too serious. Guinevere demands that Lancelot defend her, telling him,

59. Peggy McCracken, in *The Curse of Eve*, 12.

60. Méla, *Le chevalier de la charrette*, 286.

An escrance m'an a mise	I am discredited
Vers trestoz ces qui l'oent dire,	For all who hear what he says,
Se vos ne l'an faites desdire.	If you do not make him retract it. <sup>61</sup>

(LINES 4920–4922)

Lancelot replies that he will fight to ensure “*that no one will dare to think it*” (“*que onques ne le se pansa*,” line 4935, emphasis added). In the second combat with Meleagant that follows, Lancelot’s victory will result, not in the rescue of the queen, but in the remaking of the truth about her. This is exactly the same conception of trial by combat as the one that inspired William Marshal at Henry II’s Christmas court in Caen in 1182, as reported by his biographer, discussed in chapter 1.

Lancelot calls on Meleagant’s father to see that the rules of trial by combat are respected. Each party swears, Meleagant that the blood on the sheets is Kay’s; Lancelot that Kay has never lied. What Lancelot defends, it is worth noting, is only a partial truth. The blood on the sheets is not Kay’s, to be sure, and Kay has not lied about this. But it is also the case that Guinevere is not innocent of the wrongdoing Meleagant charges her with. Nonetheless, Lancelot’s victory will make her innocent. The unfolding of the poem endorses trial by combat and the space of silence that trial by combat is meant to defend. After Meleagant’s defeat, the threat of Lancelot’s violence will ensure that no one dare even think such things of Guinevere. Lancelot’s verbal trickery, combined with the rule-governed violence of the duel, *make* Guinevere innocent.

A principal aim of *Lancelot* is to establish the sharp contrast between the love that Lancelot and Guinevere feel, on the one hand, and mere desire, on the other. But the second duel with Meleagant also allows the reader to see jealousy (when it threatens love) as sacrilegious and the public exposure of lovers’ intimacies as the act of a criminal. The figure of Arthur remains remote throughout the story—just as a husband and august king ought to be.<sup>62</sup> Arthur gives his vassals and his wife a free hand, unlike Louis VII at Antioch in 1147, unlike Philip of Flanders at Saint Omer in 1175, unlike Audebert, count of La Marche, who killed his wife’s alleged lover, repudiated his wife, and faced death without an heir in 1177.<sup>63</sup> Lancelot, Guinevere, and Arthur understand the code of aristocratic speech and silence. Lancelot enjoys *de facto* what he

61. *Ibid.*, 328. Translation by the author.

62. Aurell also notes this transformation of Arthur into a remote figure in Chrétien de Troyes’s romances; see Aurell, *L’empire des Plantagenêt*, 172.

63. On these cases, see the discussion in chap. 1.

has no right to, first, by deploying rule-governed violence against the rival Meleagant, and second, by strictly disciplining his own tongue. Guinevere makes no pledges and recognizes no rights over her. It is only Meleagant who shouts and complains. True love becomes an ideal hidden from view, relying for its realization on the shadows created by the rule-governed deployment of aristocratic speech, silence, and violence—that is, by the rules of the feud and of the judicial duel.

Chrétien has very boldly refashioned the Arthurian material he began with, to make a story that is a catechism tinged with irony. Successive episodes test every aspect of Lancelot's exemplary character as knight and lover. To stage these tests, Chrétien invents rather far-fetched characters (the mysterious dwarf) and implausible practices (the humiliation of the cart, the "custom of Logres").<sup>64</sup> Chrétien's Guinevere is also tested, clinging to her autonomy through a lengthy captivity, intimidating her captor, and refusing even to be rescued if rescue means granting another man any rights over her person. Insofar as captivity and marriage permit, Guinevere takes action. So do a series of damsels who appear in various episodes, including the damsel who saves the knight of the ford (lines 888–930) and Meleagant's sister, who frees Lancelot from imprisonment in a tower near the end of the story (lines 6374–6706).<sup>65</sup> Roberta Krueger notes that the "status and motivations" of most of these women figures "are unexplained and they vanish from the narrative after a brief appearance."<sup>66</sup> The same might be said of many male figures, however. The whole of Chrétien's unreal world is made to revolve around the two lovers and the didactic purposes of the plot. Within that framework, a series of women act to promote the love relationship of heroine and hero.

### Aristocratic Speech in the Tristan Myth

No courtly love story has occasioned more scholarly discussion than the myth of Tristan and Isolde. Their adulterous love brings so much suffering and entangles them in so much apparent wrongdoing that, to many scholars, the story's purpose has seemed to be to warn readers against love. The tale is known in several versions, two of the earliest

64. White, *King Arthur in Legend and History*, 13–14, indicates there was a precedent for what Chrétien called the "custom of Logres" in the prologue to chapter 18 of the *Life of Saint Cadoc*, of ca. 1075.

65. Méla, *Le chevalier de la charrette*, 98–100, 424–44.

66. Krueger, *Women Readers*, 56.



of which, by authors known as Thomas of Brittany and Béroul, were written in Old French at about the time that Chrétien was preparing his tale of Lancelot and Guinevere. There is another, perhaps earlier, version in Old French now lost.<sup>67</sup> Almost nothing is known of Béroul or of Thomas, but some scholars place them in Eleanor of Aquitaine's entourage between the 1150s and the 1170s.<sup>68</sup> Here we will look briefly at the versions by Béroul and by Gottfried von Strassburg, to see how the rules of aristocratic speech and of the duel operate in these texts. As in Chrétien's *Lancelot*, the two lovers sought to enjoy an adulterous love within a space of silence. In the Tristan myth, however, the threat came not from an evil captor, but from Isolde's jealous husband, King Mark. In an age of indissoluble marriage, a husband's jealousy was in many ways worse than a captor's; from a husband there was no escape.

In Béroul's version, called *Tristan et Iseut*, the weight of responsibility for the disastrous course of love is placed squarely on the shoulders of Iseut's husband, King Mark. Mark, king of Cornwall, sends Tristan to Ireland to bring back a wife for him. Tristan and the beautiful Iseut fall in love on the trip back. Mark, urged on by treacherous barons and a malicious dwarf, gradually becomes convinced of their adultery. Mark decides to burn the two lovers on a pyre. But one of Mark's loyal barons, Dinas, Lord of Dinan, counsels him against this step. He warns of the terrible grief that will seize his subjects if the queen is burnt alive. Dinas will no longer serve Mark if he takes this step. Even a king of seven kingdoms would expose his rule to great danger if he put his queen to death without a trial.<sup>69</sup> But Mark is not dissuaded. Through trickery, Tristan escapes. At the last moment Mark decides that a worse punishment than fire for Iseut would be to give her over to the captivity of a band of lepers. But Tristan rescues her from the lepers and the lovers find refuge in a deep forest.

Later, for a time, the two lovers are reconciled to King Mark. The reconciliation comes about after a hermit priest urges them to tell Mark

67. For the Thomas of Brittany version, see Thomas, *Tristan et Yseut: Le fragment inédit de Carlisle*, edited with a translation into modern French by Ian Short, in *Tristan et Yseut: Les premières versions européennes*, ed. Chistiane Marchello-Nizia (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 123–212. On dating the Béroul version, see Guy R. Mermier, "Introduction," in Béroul, *Tristan and Yseut*, xv–xxiii; Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 165–83; Frances L. Decker, "Gottfried's *Tristan* and the *Minnesang*: The Relationship between the Illicit Couple and Courtly Society," *German Quarterly* 55 (1982): 64–79.

68. Regine Pernoud, *Aliénor d'Aquitaine* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1964), 126; C. Stephen Jaeger, "Foreword," to Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan and Isolde*, ed. Francis G. Gentry, trans. A. T. Hatto and Francis G. Gentry (New York: Continuum, 1988), vii–xvii, see p. ix.

69. Béroul, *Tristan and Yseut*, lines 1085–1120 (pp. 56–57).

a “beautiful lie” (“bel mentir”).<sup>70</sup> They must swear that they have never had carnal relations. Tristran will defend their claim by challenging anyone who questions them. No one will dare go against Tristran, the priest explains. They do as the priest advises. The prospect of a trial by combat with Tristran silences all would-be accusers, as the priest predicted. Iseut returns to Mark’s castle. As in the *History of William Marshal*, as in *Lancelot*, so in Bérout’s *Tristran* the truth or falsehood of claims is a question of honor, to be determined by rule-governed violence. In effect, Bérout makes the hermit priest into an apostle of aristocratic speech and a protector of secret love.

The Bérout text has survived only in an unfinished version. But Bérout’s attitude is clear. Mark is said to be “hesitant.” The barons who are jealous of Tristran’s merit and success, and who urge on Mark’s jealousy, are called “felons.” It is God’s will that they all die, we are told. The lovers are innocent; their bond enjoys divine favor. Iseut even asks King Arthur’s help, at one point. Arthur and his famous knights come to Cornwall. Arthur speaks to Mark, king-to-king. He tells Mark that he should not let people raise doubts about his wife.

“Rois Marc,” fait il, “qui te conselle	“King Mark,” says he, “whoever advises you
Tel outrage si fait mervelle;	[To do] such an ignominious thing, acts in a scandalous way;
Certes,” fait il, “sil se desloie.	Surely,” said [Arthur], “he acts very disloyally.
Tu es legier a metre en voie.”	You are easy to convince.” <sup>71</sup>

(LINES 4141–4144)

Over and over, the story reiterates the point: Mark’s jealousy, however justified, is an obsession not befitting a king and is therefore threatening to his rule. Silence is the proper stance of a king whose queen and whose best knight have formed an alliance. Mark undermines his own power by raising doubts about his queen. Better to pretend that she does no wrong.

As with Chrétien’s *Lancelot*, one finds again echoes of Eleanor of Aquitaine’s suspected dalliance with Raymond of Antioch in 1147, of Philip of Flanders’ 1175 attack on Walter of Fontanes, and of William

70. *Ibid.*, lines 2352–2356 (p. 119).

71. *Ibid.*, 209.

Marshal's rumored affair with Margaret of France in 1182. These events and these texts are so close in time that it is reasonable to ask whether gossip influenced storytelling or storytelling influenced gossip. Like Chrétien's *Lancelot*, Bérout's *Tristan et Iseut* features a splendid knight and an active, autonomous queen united in an adulterous love relationship blessed by God. As with Chrétien's *Lancelot*, Bérout's *Tristan et Iseut* takes place in a long-ago land; any relationship with real persons living or dead, as the present-day disclaimer goes, is purely coincidental. Fiction, as a genre, provides deniability; it is an apt vehicle for covert lessons about the covert code of tricky speech. And in these twelfth-century *fictions*, inquiring into the *truth* of charges of adultery is condemned as the act of an evil knight or as the foolish misstep of a misguided king intent on destroying his own kingdom.

The better-known Middle High German version of the story, Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan und Isolde*, composed before 1220, is a much more elaborate and self-consciously literary work than any of the twelfth-century Old French romances. Very little is known about Gottfried, except that he was one of a prolific second generation of *Minnesänger* and of German romance writers who developed Arthurian material into a sophisticated literary corpus. This famous text has been frequently read as a condemnation of passion and its destructive effects, but such a reading succumbs on closer inspection if one keeps the rules of aristocratic speech in mind.

In the 1930s, Denis de Rougemont praised Gottfried's *Tristan* because "it set passion in a framework within which it could be expressed in symbolical satisfactions." The need of such myths for the passion of love is "historically permanent," he declared.<sup>72</sup> Myth can help one to realize that passion is ultimately destructive. "So dreadful and unutterable is the real meaning of passion that not only are those persons who undergo it unable to grow aware of its end, but also writers wishing to depict it in all its marvellous violence are driven to employ the deceptive language of symbols."<sup>73</sup> A myth such as Gottfried's *Tristan* is useful because it allows the reader vicarious enjoyment of passion but at the same time shows the reader clearly where passion leads—to destruction and death. More recently, C. Stephen Jaeger, in contrast to Rougemont, realized that Gottfried was no enemy of passion; instead he "seems to

72. Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (New York: Pantheon, 1956), 22–23; originally published as *L'amour et l'Occident* (Paris: Plon, 1939).

73. *Ibid.*, 46.

be sanctifying an adulterous love affair by applying the forms of orthodox religion to it."<sup>74</sup> But, like Rougemont, Jaeger rejects any sanctification of love as dangerous. In *Tristan*, as in the letters of Heloise, Jaeger insists, "passion is idealized against logic and in blindness of the destruction it can cause."<sup>75</sup>

By his own admission Gottfried is intent on showing that the pleasures and pains of love are intricately interrelated. This was nothing new. Giraut de Borneil made the same point; Chrétien de Troyes's Lancelot suffers repeated self-mutilation in his quest to liberate Guinevere and is brought to thoughts of suicide by her apparent rejection of him before he finally wins Guinevere's embrace. But Giraut's and Lancelot's suffering was due to uncertainty about their beloved's attitude. In Gottfried's treatment, in contrast, much of the two lovers' suffering comes after they are united in a love relationship and derives from the contradictory imperatives of honor and love.

It is easy to conclude that Gottfried invites us to condemn the lovers for acting dishonorably. But that is far from his intent. His work remains a glorification of adulterous courtly love, that is, adulterous love that shelters within the silence of aristocratic speech. King Mark's repeated violations of this code of speech only underscore its importance. However, Gottfried does not simply condemn Mark's jealousy. He handles Mark with a certain compassion that also colors the characterization of Tristan and Isolde's sufferings. By this means, Gottfried elevates the love triangle itself to the level of tragedy, muting the didactic condemnation of jealousy conveyed by Béroul's text.

Far from condemning adulterous love, Gottfried insists that, on condition we love well, joy will compensate for the inevitable sorrows love brings. True love means

<p>,,, der stet vriundes mut,          der steteclie sanfte tut,          der die rosen bi dem dorne treit,          die senfte bi der arbeit;          an dem ie lit verborgen          die wunne bi den sorgen;          der an dem ende ie vroude birt,</p>	<p>. . . steadfast friendship in love,          which never fails to comfort us          and bears roses as well as thorns          and solace as well as trouble.          In such friendship joy always          lurks among the woes;          however often it is clouded,</p>
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74. Jaeger, "Foreword," viii.

75. C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 162–63.

als ofte, als er besweret wirt:	it will bring forth gladness in the end.
den vindet lutzel ieman nu;	Nowadays, no one finds such steadfast affection,
also vorwerke wir dar zu.	so ill do we prepare the soil. <sup>76</sup>

(LINES 12,269–12,278)

By this doctrine, although the narrative heaps suffering on the two lovers they must be understood to enjoy a deep, compensating happiness. Through their sufferings, Tristan and Isolde learn they can count on each other and are able to be separated from each other for longer periods of time.<sup>77</sup>

The lovers' suffering is not due to feelings of guilt. They have done nothing wrong. Tristan goes to Ireland in search of a wife for King Mark only because Mark's jealous barons threaten to kill Tristan.<sup>78</sup> These barons want Mark to have a son who will supplant Tristan as heir apparent. Once Tristan has Isolde on the ship returning to Cornwall, the two accidentally drink a love potion that was prepared by Isolde's mother for use by Mark. When Isolde's companion, Brangane, sees the two wasting away with love, she realizes what has happened and explains it to them. Tristan cries, "It is in God's hands," ("nu waltes got!").<sup>79</sup> However, Brangane, rather than allow them to die of unrequited longing, helps the two lovers to meet secretly and consummate their love. As Isolde's female companion, she mediates the establishment of the love relationship. This second threat of death, not from Mark's jealous barons but from the lovesickness of the potion, leads Tristan toward Isolde's arms.

Once back in Cornwall, however, honor compels the two lovers to go through with Isolde's marriage to Mark.

swie wol Tristande tete	However much the life [with Isolde]
daz lebn, daz er hete,	that Tristan led was to his liking,
sin ere zoh in doch der van.	his sense of honor restrained him.
sin triuwe lac im alles an,	His loyalty laid regular siege to him
daz er ir wol gedahte	so that he kept it well in mind

76. Gottfried von Strassburg (abbreviated as GvS in following notes), *Tristan and Isolde*, 162; all quotes in English are adapted from the English prose translation by A. T. Hatto and Francis G. Gentry (New York: Continuum, 1988). Original text from Wolfgang Spiewok, ed., *Das Tristan-Epos Gottfrieds von Strassburg* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989), 182–83.

77. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 218; *Das Tristan-Epos*, lines 16,621–16,660, p. 235.

78. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 136; *Das Tristan-Epos*, lines 10,311–10,318, p. 158.

79. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 165; *Das Tristan-Epos*, line 12,494, p. 185.

unde Marke sin wip brahte	and brought Mark his wife.
die beide, triuwe unde ere,	Honor and loyalty
die twungen im sere	pressed him hard:
sin herze unde sine sinne	these two,
die da vor an der minne	who had lost
waren worden sigelos,	the battle to Love
do er die minne fur si kos:	when Tristan had decided in her favor,
die selben sigelosen zwo,	this vanquished pair
die gesigeten an der minne do.	now vanquished Love in turn. <sup>80</sup>

( LINES 12,513–12,526)

The lovers' attempt to preserve appearances arises not from guilt, but from a shared sense of honor and loyalty toward Mark.

Isolde feared Mark would discover that she was no longer a virgin, so she begged her cousin and companion, Brangane, to take her place in the dark on her wedding night. Again Brangane, the active female companion, saves all. But later in the night Isolde had to replace her, and she found it distressing to deceive her new husband.

. . . die junge kunegin Ysot,	. . . young Queen Isolde,
die leite sich mit maneger not,	in great distress
mit tougenlichem smerzen	and with secret pain
ir mutes unde ir hercen	in her heart,
ze dem kunege, ir herren, nider.	laid herself down beside her lord the King. <sup>81</sup>

( LINES 12,659–12,663)

Both Tristan and Isolde are preoccupied with protecting Mark, as well as all of Mark and Isolde's many subjects, from the truth. If no one speaks it, then it is not the case. Here aristocratic honor and loyalty are treated as perfectly compatible with keeping secrets, just as in Bérout's version, just as in Chrétien's *Lancelot*, just as in the *History of William Marshal*. Yet the two lovers of Gottfried's tale remain intermittently troubled about their deceit.

Gottfried, like Bérout, warns his readers against jealousy. "What harms love more than doubt and suspicion?" ("was mag ouch liebe nater gan / danne zwivel unde arcwan?" lines 13,777–13,778) Gottfried asks.<sup>82</sup> For the lover afflicted with jealousy, getting to the bottom of a

80. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 165, *Das Tristan-Epos*, pp. 185–86.

81. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 167; *Das Tristan-Epos*, p. 187.

82. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 182; *Das Tristan-Epos*, p. 201.

suspected offense and discovering there is nothing to it does no good. Either jealousy soon returns over a new circumstance or else suspicion turns into certainty, which brings the lover even worse suffering.

die vorderen beide,	The two ills which
die im e beswereten den muot,	troubled [the jealous lover] before
di duhten [ <i>in</i> ] danne guot;	would now be welcome to him.
mohter si danne wider han,	If only he could have them back,
so nemer zwivel unde wan,	he would now accept doubt and surmise,
daz er der waren kunde	if only he need never
niememer niht bevunde.	know the truth. <sup>83</sup>

(LINES 13,806–13,812)

It is Mark's steward Marjodoc who first plants the seed of doubt in Mark's mind; from this moment he is drawn into an infernal spiral.

. . . dem gieng ouch Marke vaste mite:	. . . Mark perservered in this same
	senseless habit.
er wante spate unde vruo	Day and night he bent
allen sinen sin dar zuo,	his whole mind to ridding himself
daz er den zwivel unde den wan	of doubt and suspicion,
gerne hete hin getan	and was most eager to arrive
unde daz er mit der warheit	through proof positive
uf sin herceclichez leit	at his own
vil gerne komen were:	mortal sorrow.
dez was er gevere	Such was his set intention. <sup>84</sup>

(LINES 13,844–13,852)

Lovers will have doubts, Gottfried concludes, but they should not investigate them. "Doubt should have part in love. Love must find her salvation with it" ("zwivel sol an liebe wesen; / mit dem muz liebe genesen . . . ," lines 13,823–13,824).<sup>85</sup> If Mark had understood this, Tristan and Isolde's story would have had a happy ending.

Much has been made of Isolde's trial by ordeal, when she declares on oath that no man but Mark has ever held her in his arms with the exception of a certain pilgrim who saved her from falling off a boat

83. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 182; *Das Tristan-Epos*, p. 201.

84. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 183; *Das Tristan-Epos*, p. 201.

85. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 183; *Das Tristan-Epos*, p. 201.

just before her oath (and who was Tristan in disguise).<sup>86</sup> After swearing, Isolde picks up the hot iron bar and is not burned. Her temporary escape from suspicion gives Gottfried occasion to launch into ironic reflection on the misuse of judicial ordeals.

<p>da wart wol geoffenberet unde al der werlt beweret daz der vil tugenthafte Crist wintschaffen als ein ermel ist: er vuget unde suchet an, daz manz an in gesuchen kan, als gevuge unde als wol, als er von allem rehte sol, erst allen herzen bereit ze durhnehte unde zuo trugeheit.</p>	<p>Thus it was made manifest and confirmed to all the world that Christ in His great virtue is pliant as a windblown sleeve. He falls into place and clings, whichever way you try Him, closely and smoothly, as He is bound to do. He is at the beck of every heart for for honest deeds or fraud.<sup>87</sup></p>
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(LINES 15,733–15,744)

This remark, in the minds of some scholars, rules out any suggestion that, for Gottfried, the love of Tristan and Isolde enjoyed divine approval. But it is equally possible that Gottfried's irony was aimed at the questionable value of trial by ordeal rather than at love. The ordeal was condemned definitively in Gottfried's own day, in a ruling by Pope Innocent III in 1212.<sup>88</sup>

Gottfried's belief in the spiritual status of love is, in any case, evident. Tristan and Isolde constantly turn to prayer, begging God's help in their efforts to remain together and preserve secrecy. Gottfried reports these prayers with perfect seriousness, and every one of these prayers is answered.<sup>89</sup> The cave where Tristan and Isolde seek refuge after Mark finally banishes them is a veritable cathedral of love. Various aspects of the cave represent integrity, constancy, purity, and modesty. Three high windows, representing kindness, humility, breeding, allow the light of honor to shine in. The bed in the center of the cave is made of crystal, because "Love should be of crystal—transparent and

86. Jaeger, "Foreword," vii; Decker, "Gottfried's *Tristan* and the *Minnesang*"; Robert Müller, "La femme et la *Minne* dans le *Tristan* de Gottfried von Strassburg," in *Amour, mariage et transgressions au Moyen Age*, ed. Danielle Buschinger and André Crépin (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1984), 195–201.

87. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 207; *Das Tristan-Epos*, p. 224.

88. Müller, "La femme et la *Minne*," 198; Finbarr McAuley, "Canon Law and the End of the Ordeal," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 26 (2006):473–513.

89. For example, GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 164, 166, 193–94, 200, 205.



translucent" ("die minne sol ouch cristallin, / durh sihtic unde durh luter sin," lines 16,983–16,984).<sup>90</sup> Love, Gottfried comments, is not found in street or court, but hidden away in the wilds. "I know this well," he remarks, "for I have been there" ("diz weiz ich wol, wande ich was da," line 17,100).<sup>91</sup>

Gottfried no less than Bérout approved of Tristan and Isolde's adultery and deplored King Mark's suspicions. But unlike Bérout, he did not condemn King Mark. Gottfried called him a "waverer" (p. 185), a "pathless man" (p. 230). Yet Gottfried's Mark was almost saved by love when he saw Tristan and Isolde sleeping in the cave without touching each other.

minne, die sunerinne, die quam da zu geslichen gestreichet unde gesrichen ze wunderlichem vlizze . . .	Then Love, the Reconciler, stole to the scene, preened and painted wondrously . . .
.....	.....
dane was zwivel noch wan: der minnen uber gulde, die guldine unschulde, die zoh im ougen unde sin mit ir gespensticheite hin, hin da der osterliche tac aller siner vroude lac.	Doubt and Suspicion were no more. Love's gilding, golden Innocence drew his eyes and senses with its magical enticement, drew them to where the Eastertide of all his joys was lying. <sup>92</sup>
(LINES 17,536–17,539, 17,550–17,556)	

He had never loved Isolde as now. For a while, at least, Mark permitted the lovers to return to court.

Gottfried, like Bérout and Chrétien, upheld the honor of a transgressive love, so long as the secret was actively guarded by the two lovers. Meleagant seizes on any sign that Guinevere might have committed an indiscretion, hoping to use it against her, to shame her, and to batter down her self-possession. His desire for her is great; he feels no love. He is like Mark's barons, a selfish usurper. Mark's love for Iseut/Isolde is deep and genuine, but it too readily succumbs to jealousy, a husband's temptation, and the disastrous longing for certainty that jealousy imposes.

90. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 223; *Das Tristan-Epos*, 239.

91. Description of the cave of love: GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 220–26, quote from p. 225; *Das Tristan-Epos*, lines 16,679–17,274, pp. 235–42, quote from p. 240.

92. GvS, *Tristan and Isolde*, 230; *Das Tristan-Epos*, 246.

The same lesson could have been extended beyond love to all aristocratic dealings of the period. A ruler seldom advanced his authority or prestige by an overly strict accounting of all that was due to him. Explicit claims had to be defended; open challenges had to be defeated. Therefore it was important not to make a claim explicitly unless one had the will and the capacity to enforce it. Silent enjoyment must be kept silent.

## The “Lais” of Marie de France

Among the best-known early verse narratives of the courtly love tradition are the *Lais* of Marie de France. She was a contemporary of Chrétien de Troyes and probably a protégée of Eleanor of Aquitaine or of a “Count William” close to the Angevin court.<sup>93</sup> Her short tales, popular in her own day, have enjoyed enduring popularity and have also aroused their share of scholarly perplexity and debate.<sup>94</sup> R. Howard Bloch reads several of Marie’s stories as fatalistic: secret love is inevitably exposed, with dire consequences for the lovers.<sup>95</sup> Courtly love was adulterous love, Bloch reminds his readers, and “deception cannot be divorced from the theme of adultery.”<sup>96</sup> This view is consistent with Bloch’s larger sense of courtly love literature as presenting a vision of impossible or doomed relationships, in which speech—necessary for the realization of love—inescapably leads to love’s exposure. Bloch is right to emphasize the crucial role that silence plays in Marie de France’s *Lais*. But this silence takes on a new meaning when placed in the context of the code of aristocratic speech of Marie’s own public.

E. Jane Burns finds in Marie de France’s *Lai de Lanval* a case of courtly literature depicting ladies who were capable of “direct critiques of male configurations of courtly love, through the double-voiced speech of ‘bodytalk,’ or through innovative responses to authoritative

93. Finke and Shichtman suggest Marie’s patron was William Marshal; see Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, “Magical Mistress Tour: Patronage, Intellectual Property, and the Dissemination of Wealth in the ‘Lais’ of Marie de France,” *Signs* 25 (2000): 479–503; Chauou finds such a hypothesis plausible: *L’idéologie Plantagenêt*, 95–96. See also Lejeune, *Littérature et société*, 422–30.

94. On the popularity of the *Lais* in her own day, see Donald Maddox, “Rewriting Marie de France: The Anonymous ‘Lai du conseil,’” *Speculum* 80 (2005): 399–436.

95. R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), esp. pp. 130–34, 170–74. Bloch elaborates on these views in *The Anonymous Marie de France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

96. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 136.

discourse.<sup>97</sup> Benjamin Semple supports the more common view that Marie saw herself as an advocate for, and instructor in the ways of, courtly love. Semple insists—in contrast to Bloch—that Marie was intent on “demonstrating that sexual behavior was not incompatible with a stable social order.”<sup>98</sup> In the context of twelfth-century Christianity’s sweeping condemnation of sexual pleasure and insistence upon women’s abject sinful nature, such a demonstration could only benefit women, in Semple’s view. Robert R. Edwards reads Marie de France as exploring how lovers can successfully combine desire and loyalty into sustained relationships.<sup>99</sup>

Scholars generally recognize that each *lai* (tale) represented a lesson, a set piece, or cautionary tale. But Semple and Edwards offer readings of her stories that take her claims about them at face value and cohere with the context of aristocratic speech in which they were written. Marie was an advocate and teacher of love. For her, love was primary, but also, if those involved were wise, love could be reconciled with other loyalties and duties. As her Prologue begins, she declares that she writes from a sense of moral imperative.

Qui Deus a duné esciënce	One to whom God has given knowledge
E de parler bone eloquence,	And eloquence in speaking
Ne s'en deit taisir ne celer.	Should not remain silent or hidden. <sup>100</sup>

(LINES 1–3)

But what is the character of this moral imperative?

Many difficulties are easily settled if one supposes that her mission was similar to Chrétien’s and Bérout’s. She, too, under the cover of fictions about the long-ago and far-away, was celebrating a shadow religion of love that could flourish in the silences of aristocratic speech. She notes that ancient philosophers often expressed themselves “rather obscurely” (“assez oscurement”) so that those who came afterward could add commentaries to the texts “and put in their contribution of

97. E. Jane Burns, “Courtly Love, Who Needs It? Recent Feminist Work in the Medieval French Tradition,” *Signs* 27 (2001): 23–57, see p. 44.

98. Benjamin Semple, “The Male Psyche and the Female Sacred Body in Marie de France and Christine de Pizan,” *Yale French Studies* 86 (1994): 164–86, quote from p. 173.

99. Robert R. Edwards, *The Flight from Desire: Augustine and Ovid to Chaucer* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 85–103.

100. Marie de France, *Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Karl Warnke and Laurence Harf-Lancner, with French translation by Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1990), 22; translation by the author, following the French of Harf-Lancner.

sense” (“e de lur sen le surplus metre,” lines 11–16).<sup>101</sup> This may be an allusion to her own procedure. Offering what is ostensibly a collection of Breton tales that she knows to be “true,” Marie invites her reader to supply the implicit catechism of love.

*Guigemar*, which is the *lai* placed first in the two most complete surviving manuscripts, offers a lesson in support of love that could not be more explicit or more heretical without breaking with the cover of fiction.<sup>102</sup> Wounded by a magical fawn, Guigemar is carried by a mysterious boat to an enclosed garden where he finds a young lady and her companion. This lady is the wife of a very old man who is extremely jealous and who keeps her confined to the garden, an adjoining room, and a chapel. As the lady and her companion nurse Guigemar back to health, Guigemar and the lady are stricken with love.

Marie describes the frescoes that cover the walls of the lady’s room in some detail. Venus, the goddess of love, is depicted demonstrating “the characteristics and the nature” of love, “how a man must maintain love and well and loyally serve” (lines 236–238). In one panel,

Le livre Ovide, ou il enseigne	Ovid’s book, where he teaches
Coment chascun s’amur estreigne,	How each can repress his love,
En un fu ardant le getout	[Venus] threw in the burning flame
E tuz icels escumenjout	And excommunicated all those
Ki ja mais cel livre lirreient	Who ever read that book
Ne sun enseignement fereient.	Or follow its teachings. <sup>103</sup>

(LINES 239–244)

In this passage, Marie sets up love as a religion whose goddess—just like the Christian popes and bishops—has an official doctrine, burns heretical books, and excommunicates those who defy her teachings. But she is only describing a fresco, an elegant decoration of a well-born lady’s bedroom.

The book that Venus consigns to the flames is Ovid’s *Remedia Amoris*. In the *Remedia Amoris*, the Roman poet—in his usual tongue-in-cheek fashion—offered a series of strategies for overcoming lovesickness. A lost love is not worth dying over, Ovid assures us; a few tears are sufficient. Busy yourself with farming, business, or politics, he advises.

101. Marie de France, *Lais*, 23.

102. See Philippe Walter, “Notice,” in Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. and trans. Philippe Walter (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 412–14.

103. Marie de France, *Lais*, 38–39. Also cited by Edwards, *The Flight from Desire*, 86–89.

Remind yourself how cruel your lover was, how ugly her legs looked. Make love with someone else; it will diminish your longing. Avoid solitude. For all his constant invocations of Venus and Cupid, Ovid did not treat love as sublime or worthy of tragedy, and he attached no moral value to fidelity.

For Marie's Venus, this was heresy. In the rest of Marie's *lai*, Guigemar and his lady go on to demonstrate unshakable loyalty through excruciating tests and separations. Guigemar never tries to trap or confine his lady, unlike every other male who is attracted to her. These other men include, first, her jealous husband and, second, the knight Meriaduc, who gives her refuge after she finally escapes from her husband but then, out of a selfish love, refuses to let her go with Guigemar. In the end Guigemar besieges and takes a well-fortified town to be reunited with her. The story bears a noteworthy resemblance to Chrétien's *Lancelot*.

In this first *lai*, love is portrayed as a religious devotion that includes sexual desire and legitimates adulterous sexual intercourse. This religious devotion is contrasted both to the self-centered, possessive loves of the lady's husband and of Meriaduc—who resembles Meleagant in a number of respects—as well as to the passing infatuations that many people mistake for love. While Marie is much more concerned with condemning jealousy and possessiveness than the troubairitz and troubadours were, she is nonetheless just as careful as they are to condemn those who pretend to love but want only to satisfy their desire and boast to their friends.

Amur est plaie dedenz cors,  
 E si ne piert niënt defors.  
 Ceo est uns mals ki lunges tient,  
 Pur ceo que de nature vient;  
 Plusurs le tienent a gabeis,  
 Si cume li vilain curteis,  
 Ki jolivent par tut le mund,  
 Puis se avantent de ceo que funt;  
 N'est pas amur, einz est folie  
 E malvaistiez e lecherie.  
 Ki un en puet leial trover  
 Mult le deit servir e amer  
 E estre a sun comandement.

(GUIGEMAR, LINES 483–495)

Love is a wound inside the body,  
 And does not appear outside.  
 This is a malady that lasts a long time,  
 Because it comes from nature;  
 Many make fun of it,  
 Like those courteous villains  
 Who flirt with everyone  
 And then brag about what they've done;  
 That's not love, it's folly  
 And wickedness and lechery.  
 Whoever finds a loyal lover  
 Must serve him and love him  
 And be under his command.<sup>104</sup>

104. Marie de France, *Lais*, 50.

True love is sharply contrasted with the “wickedness and lechery” (“malvaistiez e lecherie”) of those who “brag about what they have done.” The Old French term *lecherie*, like the similar Occitan term *lechchai*, used by Jaufré Rudel in “Lanquan li jorn,” and the English term *lechery*, derives from the Latin *lingere*, “to lick.” As terms for sexual desire, these words underscored the parallel with the appetite of hunger. Unlike those motivated by lechery, true lovers try to keep their relationship secret. Exposure, when it comes, may bring separation and terrible suffering—but not always disaster. In fact, exposure of a secret love relationship is often a prelude to a more open and happier arrangement in Marie’s *lais*, including the *lais* of *Lanval*, *Eliduc*, *Le Fresne*, and *Milun*. Many of the *lais* end happily (or at least, as with *Yonec*, with a righting of injustices); scholars who attribute only dark purposes to her writing must address these outcomes.

Lovers end badly, it is true, in *Equitan*, *Les Deus Amanz*, and *Laüstic*. But in each of these cases, the unhappy ending serves a clear didactic purpose. In *Equitan*, the lovers conspire to murder the lady’s husband, who has so far neither discovered nor threatened their relationship. But they fall victim to their own scheming. Marie disapproved strongly of jealousy, but, as this story makes clear, she also disapproved of lovers whose behavior would justify a husband’s worst fears. In *Les Deus Amanz*, a possessive father sets an impossible test for any aspirant to his daughter’s hand. Her lover passes the test, carrying her successfully to the top of a steep mountain, but then dies of his efforts. She, in turn, soon dies of grief. In this way, the father is punished. In *Laüstic*, a lady habitually rises at night to gaze through a window, hoping to catch a glimpse of her beloved, who lives nearby. When her husband asks what she is doing, she claims she only wishes to hear the sound of the nightingale. Her suspicious husband has the nightingale trapped and killed, and throws it at her, spattering her with blood. She sends the bird’s corpse to her beloved with an explanation, written in gold thread on a piece of cloth. Now he will know why she no longer appears at her window. Her beloved has a gold case made for the bird, as if it were a saint’s relic, and keeps it with him always. Jealousy may block fulfillment, but it cannot change true lovers’ hearts.

Like the *trobairitz* and *troubadours*, like Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France quietly assumes God’s approval of true love. Many supernatural interventions favor lovers’ aspirations. In one *lai*, *Eliduc*, even the renunciation of jealousy is given a Christian twist. *Eliduc* is forced unjustly into exile. He travels to England, with little hope of ever returning to his home. *Eliduc*’s wife is faithful to him during his exile. But,

while in exile, he receives the true love of a young princess and he returns her love. He elopes with her. During their travel and before they can wed, the princess discovers that Eliduc is already married, and she dies at once of grief. Yet the story does not end here. Despondent, Eliduc returns home. Eliduc's wife, surprised at his daily visits to a shrine near their manor, goes there and finds the miraculously fresh body of the dead princess. The wife discovers the princess is not really dead and revives her. When his wife then learns of her husband's love for this princess, she immediately decides to release him from his marital vow and enter a convent. Eliduc and his princess are then united in marriage. Sometime later they, too, enter monastic life, and the three correspond lovingly.<sup>105</sup> The adventure ends happily only because husband, lover, and wife share the same devotion to love itself. The wife rejects jealousy because it is incompatible with her selfless devotion to her husband. Like the active damsels in other romances, she is instrumental in bringing the two lovers together. True love, in her case, is perfectly compatible with entry into the religious life—both involve self-sacrifice in the name of a higher cause. In this story, the church's prohibition of divorce is simply overlooked. In effect, lovers such as these are already leading a religious life, and transition to the monastery is both logical and smooth.

Like Chrétien de Troyes, like Béroul, like Gottfried von Strassburg, like the *trobairitz* and *troubadours* who routinely called on God for aid, Marie de France regards courtly love as a religious duty, fulfilling in itself for those who obey its call. Like them, she knows how to craft her message in such a way that it can teach while appearing to be a mere entertainment.

Marie's lessons are plain in her stories' endings. Love often brings happy endings. When it fails to do so, it is because the lovers broke a rule (indicative of a love that was less than true) or because outsiders have interfered. Often, these outsiders bring disaster on themselves as well as on the lovers. Love, when it occurs, Marie counsels, must be covered over and protected by the silence of aristocratic speech. Third

105. Marie de France, "Eliduc," in *Lais*, 270–327. R. Howard Bloch has singled out this story as demonstrating the problem, in medieval love literature, that "deception cannot be divorced from the theme of adultery" (Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 136). In this story, Bloch points out, the wife is pained when she notices her husband's withdrawal; worse, the beloved dies when she discovers her lover is married. Love, in effect, makes Eliduc a bigamist in intention, even if the beloved's death prevents him from becoming one in fact. For both women, according to Bloch, "the bigamist is ambiguity, and never more so than when he claims to be telling the truth" (137). But the full narrative, with its happy outcome based on mutual self-sacrifice, undercuts Bloch's negative verdict.

parties who fail to realize this put their own well-being at risk as well as that of the lovers.

### More Real-Life Romances of the Late Twelfth Century

The years of English king Henry II's rule from 1154 to 1189 were extremely fruitful ones for the production of courtly love songs and stories. Among the troubairitz and troubadours active in those years were Giraut de Borneil, Raimbaut d'Orange, the Comtessa de Dia, Azalais de Porcairagues, Peire Vidal, Gaucelm Faidit, and Arnaut Daniel. Their songs were sung as far south as Barcelona and were soon winning admirers in north Italian towns.<sup>106</sup> By the 1170s, Gace Brulé, Conon de Béthune, and others had begun emulating them in northern France. The Wace translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth, in 1155, was soon followed by full-fledged Arthurian romances such as those discussed here and others by authors linked with the courts of Henry II and Eleanor, Marie of Champagne, and Philip of Flanders. These texts dramatized courtly love and depicted it as an essential element in the lives of chivalrous knights and their ladies. Like Occitan lyric, Arthurian romance also made clear the proper place of love within the honorable silences of aristocratic speech.

As we saw in chapter 1, William Marshal, as depicted in his biography, was careful to refrain from speech that threatened the honor of young Henry or of his wife Margaret of France. Carefully, he chose a time and place to confront his accusers, challenging them to prove their claims in combat. If we were to suppose that he had, in fact, carried on a secret affair with Margaret, then we could conclude that his behavior conformed to the courtly love ideal. He was prepared to go to any lengths to protect her reputation, accepting the necessity of a permanent separation from her. The ease with which William Marshal's reported behavior can be read as conforming to the rules of courtly love only underscores how trimly the ideal of courtly love fit within the rules governing aristocrats' speech more generally. This is hardly surprising, since courtly love was their invention.

The rapidity with which courtly love's literary forms spread in the late twelfth century reflects this smooth conformity. The development of the German *Minnesang* was as rapid and as popular as the develop-

106. John Larner, "Chivalric Culture in the Age of Dante," *Renaissance Studies* 2 (1988): 117–30.



ment of northern French *trouvère* love songs. Frederick Barbarossa's marriage to Beatrice of Burgundy in 1157 may have brought the German imperial court into contact with Occitan love songs for the first time.<sup>107</sup> One of the earliest German *Minnesänger*, Friedrich von Hausen, was associated with Frederick Barbarossa's court, traveled to Italy with the future emperor Henry VI in 1186–88, and died on crusade with Frederick Barbarossa in 1190. Friedrich von Hausen's songs drew on those of the troubadours Bernart de Ventadorn and Folc of Marseilles and the *trouvères* Gace Brulé and Conon de Béthune.<sup>108</sup> Hartmann von Aue, also a knight of the imperial court, penned an early Arthurian tale in 1186.<sup>109</sup> Frederick Barbarossa staged an elaborate dubbing ceremony for his sons in 1184 at Mainz. A tournament planned for the occasion was called off after a violent storm.<sup>110</sup> The event nonetheless gave imperial sanction to the increasingly elaborate rituals of chivalry.<sup>111</sup> As noted before, courtly love conventions were current in urban Jewish communities as well by the end of this period.<sup>112</sup>

It is safe to conclude that ideas about how to carry out a courtly love relationship became widely known, but it is difficult to say to what extent these ideas influenced practice. Below, two more cases of “real” courtly love mentioned in chronicles of the period will be examined (in addition to those discussed in chapter 1, involving Eleanor of Aquitaine and Raymond of Antioch, Walter Fontanes and Elisabeth of Vermandois, and William Marshal and Margaret of France). These two late twelfth-century stories underscore the excellent fit of the courtly love ideal with existing aristocratic practices under the pressure of the Gregorian Reform.

107. Richard Mortimer, “Knights and Knighthood in Germany in the Central Middle Ages,” in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood: Papers from the First and Second Strawberry Hill Conferences*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1986), 86–103, see p. 100.

108. Hans Jürgen Rieckenberg, “Leben und Stand des Minnesängers Friedrich von Hausen,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 43 (1961): 163–76.

109. William Henry Jackson, “Knighthood and the Hohenstaufen Imperial Court under Frederick Barbarossa (1152–1190),” in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood III: Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference, 1988*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1990), 101–20, see p. 108.

110. Mortimer, “Knights and Knighthood in Germany,” 99.

111. Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, 203–7; Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Naissance de la noblesse: L'essor des élites politiques en Europe*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 478–80.

112. Joseph Shatzmiller, “Un mariage d'amour était-il possible au Moyen Age?” in *Le mariage au Moyen Age (X<sup>e</sup> – XV<sup>e</sup> siècles): Actes du Colloque de Montferrand du 3 mai 1997*, ed. J. Teyssot (Montferrand: Association Il Etait une Fois Montferrand, 1997), 11–14.

*Sybil of Jerusalem and Guy of Lusignan (1180–87)*

The love between Sybil, sister of King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem (reigned 1174–85), and Guy of Lusignan is mentioned in a number of sources.<sup>113</sup> Sibyl had been living at her brother Baldwin's court since the death of her first husband, the count of Jaffa. Guy of Lusignan was one of Baldwin's household knights. Chronicler William of Tyre states that Baldwin agreed to a hasty marriage between Sibyl and Guy in 1180, against his better judgment, due to "the intervention of certain causes."<sup>114</sup> Guy was far below her in rank, and the marriage did not fit Baldwin's dynastic plans. Roger of Howden states that Sibyl found Guy handsome and decided to marry him secretly. When Baldwin found out, Roger states, he wanted to have Guy stoned, but wiser counsel prevailed, and he permitted them to marry.<sup>115</sup>

Six years later, after the death of Baldwin, his sister Sybil was acknowledged as the heir to the throne. But, according to Roger of Howden, some of Jerusalem's barons refused to be ruled by Sybil's husband. Guy was not of sufficiently exalted descent, they insisted. (The Lusignan lords in Poitou enjoyed no official title, not even that of viscount.) Sybil ought to have a husband who was from one of the leading families of Jerusalem. Sybil agreed to divorce Guy before being crowned, but only on condition that the barons promised to be ruled by whomever she chose as husband. To this condition they acquiesced. As soon as she was crowned, however, she turned and declared, to the consternation of the court,

I, Sibyl, elect, as my husband and king, Guy of Lusignan, who was my husband. For I know him to be a man of prowess and gifted with honorable comportment, and with God's help he will reign over His people well. I well know that, so long as he lives, according to God, I must have no other husband, for the Scripture says, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."<sup>116</sup>

113. Sibyl and Guy's secret marriage is known from at least four sources, William of Tyre, both of the chronicles by Roger of Howden, and the *Chronique d'Ernouf*; see John Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion: Kingship, Chivalry, and War in the Twelfth Century* (London: Hambledon, 1994), 243–48.

114. "Causis quibusdam intervenientibus," quoted by Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 245.

115. Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, ed. William Stubbs, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1867), 1:342–43.

116. "Ego Sibylla eligo mihi in regem et maritum meum Gwidonem de Lezinam, qui maritus meus fuit. Scio enim cum virum probum et omni morum honestate praeditum, et per auxilium Dei populum suum bene rectorum. Scio enim quod eo vivente alium secundum Deum habere non possum, cum dicat Scriptura, 'Quos Deus conjungit homo non separet.'" Howden, *Gesta*, 1:358–359, translation by the author, adapting that of Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 244.

Some were indignant at this move. But the knights of the Temple and the Hospitalers saw that Sibyl could not be deflected from her course, and they anointed Guy as king and had him acclaimed by the populace. Sybil's words could be interpreted as a subtle reference to recent decrees by Pope Alexander III (1159–81) reaffirming the indissolubility of marriage and asserting that a valid marriage was based on the free choice of both partners.<sup>117</sup> Guy was soon defeated in battle by Muslim forces and imprisoned. But he was later rescued by Sybil's cousin Richard Coeur de Lion, who installed Guy and Sybil as king and queen of Cyprus on his return trip from the Holy Land.

Again, it is not difficult to discern the rules of aristocratic speech in play in this account. After Sybil grants her love to Guy, Baldwin must make the best of it. He avoids dishonor by formally approving a union he did not want. Later Sybil's high-risk deception of her barons represented a fine maneuver, "very courteous," as Henry II might have called it. It is also not difficult to discern courtly love ideas at work in the clipped Latin account of Sybil's marriage provided by Roger of Howden. As in Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligés*, here also a clandestine love affair becomes a legitimate marriage. As in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, Sybil and Guy's love faces its great test only after their wedding. Sybil's heroic devotion to Guy, as she outwits her husband's powerful opponents at court, although she had everything to gain by dropping him, confirms the depth of her love in a manner that is typical of courtly love literature.<sup>118</sup>

### ***Arnold of Ardres and Ida, Countess of Boulogne (1183–91)***

The love affair of Arnold of Ardres and Ida of Boulogne is known from only one source, the chronicler Lambert of Ardres, whose *History of the Counts of Guines and Lords of Ardres* was written between 1199 and 1206. Lambert wrote about "extremely local characters," according to the work's editor and translator Leah Shopkow.<sup>119</sup> Guines was a small

117. Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 330–31.

118. Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 245–46.

119. Leah Shopkow, "Introduction," in Lambert of Ardres, *The History of the Counts of Guines and Lords of Ardres*, trans. Leah Shopkow (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 1–39, see p. 20. See also, on Lambert of Ardres, Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 253–84. See also Erin L. Jordan, "The 'Abduction' of Ida of Boulogne: Assessing Women's Agency in Thirteenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 30 (2007): 1–20.

county overshadowed by neighboring Boulogne and under the overlordship of the count of Flanders; Ardres was an even smaller lordship within Guines. Lambert's approach to the writing of history was also out of the mainstream. The more learned chroniclers of his time preferred written sources or eyewitnesses. Lambert passed on oral traditions uncritically, shifting at times into verse, then back into prose.<sup>120</sup> He was well read. He certainly knew the writings of Chrétien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus, but, Shopkow notes, Lambert had little patience with the pretensions of courtly love.<sup>121</sup> He was the chaplain of Ardres and watched Arnold of Ardres—heir to the county of Guines—grow up from a boy. His story of Arnold's courtship of Countess Ida of Boulogne is therefore quite probably based on personal knowledge.

According to Lambert, then, Arnold of Ardres was sent by his father, Baldwin II of Guines, to the court of Philip of Flanders for military training, sometime in the 1170s. Arnold would therefore have witnessed the tournaments that Philip participated in during those years, often matching weapons and wits with the Young King and William Marshal. Arnold may also have witnessed or heard about the dénouement of the adulterous love between Count Philip's wife and Walter of Fontanes in 1175. In 1181, Arnold returned to Guines to be knighted by his father, along with several of Arnold's companions. Baldwin fitted them out with armor, horses, and funds, and for two years Arnold did little else but pursue glory on the tournament circuit. He was accompanied by a mentor, selected by his father, who was charged with his further training.

Soon the widowed Countess Ida, daughter of Count Matthew of Boulogne, heard of Arnold's tournament successes. Countess Ida, says Lambert,

indulged in pleasures and worldly delights of the body, like a widow without a husband. And hence she enticed Arnold of Guines as much as she could and loved him with a sexual passion [*venereo amore dilexit*], or at least, she pretended she did [*simulavit*] out of feminine frivolity [*feminea levitate*] and deception. Thus, as messengers and secret signs went back and forth between them carrying tokens of true love [*signis occultis certi amoris*], Arnold loved her with a similarly loving return—or pretended to love her out of manly prudence [*virili prudentia*] and caution. But he did aspire to the land and the dignity of the county of Boulogne once he had won

120. Shopkow, "Introduction," 4–5.

121. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

the favor of this countess through this exhibition of real—or feigned—love [*veri vel simulati amoris*].<sup>122</sup>

But Reynold, son of the count of Dammartin, abandoned his wife and began wooing Ida. And Ida, “inflamed and alight as she was with women’s frivolous love,” would have married Reynold, Lambert says, but for the opposition of her uncle, Philip of Flanders.<sup>123</sup> Blocked in that direction, and full of “stupid female instability,”<sup>124</sup> Ida “again burned and was set afire with love for Arnold of Guines.”<sup>125</sup>

She therefore often sent for him at Desvres, and more often at Merck, where they had secret counsel concerning their private business in the rooms and in hidden places. But even this did not satisfy her. So when she had sent to the hero at Ardres, it happened that the messenger and person in her confidence fell sick three days later and then died there. Hearing this, the countess took the opportunity to see Arnold of Guines in his Ardres and to bury her dead servant there. But Arnold, knowing ahead of time about the countess’s arrival, solemnly received her; when the dead man had been buried, he had her dine with him and when they had spoken of many things, the countess went away. Still, Arnold would have detained her, but he believed the woman when she promised that she would come back to him after a short while.<sup>126</sup>

But Reynold returned to Boulogne with his men and abducted Ida “without really using force,” says Lambert, adding, “Oh! the perfidy of female instability!”<sup>127</sup> Reynold fled with her to a fortress in Lorraine. “However, she asserted that force had been brought by Reynold against her, while she resisted and was unwilling—Oh, the machinations of

122. Lambert of Ardres, *History*, chapter 93, p. 126. The original of this very interesting passage reads: “. . . [Countess Ida] *corporis voluptatibus et secularibus deliciis indulsit*. Unde et Arnoldum de Ghisnis *venereo amore dilexit et sibi, prout potuit, illexit vel feminea levitate et deceptione simulavit*. Intercurrentibus itaque nunciis et signis occultis certi amoris indicium hinc illinc portendentibus, Arnoldus *simili vicissitudine amoris vel eam amavit vel virili prudentia et cautela eam amare simulavit*. Ad terram tamen et Boloniensis comitatus dignitatem veri vel simulati amoris obiectu, recuperata eiusdem comitise gratia, aspiravit.” (Emphasis added; *Historia comitum Ghisnensium*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum* [hereafter *MGH Scriptorum*] (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1877–1909), XXIV, 604–5.

123. Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 126. Original: “vero feminee levitatis quantocius accensa et inflammata amore”; see *MGH Scriptorum*, XXIV, 605.

124. Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 127. Original: “feminee imbecillitatis levitate”; *MGH Scriptorum* XXIV, 605.

125. Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 127; “in amorem Ghisnensis Arnoldi iterum incaluit et accensa est” (*MGH Scriptorum*, XXIV, 605).

126. Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 127; *MGH Scriptorum*, XXIV, 605.

127. Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 127. Original: “o feminee levitatis fidem, immo perfidiam!—ei prout voluit volenti sine viribus vim”; *MGH Scriptorum*, XXIV, 605.

female treachery!—and secretly sent for Arnold of Guines. She announced to him that she promised and swore that she would leave Reynold and marry him, if he could come for her.<sup>128</sup> Arnold gathered a band of friends and knights in his pay and set out for Lorraine. But he and his men were captured at Verdun. Lambert alleges that Ida had tipped her captor off. Arnold remained in captivity for some time, until the archbishop of Reims intervened. By this time, the marriage of Ida and Reynold was an accomplished fact.<sup>129</sup> Arnold and his companions returned to Guines. “And so when Arnold of Guines came to his right mind afterward,” writes Lambert in conclusion, “he understood the inconstancy and falsity of women” and resolved to obey his father in everything, including choice of a spouse.<sup>130</sup> He was soon back on the tournament circuit.

Arnold of Ardres was count of Guines by 1206 and was thus Lambert’s lord and patron at the time Lambert was completing his chronicle. In this passage, as elsewhere, Lambert makes clear his disapproval of aspects of the emerging code of chivalry, of daring rescue attempts, of tournaments, and courtly love, echoing official church views. But he also arranges his account of this episode so that he appears to be telling a tale of regrettable youthful folly in which Arnold had learned a very hard lesson. Arnold is altruistic and trusting, taken in by a woman’s guile. The fault is laid, as far as possible, at the feet of Ida of Boulogne. Lambert deploys the usual tropes of clerical misogyny, blaming women’s levity and instability, their raging appetites. Without a thought about the extreme vulnerability of an unmarried countess who lacks military resources, Lambert rushes to blame the victim. She does not really resist, Lambert asserts, when Reynold captures her. After begging Arnold to rescue her, she betrays him by telling Reynold of the plan. But it is hard to see how Lambert could have known her motivations, or how Reynold treated her, or what threats Reynold may have made—much less, what she precisely did or said. It is also hard to see what motive Ida might have had, other than a strong preference for Arnold, when she took the risky step of secretly sending to Arnold to beg him to rescue her.

128. Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 127. Original: “Illa autem—o feminei machinationem doli!—sibi renitenti et invite vim a Reinaldo illatam contestans, pro Arnolde de Ghisnis clanculo misit, nuncians ei, quod, si pro ea venire satageret, Reinaldum relinquere et ei nubere compromisit et affirmavit”; *MGH Scriptorum*, XXIV, 605.

129. Philip II of France confirmed their marriage by a charter of 1192; see note 323 to Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 127.

130. Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 129. Original, in part: “Postquam igitur Arnolde de Ghisnis ad se ipsum reversus muliebrem deprehendit inconstantiam et fallaciam”; *MGH Scriptorum*, XXIV, 607.

Doubtless, the rules of aristocratic speech were in play. Ida, Arnold, and Reynold each sought to establish her or his own “truth” by adroitly combining promises, trickery, and force, in the usual manner. Rescue is such a common theme in courtly love literature that Lambert or even Arnold himself may have woven this theme retrospectively into what was in reality a no-holds-barred scramble for an heiress.<sup>131</sup> Yet one cannot rule out that the actors experienced the events themselves as an enactment of the rescue motif.

According to Lambert, Ida and Arnold relied on the conventions of courtly love in making their approaches to each other. Ida of Boulogne’s position was not unlike that of Eleanor of Aquitaine’s after she separated from Louis VII in 1152 or that of Laudine after her husband’s death in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Le chevalier au lion* (ca. 1180). Like the divorced Eleanor or the fictional Laudine, the widowed Ida ruled in her own right but in a dangerous world. To protect herself from predatory abduction, she needed a husband. She may have been prepared to accord her love, like Laudine and Eleanor, without much in the way of preliminaries—especially to a young knight of lesser rank with a reputation from the tournament fields, who might be a little overawed by her. For Arnold, her favor meant prestige, greater wealth, and higher rank—instantly, without waiting to inherit his father’s title. Like Marie de France’s fictional young knight Lanval, Arnold might well have felt love, spontaneously and unreflectively, toward a woman who offered him all of that, or a more complex array of feelings, all strongly positive, that he knew to label as “love.” In the background lay the competing interests of the count of Flanders and Philip II of France. A marriage to Reynold meant that Boulogne would fall into the French king’s sphere of influence.

Lambert also utilized the conventions of courtly love in his account in a way quite unlike other chroniclers of the time. The distinction that Lambert makes between real and feigned love was itself an invention of the trobairitz and troubadours. Lambert uses it to discredit Ida’s motives, but, in doing so, he implicitly admits the possibility of true love. “And hence she enticed Arnold of Guines as much as she could and loved him with a sexual passion, or at least, she pretended she did out of feminine frivolity and deception,” says Lambert. He is not sure which it was; both are bad, but the latter is worse, so that is the

131. Jordan concludes from charter evidence that Ida may well have been a willing accomplice to her abduction by Reynold; see Jordan, “The ‘Abduction’ of Ida of Boulogne.” But this still leaves open the question of her motivation for encouraging Arnold to rescue her.

version he prefers. Arnold, he says, loved her back “with a similarly loving return—or pretended to love her out of manly prudence and caution.”<sup>132</sup> (Arnold’s possible simulation is manly, rather than blame-worthy.) This is a case of an author bending over backward to deny that courtly love played any role in the unfolding of events but doing so in a way that indicates an acceptance, on his part, that courtly love is real and that there is a sharp distinction between true love and false love. This insinuation of courtly love conventions into the Latin expressions of a clerical chronicler suggests how deeply these conventions were influencing perception and action in a minor coastal province, far north of the land of Occitan songwriters, by the end of the twelfth century.

### Commonsense Ironies

Another index of the successful dissemination of courtly love conventions is their satirical treatment in fabliaux. These popular “ribald” stories began to circulate in the late twelfth century; they were vernacular tales that dealt with everyday figures. They do not satirize courtly love literature so much as the attempts by everyday people to follow courtly love’s conventions. Such satire relied on the fabliau authors’ agreement with the church in regarding all sexual behavior as motivated by desire-as-appetite. It also relied on the readers’ ready familiarity with people who tried to put courtly love into practice.<sup>133</sup>

In the fabliaux, fast talkers who are concerned only with satisfying immediate desires run circles around antagonists too dull-witted to see through them. Fabliau authors thought the theologians were right, that appetite ruled in relations between sexual partners. Sin was all but inevitable. Yet about their stories there hangs an atmosphere of skepticism: surely God did not want us all to go to hell over a bit of adultery now and then. Accepting the clerical reformers’ theology of desire, fabliau authors playfully exploited the possibilities that this vision of desire opened up for social satire.

When they turned to courtly love, fabliau authors found much to make fun of. In *Le chevalier à la robe vermeille* (The Knight of the Crimson Robe), for example, an anonymous early thirteenth-century

132. From Lambert of Ardres, *History*, chap. 93, p. 126. For the original Latin, see emphasized passages in note 122 above.

133. One might compare the fabliaux that satirized tournaments, another common practice, examined by Chênerie; see M. L. Chênerie, “Ces curieux chevaliers tournoyeurs . . .”: Des fabliaux aux romans,” *Romania* 97 (1976): 327–68.



folktale, we learn of a knight “above reproach” who won the favor of a lady, wife of a rich *vavasseur* (a lower-ranking noble) who lived a few miles away.<sup>134</sup> When the *vavasseur* goes to town on legal business, his wife seizes the occasion to send for her lover. The knight prepares to visit her in his full courtly splendor. He puts on his fine crimson robe and his golden spurs, mounts his best horse, sets on his shoulder the hawk he has raised himself, and brings his two well-trained hunting dogs. Arriving at her dwelling, he ties up his mount and leaves hawk and dogs outside. Hearing him, the lady disrobes and gets into bed. When he prepares to join her there, she insists he also must undress “so that the pleasure will be greater.” He leaves his spurs, robe, and other clothes at the foot of the bed. “There he is, slipping under the sheets: she takes him in her arms. I do not want to make allusion to other joy, other pleasure; I think that those who understand me know what I mean. Both of them gave way to the games that are dear to lovers who sport together.”

But the husband comes home unexpectedly, and the lover must hide under the bed. Seeing the horse, the dogs, the crimson robe, the husband becomes suspicious and enraged. These are gifts for you from my brother, his wife assures him. Did you not see him leaving as you came up? Slowly the husband calms down; he is delighted with these rich gifts. His wife then invites him to join her in bed and induces him to make love, giving him twice as many kisses and caresses as he is accustomed to. Finally he falls asleep, and the lover takes this chance to get out from under the bed and away, taking all his things with him. When the husband awakens and demands to know what has happened to his rich gifts, his wife teases him for having an odd dream. Who would want a used robe, anyway? she asks. A man of your stature and wealth must order new whatever kind of robe or horse he thinks he needs.

This story amuses not by poking fun at the romances by Chrétien or Béroul, but by belittling the attempts of lesser nobles to conform their behavior to courtly standards. Their *nouveau riche* preoccupation with honorable possessions is consistent with their interest, not in love, but in a sexual possession that brings gratification and honor. A story like this could only have been written once the knowledge of courtly love conventions had become general and their prestige taken for granted so that contemptible imitators could be mocked. The story, like all sexual

134. *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles imprimés ou inédits*, 6 vols., ed. Anatole Montaiglon (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles, 1872–90), 3:35–45.

fabliaux, accepts as common sense the church's conception of sexual appetite as a relentless natural force that provides the ulterior motive behind much hypocritical behavior.

This early thirteenth-century fabliau is one more indicator of the establishment within popular consciousness, for urban, educated, and aristocratic strata, of the shadow dualism of love and lust. These audiences, like Lambert of Ardres, like the troubadours Cercamon and Uc de Saint Circ, now understood that true love is rare, that many pretend to feel it, but that those who genuinely feel it will display mastery of desire through heroic acts of self-sacrifice and self-denial, while those who only pretend to feel it will betray themselves in ways that may be sinister or laughable, depending on the circumstances.

### True Love and the Pitched Battle: Rare Ideals?

Lambert's account also suggests that love episodes were beginning to be associated with the period of youthful adventure that was supposed to follow one's dubbing as a knight.<sup>135</sup> Arnold's pursuit of Ida might have become for him, by 1206, a youthful extravagance, remembered with nostalgia and dismay. Did many or most young knights have such adventures?

This may not be the right question. Commonsense notions often exercise their influence not by being directly enacted, but by structuring actors' perceptions of their choices. Other aspects of the chivalric ideal, however firmly accepted in popular imagination, might be rarely put into practice without in any way losing their centrality in the lives of knights and their lords. John Gillingham has examined the wide gap that existed, for example, between aristocratic depictions of warfare and the actual practice of warfare in the twelfth century.<sup>136</sup> This gap is just one aspect of the selective way in which aristocrats chose to make some claims and not others, and to tell stories that dwelt on certain details while passing over others in silence. A similar gap may well have existed between ideal depictions of love and actual love in practice.

As Gillingham notes, for example, famous commanders like Henry II, Philip II, and Richard Coeur de Lion cultivated reputations as impetuous and aggressive warriors. But in reality these and other successful commanders were extremely cautious and meticulous in their manage-

135. Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest*, 253–84.

136. Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 211–26.

ment of logistics and reliance on fortifications. Medieval commanders, in fact, sought to avoid pitched battles at all costs. Geoffrey V of Anjou, Henry II's father, through many successful campaigns and sieges, never engaged in a single pitched battle.<sup>137</sup> Neither did Henry II himself, despite a remarkable record of victories. Philip II of France engaged in only one battle in his long, successful career of conquest, the Battle of Bouvines of 1214. In that case, he was maneuvered into combat against his will.<sup>138</sup> Richard Coeur de Lion, also noteworthy for his successes in war, engaged in at most two or three such battles. William Marshal, in his long career as a professional knight, saw only two pitched battles. Although a young knight might join in a simulated battle once every two weeks during tournament season, the vast majority of warriors could have counted a lifetime of battles on the fingers of one hand.

The practicalities of warfare were, Gillingham also notes, far less heroic than romance or chronicle suggested. In the evening around the fire, knights apparently sought to remember moments of courage, decisive violence, and skillful use of weapons. These were the moments they trained for. Admiring biographies like the *History of William Marshal*, as well as courtly romances and songs, depict the ideal knight as intrepid; he is quick to reach for his weapons, and he challenges foes without hesitation. Much poetic energy was deployed describing the clash of lances on shields and swords on helmets. In practice, however, medieval armies engaged in constant maneuvers that recalled one of the warriors' favorite games, chess. Much of the fighting that occurred took the form of pillaging, sieges, and skirmishes that, however violent, did not put the main forces at risk.

In war, as well, although they were seldom mentioned in the sources, women were ever present: washing clothes, delousing knights.<sup>139</sup> Many high-ranking women went to the Holy Land with their husbands on the Second Crusade (1146–49). William of Tyre comments on womens' participation in combat during the Third Crusade (1189–92).<sup>140</sup> At tournaments, aristocratic ladies routinely assembled to watch the proceedings from a protected stand. Yet, for the most part, both chronicles and romances treat knights as if they moved through the world like spiri-

137. Jim Bradbury, "Geoffrey V of Anjou, Count and Knight," in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood III: Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference 1988*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1990), 21–38, see p. 28.

138. Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 214.

139. *Ibid.*, 221.

140. On William of Tyre, see Helen Solterer, "Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France," *Signs* 16 (1991): 522–49, p. 540.

tual entities, without needs, without money, with no servants other than a squire or two, without audience.

Tournaments were also much more mundane affairs than literary evocations suggest. The pretensions and anxieties of young knights on the tournament circuit were lampooned in numerous *fabliaux*, as M.-L. Chênerie pointed out in a valuable study.<sup>141</sup> A tournament attracted a crowd of merchants, clothiers, armorers, servants, washerwomen, as well as the hated usurers, who preyed on captured knights' need for quick ransom money. Many young men possessed inadequate equipment; others lacked proper training. Often, they fell into debt paying ransoms and desperately sought captives in further tournaments just so they could pay off the moneylenders. William Marshal particularly disliked moneylenders, whom he regarded as usurious predators. Although he paid his debts scrupulously, he and his associates thought nothing of robbing a moneylender they chanced to meet on the road. The church condemned lending at interest, so such robbery was no offense against honor, in his view.<sup>142</sup> But the yawning gap between reality and ideal on the tournament circuit did not prevent tournaments from remaining central rituals of aristocratic and urban life down through the fifteenth century.<sup>143</sup>

It was typical of aristocratic speech that such less-than-exalted details drew little comment. It would be reasonable to guess that a similar gap existed between the honorable descriptions of love affairs in fiction and song and sexual relationships as they were really conducted. Like pitched battles, serious love affairs may have been something one frequently heard about and constantly prepared for but which did not often happen, perhaps once or twice in a lifetime or not at all. Often, the conventions of *fin'amors* may have served only to express casual interests, just as many *trobairitz* and *troubadours* complained. Like pitched battles, romantic love may have nonetheless become by the end of the twelfth century a decisive element in many aristocratic lives, an idealized moment of personal glory for which one must always be prepared.

141. Chênerie, "Ces curieux chevaliers." See also Georges Duby, *Le Dimanche de Bouvines: 27 juillet 1214* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

142. A. J. Holden, ed., *History of William Marshal*, with English translation by S. Gregory, 3 vols. (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2002–6), lines 6677–6864, pp. 1:341–49.

143. See Evelyne van den Neste, *Tournois, joutes, pas d'armes dans les villes de Flandre à la fin du Moyen Age (1300–1486)* (Paris: Ecole des Chartes, 1996); Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's "Primavera" and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

By the early thirteenth century, the conventions of courtly romance were becoming sufficiently familiar that they became the subject of satire. It is not always easy to distinguish between, on the one hand, a satirical tone that was added, as in Chrétien's *Lancelot*, to enhance the deniability of certain doctrines from, on the other hand, the intentional ridicule of courtly themes. But the distinction is important. The early texts aim at propagation and instruction. Later ridicule of courtly love appears to express genuine skepticism about its ideals and its values.

In the thirteenth-century *Roman de Laurin*, for example, a knight receives explicit love verses and a veiled invitation from the empress of Constantinople, even though she has a noble husband. Later, when she is widowed, this knight marries her, but he can never shake his doubts about her fidelity, in view of the way she originally approached him. Although she becomes pregnant, he decides to leave her. Neither of these characters displays the heroic love of Chrétien's *Lancelot* and Guinevere or Béroul's *Tristan and Iseut*. The early courtly love figures would not have approached the beloved in so crass a manner as does the empress in the *Roman de Laurin*. In those early tales, no hero married and then abandoned a beloved woman. Other subplots of the *Roman de Laurin* are equally dissonant with the original conception of courtly love.<sup>144</sup> Like certain other thirteenth-century romances, such as *Ipomedon* or *La vengeance Raguidel*, both discussed by Roberta Krueger, the *Roman de Laurin* is at once a misogynistic and an anticourtly polemic.<sup>145</sup> This kind of satire was well known to both of the authors of the famous thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*, whose rambling structure incorporated a variety of attitudes toward the courtly tradition.<sup>146</sup> The thirteenth century and later centuries cannot be examined here. But it is worth noting in passing that, in works as diverse as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) and Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (1995), a heroic vision of romantic love somehow lives on.

144. Régine Colliot, "Les bizarreries amoureuses dans le *Roman de Laurin*," in *Amour, mariage et transgressions au Moyen Age*, ed. Danielle Buschinger and André Crépin (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1984), 301–15.

145. Krueger, *Women Readers*, 68–100.

146. On Guillaume de Lorris's indebtedness to Occitan lyric, see Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 171–83; Kay also cites some of the extensive bibliography on this work. See also John W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 150–59; Jean-Charles Payen, "Amour, mariage, et transgression dans le '*Roman de la Rose*,'" in *Amour, mariage et transgressions au Moyen Age*, ed. Danielle Buschinger and André Crépin (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1984), 335–47.

## Conclusion

There is good evidence, as noted at the beginning of chapter 1, that prior to the Gregorian Reform the longing for association played a structural role in aristocratic conflicts and alliances. But the church's efforts to reform marriage and sexual behavior forced a dramatic change in the way longing for association was felt and acted upon by aristocrats.

For many twelfth-century aristocrats, "courtly love" arose from a sense of frustration that is easy to imagine. Individuals such as William IX or the Comtessa de Dia learned, as they grew up, a traditional form of the longing for association, involving a complex wealth of feelings and expectations aroused in them by knowledge of a particular aristocratic peer who might become a "lover" or "spouse" (a distinction not so important when territorial lords and ladies could make and break their marriages without clerical interference). They may have sensed that the oversimplified schemas of Gregorian preaching about sexual appetite simply did not capture their experience of a longing for association that involved the whole person—from kinship and property and hopes for an heir, to long-term political strategies, to dress and manner, to those intangible personal qualities of the beloved that exceeded the lover's short-term capacity for conscious reflection or quick articulation. They must have sensed that their own "longings and sentiments" could not be "boiled down to sex," as Ann Laura Stoler has put it.<sup>147</sup>

The longing for association was not at all similar to what one feels when hungry and imagining a delicious meal, nor to what one feels when thirsty and imagining a cup of clean, cool water, nor to what one feels when short of breath and imagining a deep intake of life-giving air. Listening to sermons or entering the monastery church at Moissac, they must have sensed that marrying or conducting a secret love affair with a high-ranking peer or higher-ranking lord or lady simply to satisfy a sex drive would be like buying a farm because one was hungry. It is true that a hungry person could get food by buying a farm, but anyone who can afford a farm can afford to buy a loaf of bread. In the twelfth century, anyone who could afford to marry, and anyone who could afford the education necessary to flirt successfully in the

147. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 170.

courteous fashion, could also have afforded to command sex from underlings or hirelings.

To assert a contrast between longing for association and desire-as-appetite, promoters of courtly love extolled it as heroic. Literary heroes and heroines demonstrated for all to see that no mere self-regarding appetite could possibly motivate their self-sacrificing devotion. But, in becoming heroic, courtly lovers implicitly conceded that desire-as-appetite did exist. Why else strive to prove one's love was a higher thing? This was the hostage they gave to the new sexual common sense of the Gregorian Reform. In this way, courtly music and literature must have found a ready public among the aristocrats frustrated with or confused by the clergy's dire sermons about sexual appetites, about the pollution of sexual sin, and the fires of hell.

The evidence provided in the first part of this study supports the contention that a longing for association existed among European elites before courtly love, that the customary character of this longing for association and the practices associated with it were disrupted by the Gregorian Reform, and that this disruption motivated the courtiers, songwriters, and poets of the twelfth century to invent courtly love. Strong additional support for this view can be found in the sharply contrasting evidence from other contexts of very different ways of understanding and practicing the longing for association. The originality of the twelfth-century European arrangement emerges much more clearly if one places Western romantic love in a broader, comparative frame of reference.

PART TWO

# Points of Comparison





## The Bhakti Troubadour: Vaishnavism in Twelfth-Century Bengal and Orissa

“Images of love-making play a major role in the iconographic and decorative program of the Orissan temple, more so than anywhere else in India. These images appear on all parts of the temple and the motifs vary from simple and seemingly innocent *mithuna* (amorous couple) figures to explicit Bacchanalian friezes which probably illustrate specific stages of Tantric rituals.”

THOMAS DONALDSON<sup>1</sup>

In turning from twelfth-century Europe to eleventh- and twelfth-century Bengal and Orissa, one finds a relation between the “sexual” and the spiritual starkly different from that of medieval Christianity. In exploring this contrast the goal here is a limited one, to document the existence of a way of imagining and enacting sexual relationships that in no way relies on a distinction between love and lust, between a sublime emotion and a bodily appetite. The contrast between *fin’amors* and desire-as-appetite—perfectly clear in the minds of troubadours, romance authors, and clerics such as Lambert of Ardes in twelfth-century Europe—had no equivalent in twelfth-century Bengal and Orissa.

1. Thomas Donaldson, *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden: Orissa* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing, 1987), 11.

The aim here is not to provide a full portrait of “Hindu” treatments of sexuality. There is no single Hindu conceptualization of the sexual characteristics and capacities of the body. The Bengal and Orissan case and the case of Heian Japan that will be examined in the following chapter are intended only to provide points of contrast. But, as noted in the Introduction, each case must be examined with careful attention to diversity, conflict, and change over time in order to prevent the kind of inadvertent treatment of culture as monolithic that has sometimes plagued the comparative method. Two points of comparison are also useful for preventing inadvertent polarization of our understanding around an oversimplified dichotomy between “the West and the rest.”

Both non-Western cases are quite different from each other. Nonetheless, the assumption that the body has a sexual “appetite” is not found in either of them. On the basis of this demonstration, it becomes plausible that beliefs and practices organized around sexual desire-as-appetite, whether in accord with that conception or (as with *fin’amors*) in explicit opposition to it, are distinctly Western phenomena. These cases are meant only to suggest the wide variety of possible forms of sexual partnerships and of the longing for association. There are many ways to distinguish short-term partnerships from long-term ones, or to distinguish transgressive partnerships from normative ones, and many possible practical understandings of “sexuality” in relation to “spirituality” that do not rely on a notion of desire-as-appetite.

In eleventh- and twelfth-century Bengal and Orissa, one finds institutions and practices characteristic of what Vijay Nath calls “Puranic Hinduism.”<sup>2</sup> Puranic Hinduism was shaped by the myths of gods and goddesses recorded in the genre of text called the *Puranas* and centered about temple worship that sometimes included both Tantric and bhakti elements. (The meanings of these terms will be discussed in detail below.) Puranic Hinduism was closely associated, both historically and ideologically, with the appearance of multiple, independent regional kingdoms in the post-Gupta era from the sixth through the thirteenth centuries CE. Temple and royal palace were usually closely allied with each other, often physically close. Priests and temple women treated the images of gods and goddesses like royalty—or rather, courtiers and palace women treated kings and queens like representatives of the gods and goddesses. Ritual in temple and palace followed similar protocols and schedules. Court life was “aestheticized,” as Daud Ali has put it;

2. Vijay Nath, *Puranas and Acculturation: A Historico-Anthropological Perspective* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001).

kings, courtiers, and queens and their women trained themselves in local versions of a carefully elaborated code of behavior and feeling that reflected, at once, their status as sources of worldly rule and their sublime, elevated, even (in the case of royalty) godlike qualities.<sup>3</sup> Temple priests, attendants, and dancers, in a similar fashion, trained themselves to be the servants of the sovereign gods and goddesses who expected both devotion and aestheticized celebration of their presence.

In this context, as we will see for Bengal and Orissa, the most important distinction was not between the flesh and the spirit, as it was for twelfth-century Christian moralists, nor between desire-as-appetite and *fin'amors*, as it was for twelfth-century troubairitz and troubadours. The most important distinction, both in the temple and in the palace, was between a this-worldly realm of coarse, particular emotions, sometimes called *bhava*, and the universal realm of refined moods called *rasa*.<sup>4</sup> The mundane and particular emotion that inspired less exalted sexual partnerships was called *rati*. *Rati* was not “desire-as-appetite,” but a longing for association with a particular this-worldly sexual partner. The corresponding refined sentiment called *shringara rasa*—a term difficult to translate, often rendered as “erotic mood”—was a state that blended indistinguishably what Christians would have called *concupiscentia* with a range of feelings that troubairitz and troubadours would have associated with *fin'amors*. *Shringara rasa* was a longing for association with a heroic, sublime, godlike, or divine sexual partner.

Underlying this division between a mundane love-lust (*rati*) and a spiritualized love-lust (*shringara rasa*) was a conception of the physical realm and of the body that did not conform to the spirit-body dualism peculiar to Western thinking. In South Asia, as Rich Freeman has put it, “Many of the dominant philosophical and religious schools argued, against materialist positions, that some or all of the senses are ‘extro-missive’: they do not passively receive sensory stimuli from external objects, but rather project the subjective faculties from the mind, through the channels of the senses to contact and at least partly constitute the sensing and experiencing of objects.”<sup>5</sup> Thus the “mind” or spirit was already active in the constitution, not just the “perception” of an object.

In such a world, no line of demarcation separated soul from senses;

3. Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 77. On the divine status of kings, especially in Orissa, see also Walter Smith, “Images of Divine Kings from the Muktesvara Temple, Bhubaneswar,” *Artibus Asiae* 51 (1991): 90–106.

4. Oriya and Sanskrit terms used in the text are transliterated without diacritical marks. A list of those terms that have alternate transliterations, with diacritical marks, is provided in the Appendix.

5. Rich Freeman, “Taste,” *Material Religion* 7 (2011): 132–39, quote from p. 134.

“appetites” were not inherently gross. Instead, the relative status of soul-and-body was expressed in its preferences for certain tastes. For humans and gods alike, the more refined or subtle one was, the more refined or subtle those things one tasted. “The sensing of objects,” Freeman continues, “therefore connotes their consumption (*bhoga*) for subjective ends, and this latter concept is generalized, as in a host of Indic tropes, to include consumption and enjoyment of both comestibles and the objects of sexual desire.”<sup>6</sup>

Daud Ali notes that in the prescriptive and poetic literature of royal courts from the late Gupta period on courtly pleasures were to be both ethical and aestheticized; courtiers were expected to follow a way of life oriented toward enjoyment of the world, in contrast to that of renunciators or Buddhist monks. But this way of life was also supposed to be refined. This way of life included pursuit of “rectitude (*dharma*), acquisition (*artha*), and pleasure (*kama*).”<sup>7</sup> “The enjoyment of pleasures was . . . not understood as a straightforward release of libidinal impulse,” Ali remarks. Pleasure could be derived only from the enjoyment of objects appropriate to one’s own refined mind-body. The “conquest of the senses” was understood to entail “a *cultivation* of desire” (emphasis in original). The pursuit of *kama* (“desire-pleasure-love”) required “the application of means.” These means consisted of a set of “‘rules of engagement’ that the erotic texts lay out in great detail.”<sup>8</sup> Both men and women of the court were expected to practice elaborate self-adornment relying on garments, jewelry, and makeup; both were expected to master a wide range of courtly skills, including singing, playing musical instruments, painting, cooking, and, of course, Sanskrit poetics and eloquence. The material, verbal, and gestural accoutrements of sexual acts were essential to the enjoyment of a sexual partner, just as were the refined longings expressed in love poetry.

In this setting, love did not master lust, rendering it innocent. Instead noble men and women of royal courts practiced a refined love-lust. It was one of their principal preoccupations, distinguishing them sharply from the everyday people outside. In this they emulated the gods, at least in those contexts where male gods were said to derive their power from their divine female consorts and where male gods were often depicted together with their consorts in loving sexual embrace.

6. Ibid.

7. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 70.

8. Daud Ali, “Anxieties of Attachment: The Dynamics of Courtship in Medieval India,” *Modern Asian Studies* 36 (2002): 103–39, quotes from pp. 106–7.

As we have seen, it was the view of twelfth-century Gregorian reformers that all kinds of sexual contact were polluting. For Gregorian reformers, there was one kind of sexual contact that was least polluting (and, at least in some views, potentially free of sin): marital sexual contact in which appetitive craving (*concupiscentia*) was suppressed and its corresponding bodily “pleasure” (*voluptas*) was not willed or consented to. It hardly needs to be said that these contemporary Christian doctrines stood in sharp contrast to the corresponding understandings of body, perception, mind, pleasure, and attachment among certain South Asian ritual and courtly experts.

For contemporary South Asian ritual and courtly experts, body, perception, mind, pleasure, and attachment mutually constituted each other on each level of a great hierarchy of refinement. The hierarchy of refinement of soul-bodies was enacted when a courtier prostrated himself at the feet of his king, accepting “the favor of the feet,” or when, as at Puri, a devotee rolled himself in the dust left by a temple dancer’s feet.<sup>9</sup> What was polluting to king or temple dancer (the dust on one’s feet) was purifying to those below. Thus, whether sexual contact with a given partner was transgressive or uplifting was a question of the couple’s relative ranking, as measured not by one but often by multiple—and sometimes conflicting—orderings of substances and bodies. Typical of divine tasting was its capacity to transform an offering, purifying it, so that consuming a god’s leavings could sanctify the self. Such offerings were a common feature of temple worship and private devotion and could take the form of, among other things, food or sexual longing.

Within the broad environment of medieval kingship and Puranic Hinduism, Bengali and Orissan practitioners developed a distinctive form of bhakti worship and ritual that included ritualized invocations and enactments of sexual liaisons within the inner sanctum of the temple. Prayers, performances, and songs, saturated with the spiritualized love-lust of *shringara rasa*, became central features of temple worship in a manner that twelfth-century reformers such as Bernard of Clairvaux would have found difficult to imagine (and in a manner that later would deeply offend the sensibilities of Christian missionaries). In royal courts, pursuit of ennobling romantic liaisons became, in parallel fashion, a common subject of poetry and drama. In Bengal and Orissa,

9. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 107; Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 109.

poets and dramatists—and presumably the lovers themselves—did not find it necessary to prove that love was a form of heroic self-denial or self-sacrifice. They did not find it important to demonstrate that love had some higher, spiritual status that enabled lovers to discipline their lust. They had no desire, could experience no pleasure until they had achieved mastery of the “science of *kama*.”<sup>10</sup>

As with the European case, the characteristics of South Asian emotions cannot be understood apart from the specific practices of the social and cultural order within which these emotions took form and to which they gave life. To ensure that the comparative analysis is focused and avoids the pitfalls of overgeneralization and reification that have plagued some comparative work, therefore, it is necessary to build up cautiously from specifics.

In looking at the case of Bengal and Orissa, the focus will be on the building of the temple of Purushottama in Puri starting around 1137 and the origins and character of its rituals. From early on, Jayadeva’s famous poem, the *Gitagovinda*, was used in dance and ritual at the temple. This poem celebrated divine Krishna’s longing for association with a lowly cowherd girl, Radha, her longing for him, and their ecstatic sexual partnership. The choice of focusing on the shrine of Purushottama, more commonly known today under the name Jagannatha, was motivated in part by the available documentation and the state of the secondary literature. Royal courts of the post-Gupta period are often not as well known as the great temple complexes and have been less carefully studied. Daud Ali has found that, at best, a composite picture of court life can be pieced together based on fragmentary evidence from many courts.<sup>11</sup> Temple priests, such as those at Puri, carefully preserved literary traditions about their specific cults. Other temples celebrated Krishna’s loves, but Purushottama temple became one of the great regional pilgrimage sites of South Asia. Its history is relatively well documented and has received a substantial amount of scholarly attention. From the beginning, worship at Purushottama temple displayed a relation between the sexual and the sacred that was directly at odds with twelfth-century Christian and troubadour common sense.

10. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, quoting from the *Kamasutra*; see p. 215. Jayadeva also uses this phrase with reference to Krishna’s lovemaking in *The Gitagovinda*, Canto II, lines 14–15, as translated in Lee Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in Indian Traditions as Exemplified in the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 252. See below for further discussion of this passage.

11. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 19–21.

## The Building of the Temple at Puri

Construction began on the Purushottama temple (now usually referred to as Jagannatha temple) in the town of Puri (Orissa) in the final years of King Anantavarman Codaganga's reign (1078–1147 CE). In a brilliant military career, Codaganga had expanded his realm north from its dynastic core around present-day Mukhalingam (Andhra Pradesh), encompassing the Mahanadi River valley by 1112 and the entire coast of present-day Orissa, as far as the mouth of the Ganges River, by 1130.<sup>12</sup> Under Codaganga, the Ganga empire rivaled the power of the Chola empire to the south and set limits on Turkish-led conquests in the north.

Codaganga sought to legitimate his rule over conquered territories by associating himself with local religious customs. Like many, perhaps most, of the minor rajas who acknowledged Codaganga's overlordship, Codaganga was by family tradition a Shaiva (worshiper of Shiva). But Vaishnavism (worship of Vishnu) was spreading in northern Orissa as in Bengal in this period. Purushottama, a form of Vishnu, was already worshiped at Puri, which lay just south of the mouth of the Mahanadi, when Codaganga's army gained control of the region in 1112. His decision to build a temple for Purushottama at Puri was therefore most likely a gesture aimed at winning the loyalty of new subjects.

Evolved between the seventh and ninth centuries CE, the figure of Purushottama was closely linked with two other aspects or forms of Vishnu, named Narasimha and Krishna. According to G. C. Tripathi, "the term 'Vishnu' represents the Bhagavata-Vasudeva aspect, 'Narasimha' the furious or violent (*ugra*) aspect, and 'Purushottama' the amorous aspect of the same god."<sup>13</sup> Purushottama was also spoken of as embodying Vishnu's cosmic significance. For example, an inscription of the 1190s states that only a great king such as Codaganga could

12. Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi, eds., *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978); for extent of Codaganga's conquests, see particularly in this collection Heinrich von Stietencron, "The Advent of Vishnuism in Orissa: An Outline of Its History according to Archaeological and Epigraphical Sources from the Gupta Period up to 1135 A.D.," 1–30, see p. 25; and Kulke, "Early Royal Patronage of the Jagannâtha Cult" 139–55, see esp. pp. 146–47. See also Upinder Singh, *Kings, Brahmanas and Temples in Orissa: An Epigraphic Study, AD 300–1147* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1993), 73–74.

13. Gaya Charan Tripathi, "On the Concept of 'Purushottama' in the Agamas," in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, ed. Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 31–59, quote from p. 42.



have managed to build a temple worthy of Purushottama, “whose feet are the earth, the navel the mid-region, the head the heaven, the ears the directions and the two eyes the sun and the moon respectively.”<sup>14</sup> Like other aspects of Vishnu, as well as Shiva in his various forms, Purushottama was said to gain his specific divine characteristics by union with a consort goddess, who was the source of his power. The *Sharadatilaka*, a famous Tantric work by Lakshmana Deshika, which was probably written in Orissa in the twelfth century, and which, according to Tripathi, was found still in 1978 “in almost every household in Orissa,” urged devotees of Purushottama to meditate on him “as being tightly embraced by Lakshmi who is sitting in his lap with a lotus in her left hand with the gaze of Purushottama rivetted on her lovely face.”<sup>15</sup>

Codaganga presented his building project at Puri as an act of piety, aimed at restoring an older temple that had fallen into disrepair. But the new temple was also meant as a response to the great temple complex at Tanjore, at the center of the rival Chola empire to the south. King Rajaraja the Great (985–1014), having reestablished Chola pre-eminence, launched the Tanjore temple project in 1003. “Hundreds of Brahmins and temple servants were brought to Tanjore, among them 400 dancing girls, 212 dancing masters, musicians, drummers, tailors, goldsmiths, accountants, etc.”<sup>16</sup> This army of specialists was supported by direct land grants. “Villages were donated to the temple all over the empire, even in Ceylon.”<sup>17</sup> Rajaraja and his family donated an immense treasure to the temple. Rajaraja’s portrait there bore a remarkable resemblance to images of Shiva, and the central image of Shiva at the Tanjore temple was called Rajarajeshvara, an ambiguous phrase meaning perhaps “Shiva, the lord of Rajaraja” or “Rajaraja, the Lord Shiva,” suggesting a kind of divinization of the Chola ruler.<sup>18</sup>

14. Inscription paraphrased by Tripathi, in *ibid.*, 41.

15. *Ibid.*, 44. On the origins of the *Sharadatilaka*, see Alexis Sanderson, “Atharvavedins in Tantric Territory: The Angirasakalpa Texts of the Oriya Paippaladins and Their Connection with the Trika and the Kalikula,” in *The Atharvaveda and Its Paippalada Shakha: Historical and Philological Papers on a Vedic Tradition*, ed. Arlo Griffiths and Annette Schmiedchen (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2007), 195–311, see pp. 230–33.

16. Hermann Kulke, “Royal Temple Policy and the Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdoms,” in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, ed. Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 125–37, see p. 135; see also on Tanjore, George Michell, *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Forms* (London: Paul Elek, 1977), 59; Saskia Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali: Devadasi Tradition in South India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 24–28; Leslie C. Orr, *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Medieval Tamilnadu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 173.

17. Kulke, “Royal Temple Policy,” 136; see also Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali*, 24–28; Orr, *Donors, Devotees*, 33–36.

18. Kulke, “Royal Temple Policy,” 136.

The Tanjore temple project was the culmination of a number of trends. Regional monarchies, new peasant settlements, temple worship of the Purana deities, and Brahmin priestly appropriation of popular religious forms had all spread together in the period after the end of the Gupta empire in about 600 CE.<sup>19</sup> By the time of Rajaraja the Great, the Chola empire had brought to a high degree of refinement the widespread practice of legitimating royal power through patronage of temple worship.

But Codaganga was not to be outdone by his southern rivals. Codaganga may have heard that, in about 1135, the Chola king Kulottunga II (1133–50), in an “exceptional act of intolerance,” ordered a famous image of Vishnu removed from the Shiva temple of Chidambaram and had it thrown into the sea.<sup>20</sup> It was only shortly afterward that Codaganga, while remaining a Shaiva, began construction of the new Vaishnava shrine at Puri—as if to say, others may be intolerant, but my kingdom is open to all. The height of the Purushottama temple tower, when it was finally completed, exactly matched that of the temple of Tanjore at 216 feet.<sup>21</sup> Scores of villages were turned over to support the temple and its hundreds of priests, dancers, and servants.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike Kulottunga II, Codaganga understood the religious “universe of discourse,” as Romila Thapar has put it, that transcended sectarian lines in South Asia.<sup>23</sup> Religious movements in the Indian subcontinent were less likely than Christian movements to employ exclusion or persecution and more likely to seek to advance by combining new and old ingredients. It is from such varied ingredients that distinctive treatments of sexual matters were devised.

Beginning in the Gupta period, religious experts sought to fashion a new religious fabric by weaving together various strands of local non-brahmanical traditions with strands drawn from Sanskrit-based brahmanical traditions. These strands included popular fertility cults, as

19. On the trends of this period, in addition to Kulke, “Royal Temple Policy,” see Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Nath, *Puranas and Acculturation*; Kesavan Veluthat, “Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation: The Case of Early Medieval South India,” *Social Scientist* 21 (1993): 23–33; Bhairabi Prasad Sahu, “Brahmanical Ideology, Regional Identities and the Construction of Early India,” *Social Scientist* 29 (2001): 3–18; Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali*, 17–24.

20. Kulke, “Early Royal Patronage,” 150.

21. *Ibid.*

22. On the temple endowment, see Hermann Kulke, “Jagannatha as the State Deity under the Gajapatis of Orissa,” in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, ed. Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 199–208, esp. p. 200; see also Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali*, 26–27.

23. Thapar, *Early India*, 278; see also Stietencron, “The Advent of Vishnuism,” 22.

well as shamanistic, Vedic, Tantric, and bhakti elements.<sup>24</sup> The blending of traditions is seen as a crucial element in the success of regional and transregional monarchies, as they spread beyond the Ganges River valley in this period. Some scholars, such as Hermann Kulke, emphasize the importance of nomadic and forest-dwelling groups as a source of military recruits for transregional monarchical armies. Others, such as Vijay Nath, believe efforts to incorporate the nonbrahmanical religious practices of such groups were essential to the spread of cereal cultivation to hitherto uncleared areas.<sup>25</sup>

Codaganga, along with his successors and their priestly advisers, worked to ensure that the Puri shrine appealed to as many strands as possible. By the twelfth century, this was a standard strategy, but it was pushed very far in Puri. Purushottama was already endowed with nonbrahmanical associations. Under an earlier local dynasty, probably the Somavamshis, a local cult of certain trees, or of posts made from their wood, had been identified as a form of devotion to the brahmanical high god Purushottama—in what was by then a common strategy of “Sanskritization” of local cults. Purushottama was correspondingly worshiped at Puri in the form of a wooden post prepared by non-Brahmin priests from local lineages.<sup>26</sup>

The ground plan of Codaganga’s Puri temple suggests that it was originally intended for worship of the erotically linked pair Purushottama and Lakshmi. But sometime after construction began, there was a change of plans. It is known that the Vaishnava reformer Ramanuja (1056–1137), who visited Puri during his travels, disapproved of the erotic element in the cult of Vishnu. However, another Vaishnava reformer at Puri, Nimbarka, “proclaimed Radha as the Shakti of Krishna

24. McDaniel suggests the concept of “strands” of varied religious traditions; see June McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6. On the weaving together of various strands in post-Gupta-era South Asia, see Thapar, *Early India*, 276; Nath, *Puranas and Acculturation*, 33. On shamanistic practices, see McDaniel, *Offering Flowers*, 55. The term “brahmanical” is used here to refer to the priestly tradition of the Vedas, emphasizing correct accomplishment of rituals for a privileged elite originally located in the settled Ganges River plain. The terms “Tantric” and “bhakti” will be discussed at greater length below.

25. Kulke, “Royal Temple Policy”; Nath, *Puranas and Acculturation*, 22–42.

26. Roland Hardenberg, “The Renewal of Jagannath,” in *Jagannath Revisited: Studying Society, Religion and the State in Orissa*, ed. Hermann Kulke and Burkhard Schnepel (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 65–92; Anncharlott Eschmann, “The Vaishnava Typology of Hinduization and the Origin of Jagannatha,” in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, ed. Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 99–119, see p. 100; see also Anncharlott Eschmann, H. Kulke, and G. C. Tripathi, “The Formation of the Jagannatha Triad,” also in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, 169–96, see pp. 175–76; Hermann Kulke, “King Anangabhima III, the Veritable Founder of the Gajapati Kingship and of the Jagannatha Trinity at Puri,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1 (1981): 26–39.

and his spouse in divine sport."<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, Ramanuja's influence may help explain the fact that Lakshmi was soon linked with (and occluded by) Krishna's sister, Subhadra. According to Eschmann, Kulke, and Tripathi, "The erotic element and the idea of the divine couple was not continued, but repressed. Subhadra was reinterpreted as the sister of Jagannatha, though her original relationship always remained secretly known."<sup>28</sup> The brother-sister tie may also have had a special importance to some Orissan communities. Accommodation was also made for the strong Shaiva loyalties of many of Codaganga's subjects by adding a third god. Relying on a useful theological authority, experts at Puri gave Purushottama an additional companion, Krishna's (and therefore Purushottama's) brother, Balabhadra, who was said to be a form of Shiva. The inner sanctum of the Puri temple thus became the dwelling, not of a divine couple, but of three sibling gods: Purushottama, Subhadra, and Balabhadra. Each was represented by a wooden post, fashioned, painted, and clothed by a team of nonbrahmanical priests of local lineages, the *daitas*, who worked in subordination to the new temple's large staff of Brahmin priests.

Those who disapproved of the erotic element in Vishnu worship could focus on the three sibling gods. Those who were loyal to Shaivism could focus on Purushottama's brother Balabhadra. Daily ritual, in addition, may have been organized to appeal to the diversity of religious impulses. Those who embraced Tantric ritual could focus on the midday dance and food service. Those who were enthusiasts of bhakti devotion to Krishna could focus on the evening dance, accompanied by songs of Krishna's erotic play with the *gopis* (cowherd girls).<sup>29</sup> In addition, the greatest of the annual celebrations at Puri, the so-called Car Festival that precedes the return of rains in June each year, was given a strong bhakti dimension.

By these careful accommodations, the temple's rituals were structured to provide every pilgrim, every worshiper with the form of devotion she or he sought to find—local, brahmanical, Shaiva, Vaishnava, Tantric, bhakti, or whatever combination of these that suited the worshiper's beliefs or tastes.<sup>30</sup> While the temple personnel maintained a

27. Donaldson, *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden*, 365.

28. Eschmann, Kulke, and Tripathi, "The Formation of the Jagannatha Triad," 184; Kulke, "King Anangabhima III," dates this change to the year 1230.

29. Frédérique Apffel-Marglin provides detailed descriptions of the history and character of daily rituals at Puri in *Wives of the God-King*.

30. Kulke and Schnepel note that recent research is paying careful attention to the "more fascinating, flexible, varying, diverse, yet all-embracing character" of the Jagannatha cult; see Hermann Kulke and Burkhard Schnepel, "Jagannath and Orissan Studies: Accomplishments and Prospects," in

growing library of official legends and ritual manuals, they did not broadcast any one interpretation of their complex ritual activities as the official, orthodox version. Meanings remained sufficiently ambiguous that two pilgrims attending the same rite might see two quite different sacred transformations under way—each believing that hers or his was the “real” interpretation. Contradictory beliefs were in some instances handled by making one esoteric (known only to insiders), the other exoteric (publicly proclaimed).<sup>31</sup> Ritual itself was practiced on many levels—in the inner sanctum, where the public could not penetrate; in the public hall; in the street during annual processions; in the subsidiary temples surrounding the main one. Only a handful of experts, the *rajagurus*, understood and had access to all these forms of worship and layers of interpretation, both esoteric and exoteric. This multilayered treatment simultaneously merged and preserved intact the beliefs and practices of diverse origins that were combined in worship of Purushottama.

From the beginning, Puri sought to be all things to all people.<sup>32</sup> Ambiguity was valued rather than avoided. The success of Puri as one of the great pilgrimage sites of South Asia testifies to the farsightedness of the shrine’s original conception. This may be one reason that Purushottama of Puri has been known since the thirteenth century almost always by his title of Jagannatha—“lord of the universe.”

## The Rise of “Puranic Hinduism” and the “Aestheticized” Court

There is no single religion, or even a single body of beliefs or orthodoxy that can be called “Hinduism.” This was just as true in the twelfth cen-

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*Jagannath Revisited: Studying Society, Religion and the State in Orissa*, ed. Hermann Kulke and Burkhard Schnepel (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 1–24, quote from p. 14.

31. Apffel-Marglin describes both an exoteric and an esoteric interpretation of the morning dance ritual at Puri, for example. The dance provides one of the “five m’s” offered to the deities in Tantric rites. “In the exoteric form, three of the five m’s are vegetarian food offerings which form part of the morning meal. These vegetarian offerings stand for the esoteric non-vegetarian offerings of meat (*mamsa*), fish (*maca*), and wine (*madya*). A fourth offering called *mudra* has the same form in both esoteric and exoteric versions; it consists of black grain cakes. The fifth m in the exoteric version is the dance of the *devadasi* and it stands for sexual union (*maithuna*) in the esoteric version”; see Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 217. See also David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yogini: “Tantric Sex” in Its South Asian Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 82–85.

32. Apffel-Marglin discusses a story explaining that even untouchables were permitted to worship at Puri, in *Wives of the God-King*, 175–80.

tury as it is today. Recent research has also overturned the older idea that Indian religion has consisted of a “great” and a “little” tradition—the former recorded in Sanskrit scriptures passed down by an elite of Brahmin priests, the latter consisting of a variety of “folk” beliefs. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Shastras, the epics, the Puranas, the Tantras, and other genres of Sanskrit religious writing that have been composed over the centuries do not add up to a single, coherent canon of “sacred scriptures.” Each of these textual genres was influenced by popular practices of its own time and place of composition. Literate Brahmin beliefs and popular “folk” beliefs have often interpenetrated to such a degree that the distinction itself—even if it is often meaningful—becomes a moving target, with different meanings and social implications for each time and place under consideration. Nor is it possible to draw a neat line separating Sanskrit “Hindu” traditions from Jain or Buddhist traditions. Villages, state structures, local Brahmin communities, and networks of affiliated monasteries worked up and conserved their own more or less coherent practices over the centuries, adapting and incorporating new elements with each generation. Individual families and clans, in addition, maintained their own private cults.

Romila Thapar divides the so-called Hindu community of the seventh through twelfth centuries CE into “Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta, or more closely, Bhagavata, Pashupata, Kapalika, and so on [groups].”<sup>33</sup> Some of these groups regarded others with disdain, even revulsion; others coexisted or blended, syncretically, into each other. The contrasting attitudes of Kulottunga II and Codaganga toward Vaishnavism, mentioned above, are suggestive of the range of attitudes toward religious diversity that existed in that period, with Codaganga’s open approach by far the more common one, at least among conquerors.

A good deal of recent work has also emphasized the underlying Shakti tradition—ignored by earlier scholars due to its emphasis on divine female power—which had both popular and brahmanical variations and made its impact felt on both Shaiva and Vaishnava cults, Tantric and bhakti practices, private worship and temple worship, animist and philosophical belief systems. Mother-Goddess worship is often considered to be a widespread feature of indigenous beliefs that was gradually incorporated by “the higher strata of Hinduistic society,” as Tripathi put it, in late Gupta times (fifth and sixth centuries CE). In this period, “Every Hindu and Buddhist god was provided with a Shakti”;

33. Thapar, *Early India*, 438–39.

that is, a female deity who endowed him with his divine power, “with whom he was believed to be eternally associated.”<sup>34</sup>

David Gordon White argues that divine female power was important in brahmanical religion from the very beginning. The rise of Shakti mythology in the middle of the first millennium CE built on this preexisting foundation. White sees a close relationship between Shakti beliefs (that is, the widespread veneration of the female divinity as the highest god, who is alternately a death-dealing, seductive, or maternal force) and Tantrism, a tradition involving ritualized sexual practices. White perhaps goes too far in concluding that Tantra is “the occulted face of India’s religious history” and in claiming that Tantra “has been the predominant religious paradigm, for over a millennium, of the great majority of the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent.”<sup>35</sup> But David Lorenzen remarks that “by the ninth or tenth centuries, Tantric religion, both Hindu and Buddhist, had become extremely influential, perhaps even dominant” in many areas of the subcontinent.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the precise scope of many religious terms, such as Tantra, Shakti, or bhakti, remains unsettled in South Asian scholarship. White, for example, would doubtless wish to include as a *tantrika* an informant of June McDaniel in West Bengal who carefully denied that she was a *tantrika*. “I have sat upon the five skulls, and called down the goddess and spirits, I have practiced *tantra sadhana*. But I am not a *tantrika*. A *tantrika* is a person who drinks wine, and who takes much hashish and opium. I do not drink and take drugs, therefore I am not a *tantrika*.”<sup>37</sup> McDaniel, in fact, reports hearing ten different answers to the question Who is a Shakta? as well as varying opinions on who are “false” Shaktas and who are the genuine ones.<sup>38</sup> In contrast to White, Vijay Nath mentions Tantrism only as a “vener” applied to popular bhakti devotional forms in the late first millennium CE.<sup>39</sup> Closer to White, N. N. Battacharyya calls Tantrism “an undercurrent which influenced all forms of Indian religious systems in some way or other.”<sup>40</sup>

34. Tripathi, “On the Concept of ‘Purushottama,’” 43.

35. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 3.

36. David N. Lorenzen, “Early Evidence for Tantric Religion,” in *The Roots of Tantra*, ed. Katherine Anne Harper and Robert L. Brown (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 25–36, quote from p. 33; see also Katherine Anne Harper, “The Warring Shaktis: A Paradigm for Gupta Conquests,” also in *The Roots of Tantra*, 115–31.

37. McDaniel, *Offering Flowers*, 72.

38. *Ibid.*, 15, 18.

39. Vijay Nath, “From ‘Brahmanism’ to ‘Hinduism’: Negotiating the Myth of the Great Tradition,” *Social Scientist* 29 (2001): 19–50, see p. 20.

40. N. N. Battacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion: An Historical, Ritualistic and Philosophical Study* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 213.

The term “Hindu” originated with the Arabs from the eighth century, who used it as a label for all those living beyond the Indus River.<sup>41</sup> However, Muslim conquests after 800 CE did not spur indigenous non-Muslim elites to identify themselves as “Hindus” in South Asia, and the conquerors were not regarded as a threat to a “Hindu community.” The Muslims themselves were split, as Thapar remarks, into Sunnis, Shiahs, Ismailis, Sufis, Bohras, and others.<sup>42</sup> Hindus who converted to Islam, voluntarily or under coercion, were at first not allowed back into the Hindu community, but bhakti leaders such as Chaitanya rejected this attitude.<sup>43</sup> The Vijayanagara kingdom, which arose in the south following the collapse of the Delhi Sultanate in the mid-fourteenth century, has often been regarded as a self-conscious revival of the Hindu monarchical state. But even in Vijayanagara, loyalties were not defined in sectarian, or religious, terms; the ruler frequently relied on Muslim mercenaries and provided Muslims with their own quarter in the capital city.<sup>44</sup>

Nonetheless, within this array of religious and practical impulses, and across substantial regional and linguistic differences, something like a “classical” form of South Asian kingship and corresponding forms of religious practice did emerge in the seventh through thirteenth centuries. Success in war raised certain local rajas above their peers and gave them extraordinary resources. These rulers sought to shore up and legitimate their overlordship in a variety of ways: by securing pledges of subordination and loyalty from conquered local warlords, by making substantial land grants to their own kin and followers, by establishing a glittering court and at least a minimal administrative apparatus capable of tracking grants, dues, and obligations, and by marrying daughters of subordinate lineages to tie the fates of these lineages to that of the dynasty.<sup>45</sup> A cosmopolitan order based on a shared Sanskrit literacy and on the protocols and principles of Sanskrit prescriptive manuals commonly set off kings and their subordinate lords, courtiers, and families from the local subject populations they ruled.

In the religious sphere, these kings favored temple worship and be-

41. Thapar, *Early India*, 275.

42. *Ibid.*, 439.

43. G. N. Dash, “Kalapahar the Iconoclast: The Making and Message of a Legendary Tradition; Reconversions in Medieval Orissa and Bengal,” in *Jagannath Revisited: Studying Society, Religion and the State in Orissa*, ed. Hermann Kulke and Burkhard Schnepel (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 227–51.

44. Carla M. Sinopoli, “From the Lion Throne: Political and Social Dynamics of the Vijayanagara Empire,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43 (2000): 364–98.

45. On the administration of land grants, see Thapar, *Early India*, 334–43; on rulers’ polygynous marriages: Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 51–55.



came great patrons of temple construction. Land grants to temples as well as to in-migrating Brahmin priests were in some cases very substantial. These land endowments may have consisted of preexisting agricultural villages or of virgin lands opened to peasant cultivation for the first time. In return for royal largesse, priestly experts devised temple programs calculated to combine Sanskrit-based traditions with local cults. They provided new royal dynasties with splendid genealogies linking them to mythical times. Brahmins also propagated beliefs about purity and pollution, in relation both to food and clothing and to endogamous marriage rules, introducing or reenforcing caste or *jati* (“clan”) distinctions.<sup>46</sup> By incorporating local deities and cults into Sanskritized temple worship, Brahmins sought to include select strata of local elites within their supraregional hierarchical vision.

Nath regards these developments as involving a fundamental reshaping of South Asian religion into “Puranic Hinduism.”<sup>47</sup> This new religion of the regional monarchies brought a “demographic explosion” of new gods and goddesses with their corresponding myths contained in the sacred texts known as the Puranas. Many of the new gods and goddesses were regarded as forms or aspects of the “high-Hindu” figures of Shiva and Vishnu and their consorts, Shakti (also called Parvati and Durga) and Lakshmi, respectively. Worship and ritual, formerly a monopoly of the Brahmin priesthood, were selectively open to wider groups. Each temple developed its own protocols about who was permitted entry to its various halls and attendance at its various ceremonies. Reliance on narratives—often of “folk” origin—rendered religious iconography and ritual easy to understand and remember.<sup>48</sup> Public readings of sacred stories, dance and music, public processions, and pilgrimages encouraged wide popular participation. In all these ways, worship in the Purushottama temple at Puri reflected common trends.

In many instances, as at Puri, a close parallel was established between temple and royal palace. The maharaja, or king, was said to be a deputy or representative of the temple god or goddess. Temple ritual and palace routine mirrored each other. Statues or images of the deities

46. On trends in the development of *jatis* in this period, see Thapar, *Early India*, 248–50, 260, 277, 294, 305, 462; Nath, *Puranas and Acculturation*, 35; Orr, *Donors, Devotees*, 30.

47. Nath, “From ‘Brahmanism’ to ‘Hinduism,’” 19.

48. Alexis Sanderson discusses the cautious inclusivism of Shaivism in “The Shaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Shaivism during the Early Medieval Period,” in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009), 41–349, see pp. 284–301.

were treated by temple priests and priestesses as if they were royalty—gently awakened in the morning, washed and clothed, fed and entertained, just as the king was in his palace. Reverential treatment and the abundance of refined foods and entertainments were believed to induce the divine beings to come into and stay in possession of their icons, statues, or symbols. A personal sense of intense devotion (*bhakti*) among the mass of the laity was one of the attractions thought to keep gods and goddesses in residence. So long as they remained, their favor would ensure the survival and prosperity of state and community. The king, as divine deputy, often played a central role in certain annual temple ceremonies as well.<sup>49</sup>

This parallel between king and god is evident in the iconography of Shaiva temples built in Bhubaneswar (Orissa) in the ninth and tenth centuries and was certainly crucial to the self-definition of the Ganga dynasty in Mukhalingam prior to Codaganga's conquests.<sup>50</sup> The parallel was maintained in the ritual program at Puri, which assigned a special role for Purushottama's deputy, the Ganga king, in the annual round of rituals. From 1230, the "deputy" was said to be "son" of Purushottama, as well.<sup>51</sup>

The same centuries that saw the rise of this "classic" form of Hindu royal state also saw the flowering of Tantric and bhakti practices. In some instances, Tantric and bhakti forms of worship developed independently of royal patronage. In other cases they became central features of royally sanctioned temple worship. Some scholars see a sharp contrast between Tantra and bhakti,<sup>52</sup> and many persons in the eighth through twelfth centuries might well have agreed. But both Tantra and Vaishnava bhakti relied on an underlying conception of female sexual power or energy; that is, on "Shakta" assumptions and beliefs that offer a very sharp contrast with European ideas of sexual appetite and gender difference. In addition, there is substantial evidence of interpenetration between Tantra and bhakti practices and mutual adaptation. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Puri.

The layered ambiguities of religious language and ritual practice common in "Puranic Hinduism" were well suited to accommodate a political context in which royal dynasties constantly contended for power. As each ambitious new ruler proclaimed his divine selection

49. Apfel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*; Michell, *The Hindu Temple*.

50. Smith, "Images of Divine Kings."

51. Kulke, "King Anangabhima III."

52. E.g., White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 3.

and his unconquerable might, mythologies could be adjusted, genealogies produced, and temples built to suit his needs. No transregional religious hierarchy or authority claimed to arbitrate questions of doctrine and legitimacy, as did the Church and the papacy in Europe.<sup>53</sup>

There was no sharp gap in language use between a priestly elite and vernacular-speaking warriors. Kings and courtiers doubtless acquired varying degrees of training in the intricacies of Sanskrit literature and in the prescriptions of Sanskrit courtly manuals; passive familiarity was likely all the majority could claim. But Sanskrit appears to have been used more widely for courtly entertainments and literary pastimes than was Latin in European courts.<sup>54</sup> There was therefore little danger that a theology concerning sexual matters, promulgated by a centralized, independent religious authority, might undermine the customary alliance strategies of powerful local men and women, as happened in Europe.

### *Female "Sexuality" and Spiritual Energy*

A common characteristic of female sexual capacity in South Asian belief, according to Apffel-Marglin, is that it can be "auspicious." To illustrate, Apffel-Marglin summarizes the following tale from the *Mahabharata* (composed between the third century BCE and the second century CE).

An ascetic at the sight of an *apsaras* (heavenly courtesan) spills his seed in the water of a pond. A doe drinks the water, becomes pregnant, gives birth to Risyashringa. . . . The boy grows up in the forest with his father, practicing austerities and has never met any other human beings. In a nearby kingdom there is a drought due to the fact that the king had abused the brahmins. The king is advised that to stop the drought he should bring in his city the ascetic Risyashringa. The king summons the courtesans who are terrified of the task, they turn pale and lose heart. But an old prostitute agrees to try. . . . She sends her daughter to the ascetic. The woman seduces the ascetic who mistakes her for a hermit since he has never seen a woman. She plies him with delicacies brought from the city which the ascetic mistakes for fruits which are the only type of food he knows.

53. Dash, however, notes the great authority of the Mukti Mandapa in Puri in resolving theological disputes; see Dash, "Kalapahar the Iconoclast," 230. Sanderson also refers to "a far-reaching network of interconnected seats of Saiddhantika Shaiva learning" that developed in the second half of the first millenium; see Sanderson, "The Shaiva Age," 267.

54. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 80–81.

The daughter then lures the young ascetic back to the city. "The king houses Risyashringa in the women's quarters of the palace. Immediately [the great god] Indra starts raining."<sup>55</sup>

The story parallels the celebration of the Car Festival at Puri, at the end of which Purushottama returns to the temple to rejoin his wife Lakshmi. This restoration of domesticity is then the prelude to the beginning of the rainy season. The story of Risyashringa brings out two features of much South Asian thinking about sexual energy: (1) the association of sexual abstinence with the buildup of powers that can be used either for destructive or beneficial ends, and (2) the belief that sexual enjoyment and sexual attachments can ensure this power is used to favor life and prosperity. With respect to neither of these features can sexual capacity be said to involve an instinct or appetite; it is the manifestation of a spiritual power of the substances, fluids, energies of the body.

In certain texts and traditions, divine destructive power was associated not with male ascetics, but with female spirits, demons, demigoddesses, or great goddesses. With the rise of "Puranic Hinduism," certain Puranas that came into wide circulation treated the power of the great gods such as Shiva or Vishnu as deriving from their divine female consorts. David Kinsley discusses a well-known origin myth from the *Skanda Purana* for the powerful goddess Durga. This story nicely illustrates the reliance of the Puranas on vivid narratives combining "folk" and brahmanical elements. Kinsley paraphrases it as follows:

After performing heroic austerities, [the demon] Mahisa was granted the boon that he would be invincible to all opponents except a woman. He subsequently defeated the gods in battle and usurped their positions. The gods then assembled and, angry at the thought of Mahisa's triumph . . . emitted their fiery energies. This great mass of light and strength congealed into the body of a beautiful woman, whose splendor spread through the universe. . . . Equipped by the gods and supplied by the god Himalaya with a lion as her vehicle, Durga, the embodied strength of the gods, then roared mightily, causing the earth to shake. . . . Durga defeats the demon handily.<sup>56</sup>

55. Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 100.

56. David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 96–97.

In another version of the story, Durga employs her beauty to lull her opponent, making him all the easier to defeat. That is, sexual attraction defeats the powers accumulated by austerities by ruining the ascetic's concentration. In subsequent adventures, Durga seduces and defeats many other demons who threaten the world. As Kinsley remarks, "This beautiful young woman who slays demons seeking to be her lovers and who exists independent from male protection or guidance represents a vision of the feminine that challenges the stereotyped view of women found in traditional Hindu law books."<sup>57</sup>

Durga, Kali, and other great goddesses—who are forms of the all-powerful female force or goddess Shakti—are often associated with death, with the cremation grounds, and with destruction. The worshiper must find a way, through proper austerities, rituals, and sacrifices, to propitiate the goddess, turning her angry destructive force into protective energy. Much Shakta ritual in West Bengal is still today aimed at propitiating female supernatural forces, through ascetic practices, through animal sacrifices, or with blood offerings, derived from a cut in the arm or chest.<sup>58</sup>

The association of women in South Asia with great spiritual energy, energy that can be either destructive or creative, has been noted by many observers. In a recent study of women's lives in Bhubaneswar, capital of the state of Orissa, Susan Seymour observes that it is the very belief in, and fear of, female energy that motivates restrictive attitudes towards women. "Within Hindu cosmology," remarks Seymour,

female deities, with their divine power, can be both creators and destroyers. Human females, who are by nature endowed with Shakti, are also believed to be inherently powerful. . . .

In everyday Indian life, however, in which the predominant kinship system depends upon male descent and inheritance, female power has had to be channeled to meet the needs of the patriline—the patrifocal family, the patrilineage, and the *jati* or subcaste that is based upon ties of kinship. . . . In this conceptual system, women have to be controlled because of their inherent powerfulness, not because of their inherent weakness. Practices such as child marriage, or arranged marriage at puberty, and *purdah* [seclusion] help to ensure that women's reproductive powers will maintain the social order and thereby bring honor to their families. If women were allowed free rein in fulfilling their sexual desires, if they were allowed to have

57. Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses*, 99.

58. McDaniel, *Offering Flowers*.

sexual relations with the wrong men (men from inappropriate kinship and caste groups), they would indeed disrupt the established social order.<sup>59</sup>

However, Seymour insists, such control strategies, because they honor female power, “do not . . . inevitably produce feelings of inferiority and inadequacy in women.”<sup>60</sup>

### *The Emotional Protocols of Royal Courts*

Tantrism and bhakti religiosity developed in close association with the development of a court “culture” in Gupta and post-Gupta times. By the second half of the first millennium CE, as Daud Ali puts it, “religious and political notions of lordship differed more in degree than in kind.” A single chain of being linked the heavenly and the worldly realms, with kings occupying an intermediate rank. Gods lived in their temples like kings. And a king’s authority and charisma, in turn, resembled that of the temple god or goddess, “giving a theological dimension to relationships at court.”<sup>61</sup> The term *bhakti* was as important in the courtly context as it was in the religious. At court, *bhakti* referred to the deeply felt loyalty appropriate to subordinate kings and lords before a great maharaja. Likewise, in both temple and palace, *darshana* referred to the favor of a glimpse of one’s lord, and *puja* referred to the list of courtesies that constituted the proper reverence devotees offered their lords, including bathing them, dressing them, and decorating them with flowers, adorning them with ointments and perfumes, and offering them food.<sup>62</sup> Like Krishna and other gods and goddesses, the kings and queens and their courtiers and ladies-in-waiting valued *lila*, or “playfulness,” a dimension of personal style that consisted of “a playful nonchalance, mirthful spontaneity, or a charming insouciance” that was not incompatible with the “highest forms of self-control” (158).

From Gupta times on, kings were said to “enjoy” (Sanskrit root *-bhuj*) their realms. For a king whose rule was blessed by brahmanical sanction, enjoyment was an ethical imperative, encompassing both sensory seeing, touching, tasting, on the one hand, and formal ownership or

59. Susan Seymour, *Women, Family, and Child Care in India: A World in Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 276.

60. *Ibid.*, 277.

61. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 104.

62. *Ibid.*, 105 for *bhakti*; 133 for *darshana*; 180 for *puja*. Further page numbers of Ali’s book appear parenthetically in text of this brief discussion.

title, on the other. Courtiers and refined urbanites, likewise, saw themselves as a class of “enjoyers.” For the men of the court, “enjoyment” consisted of the pursuit of *dharma* (which Daud Ali translates as “rectitude”), *artha* (“acquisition”), and *kama* (“pleasure”) (70). In terms of the four Vedic *varnas*, the virtue of the *kshatryias* (warriors) of worldly courts consisted of activity (*rajas*), a characteristic that was marked by “pleasure in enterprise, instability, indulgence in sensual objects and continually straying from one’s objective” (90–91). For the great of this world, “the acquisition of wealth and the pursuit of pleasure were themselves valorized as ethically proper,” just as the gods and goddesses were described as seeking aggrandizement and partnerships of fidelity and subordination. For persons of the court, a principal challenge of daily life was the balancing of these ends with other virtues and goals (93).

The king brought benefits to his subjects because he was “the master of various consort goddesses who represented aspects of worldly sovereignty: prosperity and wealth (*shri, lakshmi*), land (*bhu*), fame (*kirti*), learning (*sarasvati*) and weaponry (*durga*). These goddesses, and the worldly spheres they embodied, were to be ‘enjoyed’ (*bhoga*) by sovereigns in varying capacities.” The king’s wives and concubines were analogous to the goddesses and celestial women who attended the gods in heaven. “Representing royal authority thus entailed the accumulation of vast retinues of ‘palace women,’ the most important of which were the king’s consorts, headed by the chief queen (*mahadevi*)” (114). A king could not be crowned without a wife. When Codaganga’s father died in 1078, according to an inscription in Kenduli, he was only four years old; his mother, a Chola princess, had a daughter of the Chola king of Kana sent to him, so that he could marry her and be crowned.<sup>63</sup>

A rich prescriptive literature, including works on statecraft, sexual relationships, personal development, and aesthetics, gradually developed to aid courtiers and royal tutors and advisers in the proper conduct of court life, royal policy, and military affairs. These Sanskrit manuals were seconded by literary works, especially dramatic works and love poetry, that modeled the prescribed emotional experiences and personal conduct of various court figures and city dwellers.

From the available evidence, Daud Ali concludes that when a king sat before his court, surrounded by his women, with his advisers, guards,

63. Apfel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 158. See also Ronald B. Inden, *Kinship in Bengali Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 38.

officials, subordinate kings and supplicants arrayed before him, the atmosphere was “suffused with a certain sort of emotionality.”<sup>64</sup> Formal protocol was conceived in emotional terms, and thus emotions came to appear “highly formalized and ‘mannered.’” Each emotion came to be seen as discernible by a standard repertoire of symptoms and to exhibit “a self-conscious and almost ‘performative’ aspect.”<sup>65</sup> Daud Ali gives an example drawn from Bana’s *Harshacarita*, a biography of the seventh-century king Harsha (ruled 606–47).<sup>66</sup> Emperor Harsha received Hamsavega, an emissary of his subordinate ally, King Bhaskaravarman of Assam, with subtle signs of favor.

After raising him from prostration with his own hand, indicating a place (or seat) for him in the assembly close to the throne “with an affectionate (*snigdha*) glance,” and asking his fly-whisk bearer to step back so that he might address Hamsavega face to face, Harsha enquires “respectfully” (*saprashraya*) after his master’s health. The significance of these subtle gestures is not lost upon Hamsavega, and his response is just as telling: “now he is fine since your majesty so respectfully enquires with a voice bathed in affection and moist with the flow of friendliness.”<sup>67</sup>

The earliest text to provide an explicit taxonomy of the highly formalized emotions of the courts was the well-known *Natyashastra*, attributed to the legendary Bharata, written sometime between 100 BCE and 300 CE. This text was a guidebook for the composition and appreciation of dramatic performances. Actors on the stage modeled the outward appearance of *bhavas*. These common everyday states are often referred to as “emotions” in English, although the range of meanings of the term *bhava* is broader. According to the *Natyashastra*, the states covered by *bhava* included disease, intoxication, dying, sweating, crying, and trembling as well as such recognizably “emotional” states as *krodha* (anger) and *bhaya* (fear). The *Natyashastra* lists eight “permanent” *bhavas*, thirty-three “transient” *bhavas*, and eight “involuntary states,” all of which can be depicted on stage. Each of the eight permanent emotions had a list of causes, *vibhava*, and effects, *anubhava*. Causes were situations. Effects were the audible and visible signs of emotions. Each of these categories was later subdivided into objective and stimulative. “The *sthayibhava* of pleasure, *rati*, for example, had as its objective causes (*alambanavibhava*) the lover and beloved, and as its

64. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 183.

65. *Ibid.*, 185.

66. On Harsha, see Thapar, *Early India*, 289.

67. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 184.



stimulative causes (*uddipनाविभवा*) the seasons, flower-garlands, unguents, ornaments, the enjoyments of a house, going into the garden and enjoying oneself there, hearing the beloved's words, playing and sporting, and the absence of rejection."<sup>68</sup>

The *Natyashastra* and the tradition of aesthetic theory that it gave rise to placed great importance on a second order of "emotions" or states, called *rasa* (nectar or extract). For each of the eight permanent *bhavas* there was a corresponding *rasa*.<sup>69</sup> These *rasas*, Ali notes, "have long been at the heart of traditional Indian aesthetics."<sup>70</sup> *Rasa*, said Edwin Gerow, "has remained the most important and influential single concept of Indian criticism to this day."<sup>71</sup> A *rasa* differs from its corresponding everyday *bhava* in that the *bhava* is personal, accidental, and incommunicable. *Rasa*, in contrast, is depersonalized, ordered, and communicable. By the reordering of life accomplished in the action of a play, "one's own history is reactivated in an impersonal context," according to A. K. Ramanujan, in an oft-cited passage (128). The *rasa* of a play is its dominant mood, and Sanskrit drama was written and performed in order to produce this transient *rasa* or mood. "*Rasa* comes into being with the experiencing" of the play, wrote Ramanujan. "The critics compared it to the experience of God. It is its own witness, felt in the blood and along the heart through the body laid to sleep, the self in oblivion; a transient twin of the experience of Brahma" (128).

While there was much debate over the centuries about the exact relationship between *bhava* and *rasa*, it was accepted that *rasa* was a higher form and that bringing the audience into the higher states of *rasa* was the principal purpose of drama. For the author of the *Natyashastra*, drama was like cooking, combining ingredients to produce a certain flavor. The enjoyer of *rasa* was called a *rasika* or "taster" (188). In time, it came to be accepted that, not just drama, but literature in all its forms had a similar aim, the enjoyment of *rasa*.<sup>72</sup>

Daud Ali's important contribution to scholarship on the aesthetic tradition has been to point how closely aesthetic theory mirrored the prescriptive literature destined to instruct courtiers and ladies-in-

68. *Ibid.*, 186.

69. See table, Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 47.

70. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 188.

71. Edward C. Dimock et al., *The Literatures of India: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 130. Further page numbers of this work appear parenthetically in text of this brief discussion.

72. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "Introduction," in *The "Dhivanyaloka" of Anandavardhana, with the "Locana" of Abhinavagupta*, ed. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, trans. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Mason, and M. V. Patwardhan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 1-39, see p. 7.

waiting of the royal courts of the first millennium CE. The *Arthashastra*, for example, instructed the courtier to observe the king's gestures and facial expressions with care. He should be able to discern a number of emotions in this way—pleasure, aversion, joy, distress, resolve, fear—allowing him to determine if he enjoyed the king's favor. The ideal courtier was necessarily a skilled observer of dramatic performances. Like this prescriptive literature, Daud Ali notes, so the aesthetic literature—drama and poetry—“shaped the affective habits of people at court.” In Ali's view, the men and women of rank in this period experienced *rasa* “not merely in art but in their worldly dealings.” For them, “the capacity to experience *rasa* was a way of experiencing the affective world around them. Aestheticians of this tradition were concerned with producing *rasa* within the characters of the drama precisely because drama imitated the world.” The inscription on the fourth-century-CE Allahabad pillar, raised by Samudra Gupta (died 380 CE), for example, refers to subordinates savoring with their emotions the marvelous acts of the Gupta king, having their minds expanded “by clearly manifest affection, with an excess of *rasa*.”<sup>73</sup> *Rasa* was, Ali concludes, “a sort of ‘meta-disposition’ which aestheticized every aspect of an individual's experience” (193).

Hence, aestheticized experience was one of the fundamental features of the refined world of the court. Because of *rasa*'s parallel importance in temple ritual, aestheticized experience was also one of those facets of court life that underscored its “theological dimension.” The communicable, universal nectar of *rasa* was the feeling of the court, and such feeling both shaped its protocols and conferred authority on those who participated in it.

The sexual partnerships that characterized court life must be understood in this context. *Kama* (“erotic love”) was the subject of a prescriptive literature that explained how this sexual domain of enjoyment could be cultivated and realized. Refined sexual partnerships constituted a theme that was present in virtually all drama and that dominated the Sanskrit court poetry of the period. The earliest and best-known of the prescriptive writings, the *Kamasutra*—famous in the West for its pages on sexual intercourse—is in actuality much more than a manual of sexual “pleasure.” It provides instruction in the whole way of life of the *nagaraka*, or “man about town.” This category included kings and courtiers, as well as high-ranking urbanites. The *nagaraka*

73. Quoted by Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 201. Further page numbers of this work appear parenthetically in text of this brief discussion.

was expected to master a list of sixty-four fine arts, including the arts of poetry, dancing, and singing, but also such skills as using clothes as a disguise, gambling, and arranging flowers (75–77). These same arts were to be mastered, as well, by “high ranking courtesans, princesses, daughters of ministers” (218).

According to the *Kamasutra*, “The *nagaraka* was to bathe every day, have his limbs chafed and rubbed with oil every second day, have a foam bath every third day, his face shaved every fourth day and his body hair removed every fifth or tenth day.” He should rely on ointments, unguents, perfume, and incense to counteract body odors. He must know how to use makeup for eyelids, lac for reddening lips and feet (63). An ideal lover’s female counterpart, the *navika*, was to possess “beauty, youth, favorable bodily marks, sweet speech, attraction to virtue (not wealth), inclination towards affection and sexual union, firmness of thought, similarity of birth [to her lover], a desire to achieve distinction, perpetual avoidance of miserliness in conduct, and a fondness of skills performed at [certain refined gatherings of *nagarakas* called] *gosthis*.” Further down her list is “proficiency in the science of *kama*” (215). Love poetry’s explorations of sexual liaisons show the importance of protocols and adornments similar to those emphasized in the prescriptive literature.

Of the seven books of the *Kamasutra*, the “science of *kama*” is covered in only one. This science relied on a division of the sexual act into a number of discrete phases and activities, including “embracing, kissing, scratching, biting, coitus, slapping, moaning, and oral sex,” each of these subdivided into varieties suitable for different sorts of lovers. For people of the court, sex “was a highly mannered and tutored experience, an ‘art,’ which, like other aspects of the courtier’s life, was to be refined and perfected” (213). As described in the *Kamasutra*, notes Ali, “the sexual act itself was always accompanied by a vast array of accoutrements, material, verbal, and gestural, which were thought to be integral to its enjoyment. These accoutrements were deemed so important that the theatrical traditions considered a number of them (unguents, garlands and ornaments) to be ‘determinative’ of the very emotion of sexual pleasure (*rati*) on the stage” (75). *Kama* was not just any kind of pleasure from any kind of sexual contact; *kama* was that special enjoyment of mutual sexual interaction, properly carried out according to an elaborate protocol (a small part of which had to do with the sexual act itself), with a proper partner. As such it could play a role in relations shaped by *shringara rasa*.

When Sanskrit texts from the royal courts described the details of

sexual acts and pleasures, they were describing an art form that was part of the way of life of a stratum of society distinguished by its closeness to the gods and goddesses. It was a closeness different from that of the Brahmin priests, to be sure. The priests served and worshiped the gods and goddesses in their temples. The people of the court imitated the gods and goddesses in their palaces and luxurious townhouses. This complementarity bears little resemblance to the sharp distinctions developed and enforced by the Gregorian reformers in Europe, between the profane and the sacred, between the flesh and the spirit, between the sphere of worldly government and association and the sphere of the church, its sexually abstinent clergy, and its single hierarchy of sovereign spiritual authority. Profane, that is polluting, sex was possible in the royal courts of South Asia, when it was performed without art or reflection, without the intensity of *shringara rasa*, or when it was performed with a person of the wrong rank. In the Gregorian conception, by contrast, all sex was profane and could be disentangled from the realm of sin only with great difficulty, by legitimately married partners whose sole aim was procreation and who carefully avoided consenting to that polluting animal “pleasure” that came with the satisfaction of a bodily “appetite.”

### *The “Hard Core” of Tantra*

Building on the widespread associations of female sexuality with divine power, certain “Tantric” practitioners of the eighth through eleventh centuries went outside the boundaries of household, kinship, and *jati* and their associated cults to make alliances with dangerous female deities who could bestow extraordinary powers on human adepts. These practitioners constituted what White calls the “hard core” of Tantric practice. The hard core, White insists, literally sought transcendental powers through ritual manipulations of certain polluting substances, including sexual substances. They were not concerned about symbolic meanings or internal meditative states, emotions, attitudes, or trances for their own sake. They sought to become a *siddha* (“perfected being”)—and thereby achieve immortality, the power to fly, victory in battle—by producing and consuming certain substances.<sup>74</sup>

The Tantric hard core first emerged with the Kaula—at once a sect, a cult, and a lineage. It may have had earlier manifestations, but by the eighth century in central India, patrons were funding the adornment

74. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 13–14; on the *siddha*, see esp. pp. 7, 10, 74, 160–67.

of permanent settings for Kaula rites.<sup>75</sup> Two such sites survive in Orissa today, at Hirapur and Ranipur-Jhariā.<sup>76</sup> Kaula ritual focused on the propitiation of Yoginis, who were petulant, powerful goddesses first mentioned in sixth-century-CE texts. Sometimes taking forms that were partly human, partly animal or plant, Yoginis resembled earlier female goddesses such as the *apsaras* (heavenly nymphs) or the malevolent Seizers, responsible for a variety of diseases.<sup>77</sup> Yoginis were airborne goddesses, and Kaula patrons built ritual structures that were open to the sky to facilitate the goddesses' arrival. Kaula initiates sought to win the Yoginis' favor by offerings of a number of substances, including animal (and perhaps human) blood, meat, fish, wine, and semen.<sup>78</sup> After eating these offerings, the dangerous Yoginis revealed themselves as ravishing young women willing to confer various supernatural powers on their devotees.<sup>79</sup> Just as humans offered Yoginis substances that pleased them, such as blood and semen, so Yoginis conferred their favors through the sexual discharge of their vulvas. In Kaula ritual a Yogini would take possession of a woman, whose female discharge during coitus (*maithuna*) was believed to be from the Yogini herself. This precious fluid was consumed by practitioners as they consumed the transformed offerings of meat (*mamsa*), fish (*maca*), wine (*madya*), and black grain cakes (*mudra*). These were called the "five m's" in some texts.<sup>80</sup> Drinking female discharge was not intended to be arousing, according to White, and has nothing to do with "the 'bliss' and 'fun' offered by the modern-day Tantric sex trade."<sup>81</sup> Instead, "The 'happy ending' of these rituals is described time and again in the Tantras as well as the adventure and fantasy literature of the medieval period . . . : both Yogini and Vira [virile hero] fly up into the sky, to sport there together for eons of time" (12). The exchange of reproductive substances also transformed the Kaula initiate into a member of a divine "clan" or "lineage" able to pass its secret knowledge down through the ages.

Kaula practices violated a number of prevailing purity restrictions. The consumption of meat and alcohol was considered polluting, as was

75. *Ibid.*, 12.

76. Thomas Donaldson, "The Shava-Vahana as Purusa in Orissan Images: Camunda to Kali-Tara," *Artibus Asiae* 51 (1991): 107–41, see p. 125; see also Thomas Donaldson, "Propitious-Apotropaic Eroticism in the Art of Orissa," *Artibus Asiae* 37 (1975): 75–100, see p. 86.

77. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 27–37.

78. *Ibid.*, 76–77.

79. *Ibid.*, 8.

80. Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 217; White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 83–84.

81. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 100. Excepting note 82, further page numbers of this work appear parenthetically in text of this brief discussion.

the improper sharing of sexual substances. Sexual intercourse was supposed to be confined to a legitimate marriage with an appropriately ranked partner, to ensure that offspring were of a verifiable male lineage. One Kaula manual prescribed use of a “lowest born” woman who was to be sexually aroused during the ritual so that her vaginal fluid could be offered to the sixty-four Yoginis and fifty-eight Viras (165). Critics charged that Kaula experts were low caste, like the women they recruited for their rituals. “Drunken and dull,” their unorthodox rites epitomized the decay of the Kali age, it was said. A medieval Jain author, Somadeva, complained, “If liberation were the result of a loose, undisciplined life, then thugs and butchers would surely sooner attain to it than these Kaulas!”<sup>82</sup>

To avoid condemnation, Kaula rituals were at first staged at night in secluded locations. Later, the building of remote structures to house these rituals marked a slightly more public stance—even if the identities of those who gathered for the nocturnal rites remained secret. Still greater public acceptance was achieved when kings were won over to the cult beginning in the ninth century. Royal protection meant that secrecy could be relaxed. Kaula ritual structures became more elaborate; mainstream temples began to incorporate Kaula ritual. Over a dozen ruins of royal temples of the ninth to twelfth centuries have been identified as depicting Kaula rituals in their sculpture programs, including temples at Hirapur (Orissa, built ca. 900 CE) and Mitauli and the great temple of Khajuraho (138–39). As White notes, “No South Asian temple built in the medieval period is without erotic sculpture on its walls, and many of the sexual practices so depicted—because they are condemned in the Indian treatises on erotics (*kamashastra*)—are likely depictions of Tantric rituals.” “In Orissa,” White continues, “where the earliest *maitihuna* motifs appear on late-sixth-century Shailodbhava period temples, explicit depictions of sexual activities multiply significantly near the beginning of the tenth century and are frequently arranged in a sequential manner to imply specific stages of prescribed rites” (138–39).

The appeal of Kaula beliefs to kings is obvious. Like the high Hindu gods, kings had long been understood to acquire their strength from female figures. A Tamil poem of the first to third centuries CE, for example, describes a goddess waiting on her bed for the king. “The *ananku* [*shakti* in Sanskrit], transmitted by her to the king each time they have sexual intercourse . . . is carried inside of him as the energy that wins him victory in battle” (129). Kaula experts often found a ready ear

82. *Ibid.*, 143–58, quotes from p. 154.

when they offered to share with kings the benefits—such as flight or immortality—deriving from their secret knowledge of the Yoginis.

Not to be outdone, Brahmin temple priests around 1000 CE began to incorporate Kaula elements into existing doctrines and practices. White suggests that these more conservative figures were first responsible for the “sublimation” of Kaula beliefs—that is, for their translation into “a body of ritual and meditative techniques that did not threaten the purity regulations that have always been the basis for high-caste social constructions of the self.” Sublimation was achieved through “internalization, semanticization of Yoginis into seed *mantras*; masculinization of Tantric initiation; substitution of ritual substances for the five M-words” (219). Instead of magical powers like flight, victory in battle, or immortality, practitioners were said to seek final liberation from the cycle of reincarnations. Such “soft core,” mainstreamed practices were apparently influential in the initial elaboration of the ritual program for the Purushottama temple at Puri in the twelfth century. But certain rituals at Puri sustained, in secret, interpretations that were close to Kaula beliefs.

### ***Bhakti***

The word *bhakti* is sometimes translated as “devotion,” sometimes as “love.” It is used to refer to certain styles of worship that developed in association with Puranic Hinduism. *Bhakti* was above all a personal relationship between the worshiper and the god or goddess that she or he worshiped. In contrast, much popular ritual and much of the earlier Vedic body of ritual texts treated the gods as distant and, at best, awe inspiring; ritual and prayer were aimed at propitiation, purification, and transformation. Kaula ritual shared Vedic ritual’s preoccupation with the transformation of substances and the deployment of powers of various kinds, including “physical” powers, such as power over death or the power of flight. *Bhakti* texts, prayers, and ritual were quite different. With *bhakti*, the worshiper aimed at changing her or his orientation toward the divine and at establishing a personal tie between the worshiper and a single divine figure, modeled on (or modeling) the tie of a subordinate lord and his king as exemplified in Bana’s *Harshacarita*, quoted above.

Many scholars believe that this kind of worship was gaining in popularity in Gupta and post-Gupta times (300 through 800 CE) and that Brahmin priests attempted to harness its popularity by composing the texts known as Puranas, between the third and tenth centu-

ries CE. As bhakti forms of worship developed, they borrowed from the vision of courtly cultivation being developed in prescriptive literature and court poetry—or perhaps the borrowing went in both directions. As Paul Toomey has put it, in Krishna bhakti, that is, the emotional worship of Krishna, “[the] *bhava* and *rasa* [of literary theory] are reinterpreted, shorn of their aesthetic distance; emphasis is placed, instead, on emotional experience of Krishna and its spontaneous expression (*raganugabhakti*) in the devotee’s life. *Bhava* then becomes the devotee’s worshipful attitude; *rasa* is the joyful experience of the love relationship between a human being and Krishna. Krishna is conceived of as the fount of *rasa*: he is the object that is relished (*rasa*), the subject who relishes (*rasika*), the embodiment of all moods, and the giver of the experience of moods to others.”<sup>83</sup> To the Vaishnavas of Bengal, remarked Edward Dimock, “religious devotion, *bhakti*, is . . . a state of *rasa*: the senses and the mind of the worshiper are absorbed in Krishna, that personification of *rasa*, in the most intense experience possible for man.”<sup>84</sup>

The Puranas’ vivid stories of the doings of gods and goddesses seem often to have been of popular origin. Priests retold them in such a way as to make them more compatible with existing conceptions of the high gods and goddesses of Sanskrit tradition, as well as more compatible with brahmanical notions of purity and pollution, authority and obedience, and spiritual rank. In June McDaniel’s view, which is close to that of Vijay Nath, the Sanskrit versions of popular myths offered a kind of deal to popular devotees of gods and goddesses. Grateful for the elevation in respectability brought by brahmanical recognition, they are implicitly urged to accept brahmanical ideas about proper worship, proper family life, and proper gender identity, including female deference to male authority.<sup>85</sup>

Brahmins may have promoted bhakti or simply tried to harness it. Either way, the “Puranic Hinduism” that resulted was a great success. This new Hinduism was sharply distinguished from its “Vedic Smarta roots,” according to Vijay Nath, by “its ever widening horizon and

83. Paul Toomey, “Krishna’s Consuming Passions: Food as Metaphor and Metonym for Emotion at Mount Govardhan,” in *Divine Passions: The Social Construction of Emotion in India*, ed. Owen Lynch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 157–81.

84. Edward C. Dimock, Jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaishnava–Sahajiya Cult of Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 23. See also Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 47, 52–57; Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, “Refining the Body: Transformative Emotion in Ritual Dance,” in *Divine Passions: The Social Construction of Emotions in India*, ed. Owen Lynch (Berkeley: University of California Press 1990), 212–36, see pp. 212, 224.

85. McDaniel, *Offering Flowers*, 148–54. See also Nath, *Puranas and Acculturation*, 91–117.



popular base, its theological and sectarian pluralism, its Tantric veneer, and an extraordinary thrust on devotion or *bhakti*.”<sup>86</sup> Breaking with their elitist past, Brahmin experts assimilated local deities and elaborated new mythic materials for them, and they opened ritual participation to select strata and seasonal festival rites to a larger public. “Only such an attitudinal change,” Nath believes, “can explain the growing projection of Vishnu as a compassionate god, who through intense devotion could be won over to alleviate the sufferings of the humblest of devotees.”<sup>87</sup> This shift in interest probably suited ambitious kings who needed the active support of new subjects, as when Codaganga conquered central Orissa in the early twelfth century.

Vaishnavism was a crucial current of the *bhakti* movement or trend, at least as it was propagated by priestly experts in the north. The devotee of Vishnu was encouraged to worship him by contemplating stories about Krishna from the Puranas, in order to achieve a state of intense inner focus on the god. These stories included descriptions of Krishna as a playful child and as an amorous adolescent. More than any form of Shiva or any facet of Shakti worship, it was particularly the amorous Krishna who inspired a kind of sacred sexual love that is of particular interest here. Thapar has noted the “outburst of erotic poetry” of the period 800 to 1300 CE. “Erotic mysticism,” she continues, “expressing the relationship between the individual and his deity, seems to have caught the imagination of people.”<sup>88</sup> As Edward Dimock put it, “This *bhava* [that is, *rati*] and the *rasa* to which it leads [*shringara rasa*] are the most important in the poetry and the thought of the Vaishnavas and the Vaishnava-Sahajiyas of Bengal. . . . the transformation of the worshiper from an ordinary earthbound creature to a lover of the Lord is a very real and immediate thing.”<sup>89</sup> Lee Siegel remarks that the transformation of Krishna-*rati* into *shringara rasa* represented “the highest and finest of all” forms of devotion.<sup>90</sup>

Both of these terms, *rati* and *shringara rasa*, are translated as “love-lust” here. Neither in Sanskrit nor in the local languages of *bhakti* practice were there any words available for distinguishing between love and desire in the way that the troubairitz and troubadours did. Everyday *rati*

86. Nath, “From ‘Brahmanism’ to ‘Hinduism,’” 20.

87. *Ibid.*, 21.

88. Thapar, *Early India*, 473.

89. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon*, 23.

90. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 53–54; see also p. 47. See also Appfel-Marglin, “Refining the Body,” 212–36, esp. pp. 212, 224.

included a whole register of sexual feelings, from interest to sad pre-occupation, from loyalty to loss, from longing to stimulation. Divine *shringara rasa* was simply the transformation of this range of feelings on a higher spiritual plane. In private bhakti prayer as well as in temple ritual inspired by the Krishna-*gopi* relationship, the goal was to transform the love-lust of *rati* into the love-lust of *rasa*. Neither of these feelings was more “physiological,” or “appetitive,” neither more “affective” than the other. This strand of Vaishnavism therefore constitutes a remarkable mode of emotional experience that defies the commonsense Western distinction between love and lust and exposes the ethnocentric bias that can easily creep into Western theorizations of desire.

Devotion to Krishna as amorous adolescent offers an instructive contrast with the new European conception of romantic love that emerged in the twelfth century. From the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Bhagavata Purana*, we learn that Krishna as a child was mischievous; his step-mother, Yashoda, had to tie him around the waist to keep him out of trouble. As a youth he loved to play his flute and wander across the hillsides. One glance from his eyes, the very sound of one note of his flute, were enough to stir the beautiful young *gopis* (cowherd girls) he found there. “When one girl saw Govinda [that is, Krishna as cowherd] coming,” says the *Vishnu Purana*, “in her delight she exclaimed, ‘Krishna! Krishna! Krishna!’ with wide open eyes. Another looked at Hari [Krishna] with a frown, bending her eye-brows, and her eye-bees drank his face-lotus. One girl closed her eyes when she had seen Govinda and meditated on just his beauty; she looked like someone absorbed in *yoga*.”<sup>91</sup> On sight of him, they dropped everything, husbands and households, to pursue Krishna across the hills, to flirt with him, to dance to the music of his flute, to caress and kiss him, and to hold him in their arms. Krishna’s response is welcoming, he loves them all. According to the *Bhagavata Purana*, “By extending his arms, by embracing them, by touching their tresses hanging down their hands and necks, their thighs, their girdle knots and their breasts, by scratching them with his nails, by fondling them with his eye, by joking and playing with them, Shri Krishna excited the beautiful women of Braja and gave them pleasure.”<sup>92</sup> In the Puranas, the *gopis* are sublimely joyful when Krishna is near and disconsolate when he is away. They are jealous of

91. *Vishnu Purana*, V.xiv. 42–45; quoted by Siegel in *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 37.

92. *Bhagavata Purana*, 1442, as cited and translated in Sumanta Banerjee, *Appropriation of a Folk Heroine: Radha in Medieval Bengali Vaishnava Culture* (Rasthrapati Nivas, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1993), 7.

each other, and there is at least one passing suggestion that Krishna has a favorite.<sup>93</sup>

In these texts, transgressive sexual play derives spiritual significance not, as in Kaula ritual manuals, from its capacity to provide access to supernatural powers, but from the “emotion” that motivates it. Krishna’s sexual play (*lila*) with the *gopis* is analogous to an act of creation. Inadvertently, out of exuberance and lightheartedness, Krishna and the *gopis* enact creative play. N. N. Battacharyya, speaking of Tantric-influenced Vaishnava theology of this period, remarks, “Creation is due not to any need felt by God but merely for his sport.”<sup>94</sup> As the *Vishnu Purana* puts it, “These wives of the cowherds, fond of pleasure, slept with Krishna during the nights, although they were hindered by their husbands, parents, and brothers. . . . Of immeasurable self, destroying everything unpleasant, he dallied with them in the nights. [But as] the Lord in the form of his true essence, he pervades their husbands, them, and all beings and he indwells the All.”<sup>95</sup> As presented in the Puranas, Krishna’s playfulness, his tendency to break rules and annoy his stepmother or to offend the husbands of the *gopis*, is divine. No one can object to or resist his creative superabundance of delight. Thus, the story of Krishna’s adulterous love play with the *gopis* becomes a kind of parable of creation. Their enthusiastic, ecstatic response to him and their despondency during his absences become paradigms of the relation of the faithful to their Lord. Just as one of the *gopis* is said to meditate on Krishna’s beauty in the *Vishnu Purana*, so the faithful devotee of Krishna is invited to meditate on the *gopis*’ relationship with Krishna and to share in their longing and their joy.

### Jayadeva’s “Gitagovinda”

A straightforward way to grasp the rich, undifferentiated scope of *shringara rasa* is to examine the lengthy exploration of this sublime sentiment embodied in the twelfth-century Sanskrit poem called the *Gitagovinda*—that is, the song (*gita*) of Krishna as Govinda (cowherd boy). This poem, written just a few years after Chrétien de Troyes’s *Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart*, was taken up in ritual practice at Puri soon after its composition and eventually at many other temples, mak-

93. Banerjee, *Folk Heroine*, 7.

94. Battacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, 240, see also, on the sexuality of creation, pp. 31, 39–40, 214.

95. Quoted in, and translated by, Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, p. 38.

ing it a high point in the development of Puranic Hinduism. Over the centuries the *GitaGovinda* has been accepted as a sacred text by many Vaishnavas.<sup>96</sup> The poem consists of twelve cantos, or parts, each canto containing descriptive verses introducing two or three songs. The poet identifies himself as Jayadeva.

### *The Poet Jayadeva*

Numerous legends have grown up about Jayadeva's origins and life. Scholars are still divided about who he was and where he lived. Two bits of evidence convincingly link Jayadeva with the court of the Bengali king Lakshmanasena (1178–1206): (1) At the beginning of the *GitaGovinda* Jayadeva makes reference to other poets of the Sena court. (2) An anthology of court poetry drawn up for Lakshmanasena in 1205 includes some verses from the *GitaGovinda* as well as some other verses attributed to Jayadeva by name.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless Thomas Donaldson has assembled some interesting evidence tending to locate Jayadeva's birth and activities in the region around Puri in Orissa. Several sixteenth-century texts declare Jayadeva was from "Utkala," an earlier term for Orissa. The village of Kenduli, birthplace of Jayadeva according to Orissan legend, is a location "teeming with Vaishnava ruins and temples, perhaps more than any other site in India," according to Donaldson.<sup>98</sup>

Lakshmanasena's kingdom fell to a Turkish-led invading force in 1206; if Jayadeva was a Sena courtier, then the *GitaGovinda* was very likely completed before 1205. There is reason to believe, as well, that the *GitaGovinda* was known at Puri not long after its composition. According to Donaldson, the earliest commentary on the poem was written in Orissa around 1190.<sup>99</sup> In Orissan sculpture as well, Donaldson notes an upswing of interest in the image of Krishna as cowherd, dancing and playing his flute, surrounded by *gopis*, from the late twelfth century on, "long before such images became popular in Bengal or elsewhere in India."<sup>100</sup> The *GitaGovinda* therefore offers the historian an invaluable textual key to twelfth-century understandings—even if these understandings are all expressed in the Sanskrit of Brahmins and

96. Edward C. Dimock, Jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon*, 33, 55. See also Barbara Stoler Miller, "Introduction," in *Love Song of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's "GitaGovinda,"* trans. Barbara Stoler Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 3–66.

97. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 206–11; Miller, "Introduction," 4; Reena Bhaduri, *Social Formation in Medieval Bengal* (Kolkata: Bibhasa, 2001), 21–23; Banerjee, *Folk-Heroine*, 10–12.

98. Donaldson, *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden*, 366–70.

99. *Ibid.*, 370–71.

100. *Ibid.*, 372–74; quote from p. 374.

courtiers—of the erotic form of Vaishnava bhakti in twelfth-century Bengal and Orissa.

### *Longing for Association in the Gitagovinda*

Jayadeva's poem focuses on the adulterous love-lust relationship between Krishna and one particular *gopi*, called Radha, who becomes his favorite.<sup>101</sup> In contrast to the Puranas, which do not single out any particular *gopi*, Jayadeva's focus on the love-lust linking Krishna and one *gopi* permitted him to explore a single relationship at great length, significantly enhancing the personal quality and intensity of the mutual attachment he described. This was a remarkable theological innovation, one that recalls the fundamental innovation of Christian theology, by which the Hebrew god Yahweh was said to have sent his son down to be born and suffer as a man. But in this case, the god deigned to participate in a very different kind of human suffering, the suffering of unrequited love, the suffering of intense longing for erotic companionship with a specific beloved partner, the suffering of a longing for association. Jayadeva was obviously aware of the great significance of this move.

At the beginning of the *Gitagovinda* Jayadeva describes the playful dancing of Krishna and the *gopis* in traditional terms, although here he already foregrounds Radha's role. She is doubtless the *gopi* referred to in verse 40 of the First Canto: "Passionately embracing Hari {that is, Krishna} with the massive weight of her swollen breasts a certain herdsman's wife sings a resounded fifth note; here Hari plays."<sup>102</sup> The term "fifth note" is an amusing allusion to "a love-cry made during or before coition to signify pleasure," according to Lee Siegel.<sup>103</sup>

101. Of the two recent scholarly translations available, by Barbara Stoler Miller (*Love Song of the Dark Lord*) and by Lee Siegel (*Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*), Siegel's has been used exclusively here because of Miller's consistent reliance on a standard English sexual vocabulary—including such terms as *wanton*, *lust*, and *craving*—in such a way as to obscure the differences that are most of interest here (see, e.g., pp. 78, 80, 82–83). I am grateful to Rich Freeman for his careful discussion of these matters with me and for his detailed comments on some of Jayadeva's vocabulary. Siegel sacrificed readability in favor of a more literal translation. Replete with hyphenated words and bracketed insertions, Siegel's lines aim at word-for-word matching, which, despite the obvious drawbacks, permits more ready appreciation of the unique features of Sanskrit sexual vocabulary.

102. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 248. Insertions by Siegel are bracketed throughout, while the curly braces indicate my own insertions.

103. *Ibid.*, 248. In the Clay series translation, Siegel replaced the phrase "fifth note" with "sexy vespers," to indicate that the phrase *pancama-ragam* refers to a scale or melody rather than to a note. The *pancama-svara* is associated with *shringara*, nonetheless. Thanks to Rich Freeman for pointing this out. See Jayadeva, *Gitagovinda: The Love Songs of Radha and Krishna*, trans. Lee Siegel (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 23.

In verse 47 of this canto Jayadeva explains that Krishna is a kind of distillation of joyous love-arousal: “Producing the joy of all-creatures by his love, initiating the festival of love by his limbs which are dark and tender like bunches of [blue] lotuses, embraced by the beauties of Vraja of their own free-will, entirely, all-over-his-body, he is like the erotic [sentiment] incarnate, O friend.”<sup>104</sup> Siegel here translates the term *shringara* as “the erotic [sentiment]”—a phrase that vividly captures the difficulty of translating this term into a Western language.

In verse 49, at the height of Krishna’s dance with the *gopis*, Jayadeva again foregrounds Radha: “In the presence of the cowherds’ beautiful-browed-women who were carried-away by whirling-about with a great amount of joy/jumping in the dance, Hari was passionately kissed by Radha who was blind with love, having ardently embraced his breast, having said, “Wonderful! Your mouth/voice consists of nectar!” under the pretext of praising his song; may Hari, ravishing with his smile, protect you!”<sup>105</sup>

In the Second Canto, verse 1, Jayadeva turns to the exploration of Radha’s growing jealousy of the other *gopis*. The first verse states the theme: “While Hari, loving them all-equally, roams-for-pleasure in the forest, Radha, on account of jealousy because she was no longer his favorite-beloved, went in another direction; hiding somewhere in a grove of creepers which had crests that were noisy with circles of humming honey-bees, she was sad.”<sup>106</sup> Radha is consumed with rumination on Krishna. “[My mind] counts the multitude of his virtues,” she realizes; it “does not roam from concentrating on him even by mistake,”<sup>107</sup>

and it possesses delight, it pardons [him of his] transgressions from afar; even while fickle Krishna delights among the girls without me, yet again my perverse mind loves him! What am I to do? (II, 10)<sup>108</sup>

This verse describes a state of preoccupation very familiar to the Occitan troubairitz and troubadours and similar to the state of mind that Chrétien de Troyes attributed to Lancelot, daydreaming as he crossed a ford, swooning at the sight of Guinevere’s lost comb. Its description in a poem that was written at about the same time but over five thousand miles distant suggests that “chronic accessibility,” as cognitive

104. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 249.

105. *Ibid.*, 249.

106. *Ibid.*, 250.

107. Siegel’s paraphrase, in *ibid.*, 251, n. 79.

108. *Ibid.*, 251.

researchers now call it, is a common feature of what in the Introduction I proposed to call “longing.” In spite of the differences that are underscored in this chapter between European courtly love doctrine and Vaishnava bhakti theology, both would appear to concern a form of longing for association.

Radha lists all the details of her love encounter with Krishna, in a song of lament. In the refrain to each verse, she begs a friend to intercede for her with the beloved god:

I went to his hut in the secret thicket; secretly at night he remained hiding; I looked fearfully in all directions; he laughed with an abundance of passion for the pleasure-of-love; O friend! Make the noble Slayer of Kesin {Krishna} make-love to me passionately, I am engrossed with desire for love!

I was shy at our first union; he was obliging with hundreds of skilful flatteries; I spoke with sweet and gentle smiles; he loosened the silk-garment on my hips; O friend! Make him make-love to me passionately, I am engrossed with desire for love!

.....

My eyes were closed from sleepiness; his cheek was beautiful and bristling; my whole body was sweating; he was very restless on account of the drunkenness of his great passion;<sup>109</sup> O friend! Make him make-love to me passionately, I am engrossed with desire for love!

I cooed with the soft sound of the cuckoo; he mastered the procedures of the science of love; my tresses were strewn with loose flowers; the mass of my firm breast was scratched by his nails; O friend! Make him make-love to me passionately, I am engrossed with desire for love! (II, 11–12, 14–15)<sup>110</sup>

This long, mournful meditation is an expression of what came to be called *viraha*—love-in-separation—a central concept of Vaishnava devotion, a state many devotees attempt to achieve, considering it the highest state possible in this life.<sup>111</sup>

But it is in the Third Canto that Jayadeva introduces his greatest innovation. Suddenly, without explanation, Krishna gives Radha a special role:

109. The phrase “the drunkenness of his great passion” here translates *vara-madana-madad atilam*, where *ati-lola* means roughly “extremely unsteady” and *madana-madad* means roughly “from the rapture of *kama*.” Thus the idea, often found in Western texts, that *passion* is of bodily origin should not be read into this line. The same applies for common Western associations of *drunkenness* with appetitive excess. The “unsteadiness caused by the rapture of his love-lust” would be a less misleading translation. Thanks to Rich Freeman for guidance on this passage.

110. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 252.

111. Toomey, “Krishna’s Consuming Passions”; Banerjee, *Folk Heroine*, 15.

Moreover, the Enemy-of-Kamsa {Krishna}, having placed Radha in his heart *as the chain binding him with desire for the world*, abandoned the beauties of Vraja.

Having pursued Radhika {a diminutive for *Radha*} here and there, his mind suffering from the wounds of love's arrows, repentant in the grove on the bank of the Kalinda-Nandini, Madhava {Krishna} was despondent. (III, 1–2; emphasis added)<sup>112</sup>

Krishna proceeds to sing his own song of lament.

She left having seen me surrounded by the group of women, she was not stopped by me [for I was] truly guilty and very frightened; Hari! Hari! Because her respect [for me] is destroyed, she is gone, apparently angry.<sup>113</sup>

What will she do? What will she say [after] separation [from me for such] a long-time? What use have I for relatives [or] wealth? For life [or] home? Hari! Hari! Because her respect [for me] is destroyed, she is gone, apparently angry.

.....

O slender-woman! I suppose your heart is distressed with jealousy—I cannot calm you for I do not know where you have gone; Hari! Hari! Because her respect [for me] is destroyed, she is gone, apparently angry.

.....

Forgive me—in the future I shall not do such things to you at any time; give me a vision [of you], O beautiful-woman! I am burning with passion; Hari! Hari! Because her respect [for me] is destroyed, she is gone, apparently angry. (III, 3–4, 7, 9)<sup>114</sup>

In this verse, Siegel translates the term *manmathena* as “burning with passion.” Elsewhere (p. 235, n. 36) he glosses *manmatha* as the “Mind-churner”; this is one of the names of the god of love, Kamadeva, who shoots flower arrows at his victims. Kamadeva's role is not simply to incite sexual desire or arousal, however. His five flower arrows are “killing, stupifying, soporific, emaciating and maddening.”<sup>115</sup> In the *Brahmanda Purana*, Kamadeva's creation results when Brahma complains to Vishnu that he finds no pleasure in creating the world. Vishnu glanced at his female partner, and at that instant Kama came into being. In the *GitaGovinda*, Jayadeva uses *manmatha* in a way that suggests Krishna's self-searching regret, his mental trouble, his ruminations about Radha.

112. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 253–54.

113. The text is ambiguous and may also be read, “Because I showed no respect for her . . .” I am grateful to Rich Freeman for pointing this out.

114. *Ibid.*, 254.

115. According to the *Brahma-Vaivarta Purana*, as quoted in Donaldson, *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden*, 29.



Jayadeva presents the god as having lost touch with his divine playfulness—or else as inspired by a playfulness so all-encompassing that it includes suffering. Longing for Radha, Jayadeva says, constitutes “the chain binding him with desire for the world.” This phrase, *samsara-vasana-bandha-shrinkalam*, could also be translated as “the chain binding him by karmic residues (*vasana*) to the flux of this world (*samsara*).”<sup>116</sup> Siegel selects *desire* to render *vasana*, but that term does not have the Western sense of appetitive desire or craving. It has the sense of the sum of sensual experiences and responses that have laid down a structure in the mind for future experiences of the world as “*samsara*,” the flux of temporal existence. This resembles the broad sense of “*desire*,” in a Buddhist context—encompassing all impulses to act or pursue goals in this ephemeral life.

“The supreme Bhagavat {Lord},” remarks Siegel, “took on the form of the lover so that the devotee could gain access to the sacred, the infinite and eternal, through the expression, rather than the suppression, of earthly desires.”<sup>117</sup> Krishna offers human feeling to Radha, *samsara-vasana*, in the form of longing for her and an exclusive love relation with her. Devotees can share in this divine-become-human feeling by meditating on their love affair and by relishing Jayadeva’s poetry. There is a parallel with the logic of temple ritual. Fine clothing and perfumes, delicate foods, as well as *shringara rasa*—inducing music, dance, and sculpture, were already well-developed features of ritual that appealed to the gods’ taste for enjoyments, in an effort to keep them involved with the world.

But Jayadeva went a step beyond imagining deities as enjoying luxuries and services. Jayadeva’s Krishna himself experiences not just enjoyment or relish but also the pain of love-in-separation in the effortful meditation on his beloved, sharing in the human condition in a direct way: “The pleasures of her touch and the tremulous, tender wandering of her eyes, the fragrance of the lotus which is her mouth, the cunning flow of the nectar of her words, the mead from her *bimba*{fruit}-like lower-lip—if thus, even in attachment to sense-objects, my mind is fixed in the highest-meditation {*samadhi*}<sup>118</sup> upon her, alas, how then can the sickness of love-in-separation {*viraha-vyadhih*} increase? [III, 15].”<sup>119</sup> In

116. Rich Freeman, personal communication.

117. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 22.

118. Siegel explains that *samadhi* is “complete concentration, ecstasy, integration, absorption, the unification of subject and object, the final stage of *Yoga*.” See Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, p. 256, n. 106.

119. *Ibid.*, 256. A transliteration of this verse in Sanskrit is provided in *ibid.*, p. 294.

the Fourth through Seventh Cantos, we are treated to extended examination of the two lovers' suffering. Radha's pain scorches her; it is a sickness. She also expresses humble submission to Krishna. Krishna is "wearied by the suffering of love."<sup>120</sup> Radha is convinced of Krishna's faithlessness and imagines his wanton dalliance with other *gopis*.

After this prolonged exploration of love-in-separation, a woman companion of Radha's serves as go-between, arranging for the two to meet in a grove by the river. There, Radha is at first mistrustful, resentful. Krishna must plead with her and placate her. Finally, in the Eleventh and Twelfth Cantos, the lovers are reconciled; playfulness and artlessness are restored to both; and Jayadeva gives a lyrical evocation of their love play. "[In the place where] humming is made by swarms of bees delighted by the honey, play-in-love, O you who have the *passionate emotions of the sentiment of love*; enter here, O Radha, into Madhava's presence!" [XI, 19; emphasis added].<sup>121</sup>

The words *madana-rasa-sarasa-bhave*,<sup>122</sup> which Siegel translates as "the passionate emotions of the sentiment of love," might also be translated as "emotions merged in the savor of passion."<sup>123</sup> This phrase melodiously echoes with the sounds of the word *rasa*, the word for nectar or elixir, which was also the word for divine, universalized sentiments, especially divine love-arousal. Krishna and Radha's "sexual" union is ecstatic. "Held-captive by her arms, pressed by the weight of her breasts, pierced by her finger-nails, the cup of his lower-lip bitten by her teeth, crushed by the slope of her hips, bent-down by her hand on his hair, crazed by the trickling-flow of honey from her lower-lip, the lovely-beloved somehow obtained delight—so, oh! The way of love is paradoxical!" (XII, 11).<sup>124</sup> The paradox here is that she is on top of him, in the male position, yet he enjoys it. In the delightful aftermath of morning, they lie together in relaxed affection.

The braided-mass of her hair was dishevelled, her curls had been shaken, her cheeks had an effusion of sweat, the radiant-beauty of her lower-lip like a *bimba* [fruit] was worn-off; the string of pearls, radiant on the pitchers of her breasts, was lost, the beauty of her girdle was hopelessly-destroyed—covering her foot, hips, breasts with her hand in the moment when she noticed that, she was ashamed; so, also when dishevelled, artless-charm pleases.

120. Sixth Canto, verse 16, in *ibid.*, p. 262.

121. *Ibid.*, 278.

122. *Ibid.*, 307.

123. Rich Freeman, personal communication.

124. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 282.

[Of her whose face had its] eyes slightly closed by force of the stream of artlessly echoing love-cries, [whose face had its] lower-lip bathed by the rays of her teeth from opening [her mouth] with indistinct, warbled cries of love-play [so that her] breast was still and tranquil on account of so much embracing, [whose] body was weak from the release of the excess of joy—fortunate is he to kiss the face of the deer-eyed woman! (XII, 15)<sup>125</sup>

At the conclusion of his poem, Jayadeva announces his high religious purpose.

Skill in the arts of the Gandharvas [heavenly musicians], meditation consecrated-to-Vishnu, playful-creation in poems which are literary-works on the truth of the discrimination in erotics—may wise people joyfully purely-understand all that according to the *Shri-Gitagovinda* of the poet and scholar Jayadeva whose soul is solely directed to Krishna.

May holy-men approve in this case of the devotion of aspirants [like me] truly of their own accord and having considered my labor in composition, may wise-men respect it. (XII, 28–29)<sup>126</sup>

As these passages show, in Jayadeva's poetry one finds a complete merging of two things that the Occitan troubairitz and troubadours sharply distinguished: love and lust. Love and lust are not distinguished in Jayadeva's thought; there is only a single, spiritualized love-longing that becomes, in the beloved's embrace, a single spiritualized love-arousal. It is not just "erotic." This term in the end becomes as misleading as any other, because the love-arousal of *shringara rasa* in the *Gitagovinda* includes all the feelings of affection, devotion, concern, and empathy that Westerners associate with uplifting forms of love (whether romantic or not), fused with the preoccupation, suffering, and jealousy of exclusive, committed, unrequited sexual love. Nor is this divine love-arousal merely allegorical or abstract, moral or sentimental. We are treated to detailed, imaginative lyrics describing a very corporeal and concrete lovemaking. Dante's embrace of Beatrice in the River Lethe is, by comparison, a rather pale image.

Krishna and Radha's desire is spiritual; their true love sensuous. If Jayadeva had attempted to explain Krishna's preference for Radha in the manner that the troubairitz and troubadours explained their per-

125. Ibid., 283.

126. Ibid., 285.

sonal preferences, he would have had to break with the core meaning of *rasa*. In the songs of trobairitz and troubadour, lust is indiscriminate and impersonal; love in contrast is the opposite—it is personal, loyal, self-sacrificing. The love of the knight and his lady is strong enough to master desire, to tame it, and to harness this impersonal appetite to higher, very personal ends. But Krishna's love of Radha is at once sexual and emotional, personal and general, exclusive and indiscriminate, local and universal. It is the very essence of *rasa* that it transcends the personal, taking from the personal the spiritual extract, essence, or nectar. This extract includes all of love-lust, all of love-arousal: its jealousies, its grief, its preoccupation of the mind, its ecstasy, its excitement, its disrobing, caressing, and embracing, its morning shyness.

Jayadeva's chosen genre, poetry, is intended to be at once pleasing literature and holy prayer. Jayadeva's lines are melodic, almost hypnotic in their exuberant repetitions of syllables and sounds. He makes frequent use of untranslatable puns. The playful aesthetic pleasure of poetry, like the pleasure of erotic play, is integrated as yet another adornment of divine beauty.

By comparison, in the Christian world of a Saint Augustine or a Peter Lombard all manifestations of sexual longing or sexual partnership were firmly located in a polluting bodily realm. The influence of this unholy material realm had to be stalwartly resisted, even when, by a minimal act of involvement with it, a married couple sought to procreate. For Gregorian reformers, every human body was tainted by its sinful participation in this materiality.

In Jayadeva's context, the strategies of abstraction and sanctification were entirely different. In both traditions, to be sure, the particular and local is profane, while the general and universal is divine. But in the bhakti tradition of Bengal and Orissa, palpable substances and feelings were not inherently particular (profane); they could be sanctified as easily as thoughts and intentions. In the Western Christian tradition, bodily substances and feelings were inherently profane, except in very special circumstances, when certain feelings were born of meditation on the divinity. Even then the body, if pure, remained glued to the earth until the Last Judgment. But in Jayadeva's world, matter, mind, and spirit all lay on a continuum that stretched from grosser, more particular kinds of stuff to more generalized, refined, trans-spatial and trans-temporal stuff.<sup>127</sup> Those who were sufficiently elevated, such as

127. Rich Freeman, personal communication.

a priest or a *devadasi* (temple dancer), were admitted, body, mind, and spirit, to the temple's inner sanctum. A *devadasi's* love-lust as she performed a ritual dance was not impure.

Love-lust in this world was a faint echo of divine love-lust; ritual dance that aroused love-lust might help one to grasp that divine emotion, just as poetry might. There is simply no English term for this intense mood of spiritual love-lust-arousal; "eroticism," so often used as a descriptive term for this aspect of Vaishnava bhakti, is just as misleading as "love" or "lust."

### ***The "Gitagovinda" and Dance Ritual at Puri***

The *Gitagovinda* has been well known at Puri for centuries. Until 1955 when dance ritual was discontinued in the temple at Puri, verses drawn from Jayadeva's poem were frequently sung in the evening, as temple dancers entertained the deities prior to their retirement for the night.<sup>128</sup> The origin and significance of rituals such as those discontinued in 1955 is a matter of debate. However, available evidence strongly suggests that dance ritual inspired by the *Gitagovinda* began very early on at Puri and that it was based on a type of dance ritual already commonly enacted in Orissan temples. These dance rituals and the social organization of the dance specialists who performed them (usually referred to as *devadasis*, known locally in Puri by the term *mahari*)<sup>129</sup> gave ritual and practical embodiment to the bhakti conception of a spiritualized longing for association.

There has been considerable scholarly controversy about the origin, spread, and significance of temple dance ritual in South Asia. In the nineteenth century, the British, especially British missionaries deploying a Protestant conception of desire-as-appetite that was structurally little changed from its twelfth-century predecessor, found the presence of ritual dancers in Hindu temples to be a sign of religious decay and moral corruption. Some South Asian proponents of religious reform responded by calling for an end to temple dancing, along with other changes aimed at purifying Hinduism. This reforming impulse cannot be dismissed simply as an attempt by a co-opted elite to impose the colonizer's morality. As White and others have noted, there was a long-standing tension in South Asia between householder standards of sexual purity and the sexual rituals of certain sects and temples. At

128. Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 195–206.

129. Apffel-Marglin, "Refining the Body," 215.

Puri, the emergence of the sibling trio of Purushottama, Subhadra, and Balabhadra in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century may have reflected discomfort with the ritual enactment of extramarital sexual ties.<sup>130</sup>

In the twentieth century, during the movement for independence and the early years of Indian independence, dance ceased at many temples, and troupes of temple dancers were disbanded. In these same decades, several varieties of classical Indian dance were revived as secular art forms, suitable for performance in theaters, and dance became a standard feature of South Asian film.<sup>131</sup> To a degree, the old forms thus found new homes, although they were also revised to meet present-day standards concerning public performance.<sup>132</sup> Odissi, the dance form of Orissa and of the temple at Puri, has been reconstructed by a number of masters including Kelucharan Mohapatra, whose student Sujata Mohapatra is recognized internationally as one of the leading interpreters of this form.<sup>133</sup> At this writing, videos of some of her performances and other Odissi performances can be readily accessed on the internet.<sup>134</sup> Although they perform a secular art form on the secular stage, at least some practitioners of Odissi and other classical dance forms see their performances as expressions of devotion and regard emotions experienced during the dance, including *shringara rasa*, as an integral part of the performance.<sup>135</sup>

Since the 1980s, a number of scholars have sought to correct contemporary attitudes toward temple dance ritual, claiming that dance

130. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 147, 154; Eschmann, Kulke, and Tripathi, "The Formation of the Jagannatha Triad."

131. On the campaigns to ban dance ritual from South Asian temples, see the recent, very useful overview by Takao Inoue, "La réforme de la tradition des devadasi: danse et musique dans les temples Hindous," *Cahiers de musiques traditionnelles* 18 (2005): 103–32. See also Kunal M. Parker, "A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes: Anglo-Indian Legal Conceptions of Temple Dancing Girls, 1800–1914," *Modern Asian Studies* 32 (1998): 559–633; Anne-Marie Gaston, *Bharata Natyam: From Temple to Theatre* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996); Amrit Srinivasan, "The Hindu Temple-Dancer: Prostitute or Nun?" *Cambridge Anthropology* 8 (1983): 73–99.

132. Inoue, "La réforme."

133. I am grateful to Sujata Mohapatra for speaking with me about Odissi during her period as artist-in-residence at the Duke University Dance Program in fall 2010.

134. Links to videos of performances by Sujata Mohapatra can be found at <http://sujatamohapatra.com> (consulted on January 30, 2011). Another well-known performer of Odissi is Nandini Ghosal, also a student of Kelucharan Mohapatra, whose site [www.nandinighosal.com](http://www.nandinighosal.com) (consulted on January 30, 2011) provides links to two videos. See also the documentary film *Given to Dance: India's Odissi Tradition*, by Ron Hess, Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, 1985. On the regulation of Odissi as an art form, see Alessandra Lopez y Royo, "The Hot Chariot of the Sun God: Performing Konarak, Performing Hirapur," available at <http://humanitieslab.stanford.edu/51/73> (consulted on October 14, 2010).

135. Sujata Mohapatra, personal communication.

was not a latter-day corruption, but inherent to temple practices from the first construction of stone temples in Gupta times, basing their argument on the evidence of inscriptions and on the figures of dancing *apsaras* frequently sculpted on the exterior walls of temples of the sixth through thirteenth centuries.<sup>136</sup>

There has been some disagreement, however, about exactly where and when temple dancers became a central part of ritual practice. Usually referred to with the Sanskrit term *devadasi*, although they were known by many local terms over the centuries, temple dancers have been repeatedly charged with behaviors that are, by contemporary standards, scandalous. As a result, in a period of renewed Hindu nationalism, claims about the history of *devadasis* and their relationship to temple worship are burdened with politically charged implications.

This is hardly the place to attempt a resolution of the debate. Even a review of the relevant literature would be beyond the expertise of the present author. However, the historical significance of the *devadasis* may appear in a slightly different light in the context of this study. Their way of life gave practical shape to a conception of the sexual that scholars were not equipped to appreciate until the historical relativity of gender and sexuality began to be recognized beginning in recent decades. Even now, one cannot adequately appreciate this way of life unless one recognizes, as well, the parochialism and historicity of Western notions of sexual desire and corresponding romantic love practices.

Whether *devadasis* danced in the Purushottama temple from the time of Codaganga is uncertain. According to Upinder Singh, there is only one inscription within the temple at Puri that dates from Codaganga's reign, recording the royal donation of a village to endow the burning of twenty perpetual lamps and also a royal endowment for the production of clarified butter (*ghee*) for the temple's food offerings.<sup>137</sup> This proves Codaganga's interest in Purushottama, as well as at least the partial completion of the temple before 1147. Otherwise, Codaganga's role as builder of the temple that survives today is known only from the Dasgoba plates of his grandson Rajaraja II, dated to 1199.<sup>138</sup>

Nonetheless, a few facts bearing on the configuration of sexual prac-

136. Gaston, *Bharata Natyam*; Apfel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-Kings*; Kersenboom-Story, *Nitya-sumangali*; Srinivasan, "The Hindu Temple Dancer"; Parker, "A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes." There is a useful introduction to the re-creation of dance forms from ancient texts and archeological images: Alessandra Lopez y Royo, *ReConstructing and RePresenting Dance: Exploring the Dance/Archaeology Conjunction*, consulted as an e-book at <http://humanitieslab.stanford.edu/ArchaeologyDanceConjunction/Home> in July 2009.

137. Singh, *Kings, Brahmanas and Temples in Orissa*, 276.

138. *Ibid.*, 251; see also Kulke, "Early Royal Patronage of the Jagannatha Cult," 139–55.

tices within which worship at Purushottama temple first developed are well established.

1. Codaganga was related through his mother, and by marriage, to the Chola dynasty and found himself frequently at odds with the Chola king along his southern frontier.<sup>139</sup> He was likely quite familiar with Chola notions of divine kingship. Codaganga was likely aware that, when the Chola king Rajaraja the Great founded a new temple at Tanjore in 1003 CE, as noted above, he made lavish provision for a team of hundreds of female dancers, with masters to train them and musicians to provide music.

2. Singh, in her 1993 survey of royal inscriptions in medieval Orissa, covering the period 300 to 1147 CE, found many lists of temple services that did not include any reference to music or dancing. Kings frequently endowed “the ceremonial performance of *bali* (offerings to all creatures), *caru* (offerings to the ancestors), and *sattra* (charitable feeding), and the provision for *naivedya* (food offerings for the deity), *dipa* (lamps), and *puja* (worship), at the shrine of the deity” without mentioning dance. However, Singh notes that a Brahmeshvara temple inscription of the Somavamshi king Udyotakeshari appears to refer to *devadasis* associated with the temple.<sup>140</sup> According to Donaldson, the inscription at Brahmeshvara states that Queen Kolavati, builder of the temple, gave “some beautiful women to him (Shiva), who had eyes like that of the fickle Khanjana (wagtail) and who were bright like the sparkling and immovable lightnings of the sky by the exquisite beauty of their limbs, adorned with gemmy ornaments, of lovely heavy-swollen bosoms, piercing through the eyes of men like the beam of their own eye.”<sup>141</sup> This temple dates from the mid eleventh century CE, a hundred years prior to the rebuilding of Purushottama temple at Puri.

3. Singh also notes Codaganga’s explicit patronage of dance ritual. “The Murupaka plates of the imperial Ganga king Anantavarman Codaganga,” Singh writes, “speak of the performance of *puja* (worship), *nriya* (dancing), *gita* (singing), and *vadya* (music) at the shrine of the deity Narendreshvara.”<sup>142</sup>

4. Two inscriptions by Codaganga in his capital city of Kalinganagara

139. Stietencron, “The Advent of Vishnuism in Orissa,” 24; Kulke, “Early Royal Patronage,” 145–46.

140. Singh, *Kings, Brahmanas and Temples in Orissa*, 282–83.

141. Donaldson, *Kamadeva’s Pleasure Garden*, 326; Donaldson also discusses a number of dancer images from the Brahmeshvara temple which he regards as representing the *devadasis* who performed there. He concludes that the *devadasi* institution was established by the mid-eleventh century at Bhubaneswar; see pp. 326–27.

142. Singh, *Kings, Brahmanas and Temples in Orissa*, 283.



make reference to *devadasis*. One refers to a single priestly “family” that included dancers, a drummer, and a singer all devoted to Shiva worship at the Madhukeshvara temple complex. Stietencron and Donaldson mention a second inscription in which Codaganga endows dancers for Vishnu. Codaganga first made provision for worship of Vishnu in Kalinganagara in 1108 (prior to his conquest of Puri). At that time, he had an image of Vishnu installed in the Madhukeshvara temple and provided for “dancing girls” to be appointed to attend on the deity.<sup>143</sup>

5. The famous temple to the sun god Surya at Konarak, built by the Ganga king Narasimha I (1238–64), displays a sculpture program of Tantric rituals, depicting both sexual union and exchanges of sexual substances.<sup>144</sup> There is also a stele from Konarak depicting Narasimha I in his role as divine deputy. Under Narasimha I, the Ganga empire was at its zenith. Narasimha emphasized the parallel between deity and king as boldly as the Chola king Rajaraja the Great and his successors had done. Narasimha called himself “a great devotee of Shiva” and also “the son of Durga and the son of Purushottama.”<sup>145</sup> Kulke describes the stele as follows: “[Narasimha’s] right leg is hanging down and his foot is worshipped by a group of female devotees, who are kneeling beneath the swing. No doubt, Narasimha is depicted here as well in a typical harem scene as in the position of Lord Krishna. . . . His divine role is quite evident if we compare the worship of his foot with that of Vishnu on the beautiful sculpture at Chaurasi.”<sup>146</sup> Walter Smith agrees in seeing this representation of Narasimha as the culmination of a trend in Orissan royal iconography dating from the tenth century that underscored the divine status of the king.<sup>147</sup> The female devotees who worship at the foot of Narasimha in this image are dressed for erotic dance and can be seen, as Kulke notes, as either courtesans entertaining a king or *devadasis* entertaining a divine figure. This image suggests that the parallels between the roles of *devadasis* and royal courtesans—a parallel that Apffel-Marglin carefully explored in her twentieth-century ethnographic investigation at Puri—already existed by the early thirteenth century at the latest.<sup>148</sup>

143. Stietencron, “The Advent of Vishnuism in Orissa,” 22–23; Donaldson, *Kamadeva’s Pleasure Garden*, 327.

144. As White notes, in *Kiss of the Yogini*, 140; see also Thomas Donaldson, *Konark* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

145. Kulke, “Jagannatha as the State Deity,” 201.

146. *Ibid.*, 203.

147. Smith, “Images of Divine Kings,” see pp. 93–94; for a reproduction of the image, see fig. 10, p. 98. The stele is in the National Museum, New Delhi.

148. Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 143–45.

6. The earliest direct evidence of the use of Jayadeva's poetry in ritual at the Purushottama temple in Puri comes from an inscription of 1499, in which it is stated that king Prataparudra (1497–1540) prohibited the singing of any song other than the *Gitagovinda* by Jayadeva in the temple. The inscription dictates that women dancers in the temple will dance only to songs derived from this work and to no other.<sup>149</sup>

This kind of evidence is highly suggestive, but its interpretation is subject to debate. While Saskia Kersenboom-Story regards Rajaraja the Great's endowments for dancers at Tanjore in 1003 as a grandiose example of a more general pattern, especially within Chola history, Leslie Orr has argued that Rajaraja's gesture was "a singular and idiosyncratic event."<sup>150</sup> In earlier inscriptions in the south, Orr found frequent references to temple women, even occasionally to dancers. But, according to Orr, these references do not substantiate that there were groups of female dancers whose performances were central to temple ritual prior to 1003. Women's roles in temple life seem frequently to have resulted from their own private donations and to have been ancillary rather than ritually essential. Dance performances may have been confined to festivals or processions outside the temples. Orr points out that the divine dancers frequently depicted in temple sculpture programs are not necessarily intended as representations of temple ritual. As for the sexual behavior of temple women, Orr asserts that "Chola period temple women were clearly sexually active, given the references to their children in the inscriptions, but there is no hint that their sexual activity was significant to their identities or to their roles in the temple."<sup>151</sup> Orr concedes however that, after the end of the Chola period in 1279, some temple inscriptions substantiate "the coming together of some [new religious and patronage practices] to produce a well-organized and well-supported system of female temple service in a number of temples."<sup>152</sup> Despite their divergent views of the period up to the eleventh century, then, Orr and Kersenboom-Story agree that there were well-organized troupes of *devadasis* associated with temples at least by the time of the Vijayanagara Empire (1336–1565).

David Gordon White agrees with Thomas Donaldson in dating the

149. *Ibid.*, 325; see also Miller, "Introduction," 6; Donaldson, *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden*, 371—all provide a translation of the inscription in full. See also G. N. Dash, "The Evolution of the Priestly Power: The Suryavamsha Period," in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, ed. Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 209–21, see p. 220; Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 227–28.

150. Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali*, 24–29; Orr, *Donors, Devotees*, 173.

151. Orr, *Donors, Devotees*, 174.

152. *Ibid.*, 175.

“institutionalization of the *devadasi* system and the general ‘hedonization’ of erotic temple sculpture” to the eleventh century both in Orissa and more broadly in the center and north of the subcontinent.<sup>153</sup> This dating fits well with the inscriptional and iconographic evidence assembled by Singh and Donaldson for Orissa. If White and Donaldson are correct, then, in northern and central South Asia, *devadasis* may have been common up to two centuries earlier than Orr believes to be the case for the south. “Hedonization” refers, in this context, to a shift from a strict interest in the spiritual powers that could be acquired from offerings of sexual substances to an interest in the spiritual benefits of ritualized sexual experience itself. This interest took either the form of actual ritual sexual intercourse; or the form of ritual representation of sexual acts through dance, music, and verse; or the form of meditation on the sexual attractiveness and relationships of divine figures. In any case, it represented a shift away from Tantrism as a magical or quasi-alchemical craft toward a form of spirituality more in line with bhakti, with its emphasis on personal relationships and feelings. Jayadeva must have been aware of this trend and may have consciously relied on it in the development of his own poetico-theological vision of the longing for association.<sup>154</sup>

The inscription prescribing the *Gitagovinda* at Puri in 1499 indicates that Jayadeva’s song was integrated into Puri ritual at a much earlier date. Prataparudra’s father, King Purushottama Deva (1467–97) claimed authorship of an adaptation of Jayadeva’s work in the Oriya language, titled the *Abhinava Gitagovinda*. To merit such royal attention, the *Gitagovinda* must have already possessed great prestige. According to legend, King Purushottama Deva had his own text substituted for Jayadeva’s in temple ritual. When temple experts objected to this decision, a debate ensued, according to a traditional tale included in the eighteenth-century compilation *Bhaktavijaya*, by Mahipati.<sup>155</sup> It was decided to consult Lord Jagannatha himself. The two manuscripts were placed at his feet at night; the next morning, Jayadeva’s poem was found to be still at his feet, while the Oriya adaptation had been thrown out of the temple. The king was overcome with despair, until Jagannatha appeared to him to tell him that his text was also full of bhakti and dear

153. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 98–99.

154. Donaldson places Jayadeva in what he regards as the center of these developments in Orissa; see Donaldson, *Kamadeva’s Pleasure Garden*, 364–77. Battacharyya notes Jayadeva describes himself as a follower of the Sahajiya tradition; see Battacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, 241.

155. This text dates to 1762 according to J. N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (1920; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), 374.

to him. In a tradition of the Puri priests, seven texts were placed before Jagannatha, including the king's and Jayadeva's. In the morning Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* was found to be on top of the pile.<sup>156</sup> King Purushottama's son and successor gave in to priestly pressure, it appears, and issued the 1499 decree recorded in the temple, restoring the place of the *Gitagovinda* in Puri ritual.

Based on this evidence, Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* was already a hallowed text long used in Puri ritual by at least the beginning of Purushottama Deva's reign in 1467. The text must have been adopted at some time between circa 1190—the date of the earliest Orissan commentary, according to Donaldson—and circa 1400. Donaldson believes this occurred during the reign of Narasimha II (1279–1307).<sup>157</sup>

At an early but uncertain date, legends about the life of Jayadeva were fashioned to justify the treatment of the *Gitagovinda* as a sacred text and directly linking Jayadeva to the Purushottama temple. Such stories are included in the eighteenth-century *Bhaktavijaya* and the early seventeenth-century *Bhaktamala*—both collections of Vaishnava hagiographical oral traditions.<sup>158</sup> Jayadeva, it was said, began life as a poet skilled in Sanskrit verse. But he abandoned this course for a life of strict self-denial as a mendicant holy man. When he came to Puri, a priest of the temple insisted that it was Jagannatha's will for Jayadeva to marry the priest's daughter Padmavati, who was a dancer in the temple. According to Siegel, tradition describes Padmavati as "a paragon of beauty, a storehouse of wisdom, an ideal wife, and an ardent devotee of Krishna—she and Jayadeva spent all of their time 'dancing, singing, eagerly engaged in praising Shri Krishna.'" <sup>159</sup> Jayadeva's human love for this inspired wife brought him into touch with the divine love of Krishna and Radha, permitting him to write the poem.<sup>160</sup> This story closely parallels the myth mentioned by Apffel-Marglin and quoted above, from the *Mahabharata*, about a courtesan's daughter domesticating a powerful ascetic. Jayadeva finds Padmavati's sexual love, and sexual dance, inspiring. Initiated by her to a life of enjoyment modeled

156. For both of these tales, see Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 227–28; see also Dash, "The Evolution of Priestly Power," 220. On the kings of this period, see Kulke, "Jagannatha as the State Deity," 199–208.

157. Donaldson, *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden*, 370–71.

158. Siegel discusses these tales of Jayadeva's life, in *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 213–27; see also Miller, "Introduction," 3–4. Donaldson believes there is convincing circumstantial evidence that the *Gitagovinda* was written in Orissa, as these legends claim; see *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden*, 366–70.

159. Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love*, 220.

160. *Ibid.*, 215.

on divine *rasa*, he uses his spiritual powers to express a divine message showing everyday people how to love the divinity.

When Jayadeva came to compose Canto X, containing Krishna's forlorn pleas for Radha's forgiveness, legend states that he hesitated. When he was about to describe Krishna telling Radha to place her foot on his head, he was seized with uncertainty. How could it be right to describe the debasement of the highest god? He went away to bathe. In his absence, Krishna appeared and completed the couplet. This miracle confirmed the poem's divine inspiration in Jayadeva's eyes.<sup>161</sup> That such a legend was crafted to explain Jayadeva's bold new vision of Krishna suggests the *Gitagovinda* may have stirred controversy in its own day. The adoption of Jayadeva's poetry by the ritual experts of Puri would have represented a dramatic gesture of support.

The legend of a link to Puri in Jayadeva's own lifetime receives an intriguing hint of confirmation in the poem itself, when Jayadeva refers to Krishna as "Lord of the World" (Jagadisha) which is, according to Barbara Stoler Miller, "too similar to Jagannatha to be accidental."<sup>162</sup> This hint suggests Jayadeva may have known about love-lust-inspired bhakti ritual at Puri before he began to write.

Whether used from the beginning or adopted within the first century of worship at Puri, Jayadeva's poem is a valuable key to understanding the context in which ritual erotic dance was institutionalized at Puri and elsewhere.

## Social Organization, Ritual, and Sexuality

The social organization of temple *devadasis*—by the fifteenth century at the latest, and probably from the beginning—seemed to follow a common pattern.<sup>163</sup> This pattern of organization, as much as the dance ritual itself, scandalized British missionaries in the nineteenth century and challenged the Orientalist assumptions of British jurisprudence throughout the colonial era.<sup>164</sup> Kersenboom-Story quotes the account of Domingo Paes, a Portuguese visitor to the court of Vijayanagara in 1510, as a useful introduction to the organization and status of *devadasis* in the south. According to Paes,

161. Miller, "Introduction," 3–4.

162. *Ibid.*, 6.

163. Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali*; Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*; Parker, "A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes."

164. Parker, "A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes."

They feed the idol every day, for they say that he eats; and when he eats women dance before him who belong to that pagoda, and they give him food and all that is necessary, and all girls born of these women belong to the temple. These women are of loose character, and live in the best streets that there are in the city; it is the same in all their cities, their streets have the best rows of houses. They are very much esteemed and are classed amongst those honored ones who are the mistresses of the captains; any respectable man may go to their houses without any blame attaching there to.<sup>165</sup>

This description mentions several features of *devadasi* life that are both well documented and often controversial: (1) their wealth and high status, (2) their (occasional) extramarital sexual liaisons, and (3) their reproduction of their own numbers. Apfel-Marglin found ample evidence of these three characteristics of *devadasi* organization and activity in Puri.

The role of *devadasi* was incompatible with married life because it broke with rules of modesty and also because devotion to a deity was incompatible with devotion to a husband. Temple dance ritual was a kind of public behavior ordinarily forbidden to married women. The purity and reputation of local lineage groups (and the maintenance of their claims to occupations and properties), in many cases, depended in part on the behavior of women, on their submissive acceptance of appropriate husbands and on their conformity with strict regulations about modesty and avoidance of public exposure. But violation of modesty rules was not the only impediment preventing *devadasis* from marrying. The *devadasi*'s performances, including those in the inner sanctum and public performances in the dance hall, were intended to embody and to bring to mind a divine generalized "mood," the bhakti feeling of *shringara rasa*. Were a *devadasi* to cultivate an emotional tie to a real, particular man and family, it might impair her ability to concentrate on and enact feelings of devotion to the deity.

At Puri, *devadasis* adopted young girls; some were daughters of their brothers, and some were from other backgrounds, though these had to be from a "water-touching caste"—that is, of a rank pure enough that the person might offer water to a Brahmin.<sup>166</sup> At puberty, each girl was "married" to Jagannatha; the ritual included the tying of a piece of Jagannatha's sari around the girl's head, just as the heads of husbands and wives were tied in a normal wedding. From that point forward,

165. Quoted in Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali*, 36.

166. Apfel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 68–88.

*devadasis* considered themselves to be wives of Jagannatha, wore all the signs of married women, and would say that they were of the *gotra*, or clan, of Jagannatha. Unlike other wives, they enjoyed the certainty that they would never be widowed.

*Devadasis* at Puri were not forbidden to have sexual relationships. But their sexual activity was deemed to be “secret,” and it paralleled the treatment of food offerings. Once the deity had relished food offerings, the food was shared, according to certain rules, with the temple personnel and the devotees and pilgrims who came to worship. These “leavings” of the deity brought spiritual benefits. One informant told Apffel-Marglin that the king was required to be the first to have sex with a *devadasi*, after her marriage to Jagannatha; another said that the king had priority but only if he wished. Afterward, temple priests and certain high-ranking Puri residents (of a water-touching caste) might aspire to sexual intimacy with a *devadasi*. But sexual relationships were not supposed to endure. A *devadasi* must not establish long-standing ties; to do so would threaten her ability to feel divine *rasa* as opposed to everyday *rati*. Similarly, on the day of her temple duty, a *devadasi* had to fast as well as to refrain from even looking at a man.<sup>167</sup>

At first Apffel-Marglin was told that *devadasis* never had children; later she found out that four of nine *devadasi* informants had had at least one child. But, if girls, these children were treated no differently from adopted girls. If boys, they were eventually married in a ceremony that involved no dowry and established no affinal ties. In terms of kinship, therefore, the *devadasis* operated something like a matrilineal *jati*, in which no male affinal ties were recognized.

These practices gave social form to the idea of a range of sexual practices that were, in Apffel-Marglin’s words, technically “impure,” because publicly displayed and shared, but “auspicious” because they helped to bind the deities to Puri and to ensure their continued favor. As auspicious women who could never be widows, *devadasis* were welcome guests at weddings, but they did not participate in funerals or other mourning ritual.

The basic features of this social system were found in many temples in the early nineteenth century.<sup>168</sup> When high-ranking nontemple males were permitted temporary sexual relationships with *devadasis*, they were expected to shower their partners with gifts. *Devadasis* at Puri did not rely on such gifts for their daily needs; they were generously

167. *Ibid.*, 89–94.

168. Parker “A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes.”

endowed through the temple's ample budget. Reports of such relationships were enough, however, to convince some British observers that there was a well-established system of "temple harlotry" in India. The British administration tried to keep strictly to a hands-off policy toward temple worship. However, British-administered courts often targeted the special status of *devadasis*. *Devadasis* were not members of a "caste," in British eyes. Therefore, in litigation, the legality of their adoptions and inheritance rights could be denied. In spite of the difficulties posed by the steady pressure of British disapproval, however, it was local Hindu reform impulses that administered the coup de grâce to the *devadasi* system.

Apffel-Marglin's informants in Puri told her that, before ritual dancing was abandoned in 1955, *devadasis* performed twice daily. Each day at midday, an erotic dance was performed in the dance hall of the temple, just off the main north entrance, for the benefit of devotees and pilgrims, as part of a Tantric-inspired fivefold offering. Apffel-Marglin was told that the dance was intended to inspire *shringara rasa* in both dancer and devotees. The dancer strove to either mute or erase her own "subjective feelings, thoughts, and accompanying gestures." The devotee strove to associate her or his love-arousal not with the specific dancer she or he observed, but with the divine relationship of *shringara rasa* that the *devadasi* evoked.<sup>169</sup>

Following the dance, devotees and pilgrims rolled in the dust that had been touched by the *devadasi's* feet. It was common for the dust of the feet of a higher-ranking person (as well as other effluvia from her or his body) to be considered purifying for lower-ranking persons. But informants told Apffel-Marglin of a secret, Tantric interpretation of this practice in the context of the midday dance at Puri. Having become aroused by her dance, the *devadasi* was thought to leave sexual fluid in the dust beneath her. By rolling in that dust, the devotee gained access to the spiritual power which, according to Tantric thought, resided in divine sexual substances.<sup>170</sup>

Each evening, *devadasis* danced to verses of the *Gitagovinda*, as Jagannatha and his wife were put to bed.<sup>171</sup> This performance was for the deities alone. The *devadasis* were expected to empty themselves of their particularities and find inspiration in absorbed presentation of the love relationship of Krishna and Radha, as described in the *Gitagovinda*. The

169. Apffel-Marglin, "Refining the Body," 222–24, quote from p. 222.

170. Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 109, and "Refining the Body," 218.

171. Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*, 176. Further page numbers of this work appear parenthetically in text of this brief discussion.



dancers told Appfel-Marglin that they regarded Jayadeva's wife Padmavati as the first of their kind and creator of the dance.

Dance ritual was also a feature of the annual Car Festival at Puri, celebrated during the month of Jyeshtha (May–June), usually a period of hot weather before the onset of the rains (248). During the second twenty-one days of the Car Festival, in June, *devadasis* performed a “secret” ritual called a “fanning” of the gods twice daily. During the fanning ritual, a dancer took a position on the threshold of the inner sanctum, in complete darkness—doors were closed and all lights extinguished. The public was not allowed.

When she has arrived at her place on the threshold of the entrance to the inner sanctum, the *devadasi* undrapes her sari so as to uncover the upper part of her body and thus performs the ritual half naked. The ritual consists of singing a song which is a long poem called the ‘34 of the bathing festival.’ [Each line begins with one of 34 letters of the Oriya alphabet.] This poem tells of the sorrow of the poet at not being able to witness and see with his own eyes the splendor of the bathing festival. (105–6)

The culmination of the Car Festival comes when the three gods Jagannatha, Balabhadra, and Subhadra are installed in three huge cars or chariots and transported for a seven-day stay at the seaside Gundica temple, to enjoy the cool sea breezes. Pilgrims crowd the wide avenue between the main temple and the sea, anxious to help in pulling the chariots and eager for a glance of the deities' images, which, in other seasons, are seldom seen by anyone but the priests: “The pilgrims seize the huge ropes, a gesture and a moment highly emotionally charged for the pilgrims, innumerable hands touching each other irrespective of sex, caste, religion or any other conceivable distinction. On the chariots *daitas*, brahmin servants, and *shudra* servants all sit together.” Normally pilgrims cannot offer food directly to the deities, but during the Car Festival, anything goes. “Things come crashing on the chariots, thrown by anonymous hands in the crowd; coconuts split open upon landing and spill their milk” (274–75). The festival is, in part, a celebration of divine playfulness.

At Gundica temple, the *devadasis* in their performances played the role of *gopis*. But later, they would become the attendants of Jagannatha's wife Lakshmi, who was said to be left behind when her husband departed for the shore. She was brought to Gundica temple five days late, as a song was sung about her sorrow in being left behind. *Devadasis* remained in the audience hall while a magic dust was thrown on

Jagannatha to make him want to return to his wife. Lakshmi was then brought back to the main temple. On Jagannatha's later return, the *devadasis* sang of Lakshmi's joy and her preparations. They also helped to enact an argument in which Lakshmi, as angry wife, at first refuses to admit Jagannatha back into his home. When he finally enters the audience hall, *devadasis* and *daita* priests join in singing a lusty song (255–63). The outline of this ritual drama roughly parallels the story of the *Gitagovinda*.

To explain their ritual status, former *devadasis* told Apffel-Marglin that they saw themselves as the *gopis* dancing and singing to give joy to Krishna. The cowherd girls' feelings, one former dancer explained, are not the same as those of wives. Theirs is called, instead, *parakiya bhava* in Oriya, meaning "the emotion pertaining to a relationship in which there is no ownership, no marriage." This kind of feeling is also called *cora priti*: stolen love. The cowherd girls call Krishna *tu cora*: you thief. "Krishna has stolen the love of the *gopis* [cowherd girls], and it is in that stolen love that the greatest, most self-abandoned surrendering to Krishna can occur." A wife's feeling, by contrast, always includes "an element of ego feeling (*ahankara*)" (198).

One dancer elaborated on this interpretation by telling Apffel-Marglin the following story. A certain sage did not like this feeling of *parakiya bhava*, so Krishna decided to enlighten him. Krishna became sick and told the sage that only the dust from the feet of women could cure him. The sage went to Krishna's eight wives, but they refused to give him such dust; Krishna is the master, they said, and it would be a transgression to put their dust on him. The sage approached many other women, all of whom refused for the same reason. Finally he went to the *gopis*.

They playfully ran towards him asking him for news of Krishna. Narada [the sage] said that Krishna was very sick and that he needed the dust from the feet of women. All the *gopis* immediately took the dust from their feet and put it in a cloth for Narada. Narada queried: "O *gopis*, you know that Krishna is the highest; don't you feel it is a sin (*papa*) to do this? The *gopis* answered: "Oh Narada, whatever he is we do not know; what we know is that he is one of our village, our playmate. If he is suffering, whatever is needed we will do. If it is a sin we will go to hell (Naraka), we are ready for that. Returning to Krishna, the sage understood. (199)

In this way, in a region where adultery was regarded as a serious transgression of purity rules, adulterous love became a central feature of divine worship. A special corps of women was "married" to the god,

and their ritual enactments of “stolen love” were intended to represent the deepest surrender of self to god. No relationship could be allowed to rival this divine companionship; hence the *devadasis* could not marry a human husband. Because their divine mate was immortal, they could not become widows and were thus “ever auspicious.” However, their sexual offering was like other ritual offerings. Just as other offerings to the god were shared among devotees at the end of a ritual, so the sexual favors of the *devadasis* could be shared, discreetly and in a limited way, with high-ranking persons. In the days before British rule, the king had a special officer to supervise the sexual relationships of *devadasis*, to ensure that the gifts they might receive from their lovers, sometimes substantial gifts, did not become payments, as well as to prevent specific relationships, which sometimes endured for years, from enduring too long.

The *devadasis*' performances in Jagannatha temple thus represented a prominent and well documented case of ritual love-lust dance, a dance meant to embody the same great range of feelings invoked by Jayadeva's poem, a spiritualized longing for association, carried out from the mid-twelfth century on, at a shrine that was visited annually by thousands—and in recent times hundreds of thousands—of pilgrims.

### The Popular Dimension of Ritual Sexuality

Privileged and isolated, transgressive but auspicious, *devadasis* were not anomalous in the attitudes toward sexual practices that their way of life enacted. The popularity of Vaishnava devotion among women—at least in Bengal, as several studies have shown—ensured that sexuality as conceived in *devadasi* ritual and in Vaishnava devotion had a place in everyday life.<sup>172</sup> Similar dance ritual was practiced elsewhere, and the *Gitagovinda* has been adopted for use in scores of temples. Since the twelfth century, numerous adaptations have been written by other poets, and learned commentaries have been produced to help devotees appreciate Jayadeva's words.<sup>173</sup> Several celebrated poets have also composed devotional pieces elaborating on the *Gitagovinda* tradition. From

172. See, e.g., Sumanta Banerjee, “Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth-Century Bengal,” in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 127–79; Tapan Raychaudhuri, “Love in a Colonial Climate: Marriage, Sex and Romance in Nineteenth-Century Bengal,” *Modern Asian Studies* 34 (2000): 349–78.

173. Miller, “Introduction,” 4–7.

the early sixteenth century onward, enthusiastic devotees of Krishna gathered in the idyllic countryside around Mathura, known as Braj, where Krishna was believed to have played with his beloved *gopis*. Later movements of Krishna devotionism, such as the Vallabhite and Caitanyaite sects, held Jayadeva's poem in high esteem. Radha's adulterous longing for Krishna held center place in their theologies.<sup>174</sup> The Rajput princes of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Rajasthan cultivated devotion to Krishna's love-lust relationships through their patronage of manuscript painting, offering "a way in which ordinary eroticism became divine love," according to Kenneth Zysk.<sup>175</sup>

The illicit character of Krishna's love relationship with the *gopis* continued to cause misgivings. Kinsley relates that, in Bengal, "An adulterous sexual affair at the center of their devotional mythology was . . . embarrassing to some devotees. The illicit nature of Radha's love, however, her *parakiya* status, eventually came to be declared the orthodox position. The issue was even the subject of a formal debate in 1717. The proponents of the *parakiya* position were declared the winners."<sup>176</sup> But this event hardly settled matters for all. According to Dimock, Vaishnava theologians "tied themselves in knots" trying to resolve the question of the *gopis'* and of Radha's *parakiya* status. Among followers of the Sahajiya cult of Bengal, in a curious inversion of the standard Christian approach to sexuality, Krishna's devotees came to insist that Radha's adulterous love, because it was love of Krishna, was more holy than legitimate married love.<sup>177</sup> For Sahajiyas, Dimock remarks, "Radha is *guru*, as well as the *prakriti* that defines a woman as female, as well as the woman as ritual sexual partner who teaches the *sadhaka* to know the divine bliss in the *vaidhi* sexual ritual before he passes on to know the joy of union with her within himself." In erotic bhakti, adulterous love-lust becomes the higher form and, as Jayadeva's poetry and *devadasi* ritual show, adulterous love-lust neither excluded what Westerners call "sexual desire," nor did its proponents treat desire-as-appetite as something separable from the spiritual emotion of *shringara rasa*.

Donaldson notes the enduring popularity of Vaishnava bhakti in many parts of Orissa down to the present.<sup>178</sup> Several studies have underscored the Vaishnava folk tradition in Bengal as well. Sumanta

174. See Toomey, "Krishna's Consuming Passions"; Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon*.

175. Kenneth G. Zysk, *Conjugal Love in India: "Ratishastra" and "Ratiramana"* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 4.

176. Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses*, 90.

177. Dimock, *Place of the Hidden Moon*, 16–24.

178. Donaldson, *Kamadeva's Pleasure Garden*, 371–76.

Banerjee, for example, has examined the enduring popularity of the Krishna-Radha pair among Bengali Vaishnavas from the mid-first millennium down to the nineteenth century. Banerjee emphasizes one thread that runs through this whole period, “a certain continuity in the overtly erotic descriptions of the relationship between Radha and Krishna.” Vaishnava poets and commentators, she reports (attempting to make English say what it cannot say), “ingenuously allegorized material eroticism into ethereal communion, and vice versa.” The idea of Krishna in every man, Radha in every woman, gave women “considerable space.” Vaishnava devotion permitted some women to take to learning and music “and to establish a less inhibited relationship with men.” But, Banerjee cautions, other women found themselves victimized by Vaishnava devotional practices, noting the frequency of nineteenth-century tales about Vaishnava priests who seduced married women.<sup>179</sup>

The cultivation of alluring dance, dress, and personal adornment was considered a religious duty among elite married women in Bengal before British conquest, Banerjee reports.<sup>180</sup> In this region, the feminine arts were linked with devotion to Krishna. Female spiritual power, kept within doors in elite households, was nonetheless not neglected. Before the British arrived, low-ranked popular singers and dancers—bearers of a tradition, versed in a large vernacular folklore about Krishna and the cowherd girls—routinely visited the women’s quarters of elite homes. There they sang and danced “lascivious stories of Krishna and Radha,” or the *Krishna-lila*, including tales from the *Bhagavata Purana*, such as the tale of Krishna stealing the cowherd girls’ clothes while they are bathing. They taught the stories to young girls and trained them in dance and movement. But these practices shocked the British. Beginning in the 1840s, according to Banerjee, elite Bengali men began to discourage them. The low-ranking singers and dancers were actually prostitutes, it was charged. One Bengali reformer complained in 1863, “It is not possible for an uneducated young woman to remain unexcited when listening to episodes like *Raas* [Krishna’s dance with the cowherds] or Krishna’s escape with the clothes of the milkmaids.”<sup>181</sup> Respectable women should be kept away from such performances.

The sister of the celebrated Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore, born in 1855, was not allowed to have such instructors. By the end of the

179. Banerjee, *Appropriation of a Folk Heroine*, 6.

180. Banerjee, “Marginalization of Women’s Popular Culture.”

181. *Ibid.*, 151.

nineteenth century, Hindu nationalists began “cleansing the Krishna legend of its erotic dimension,” according to Uma Chakravarti.<sup>182</sup> This reform of elite female education and religious myth proceeded hand in glove with the slow campaign against dance ritual in the temples that culminated in the dissolution of *devadasi* groups in the twentieth century. The revival of temple dance as a secular art form, in turn, provided a way for women to sustain at least a part of this heritage.

In spite of this campaign, Tapan Raychaudhuri has argued that in nineteenth-century Bengal, sexual longing remained widespread among married men. Arranged marriages at a young age, common among many groups of colonial India, were hardly conducive of that freely chosen love, or *cora priti*, admired by *devadasis* at Puri.<sup>183</sup> Nonetheless, Raychaudhuri found that men’s memoirs frequently report deep feelings of attachment to their wives. Raychaudhuri also reports evidence that Tantric rites continued to be popular in some parts of Bengal, and suggests, finally, that an atmosphere of tolerance existed toward some adulterous relationships, in spite of brahmanical norms.<sup>184</sup>

Based on studies of popular Vaishnavism in Bengal and Orissa, although they focus on more recent documentation from the seventeenth century and later, it nonetheless seems likely that erotic temple ritual in the twelfth century was just the tip of an iceberg, the very public enactment of a broadly shared common sense about sexual practices in relation to spiritual power and emotion. Lineage purity concerns reflected this common understanding. So did popular admiration for and emulation of divine pairs such as Krishna and Radha. Despite the potential for conflict between the norm of lineage purity and the ideal of *shringara rasa*, both reflected a deep respect for the transformative potential of the longing for association.

## Conclusion

By the late twelfth century at Puri and among devotees of Vaishnava bhakti more generally, a kind of spiritual sexual practice was elaborated that offers a number of striking similarities and contrasts with

182. Uma Chakravarti, “Whatever Happened to the Vedic *Dasi*?” in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 27–87, quote from p. 49.

183. Antoinette Burton, “From Child Bride to ‘Hindoo Lady’: Rukhmabai and the Debate on Sexual Respectability in Imperial Britain,” *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 1119–1146.

184. Raychaudhuri, “Love in a Colonial Climate,” 364.

the twelfth-century European concept of courtly love. The similarities are manifold. In courtly love and in Jayadeva's conception of bhakti:

1. Love has an uplifting, even transcendent, religious significance.
2. Uplifting love is dyadic and exclusive.
3. Uplifting love may be adulterous, yet without transgression.
4. Love brings obsessive reflection, or rumination, especially on the absent beloved.
5. If the beloved returns one's love, the relationship brings health and well-being; unrequited love can bring distress, languishing, thoughts of suicide.
6. The lover (may) place himself or herself (at times), either metaphorically or really, below the beloved.
7. The fulfillment of the love relationship includes innocent, even if adulterous, sexual intercourse.
8. Finally, there were signs of uneasiness about the spiritual status of sexual attraction and arousal in both traditions, and a related concern with secrecy.

This list is remarkable and might easily be taken as grounds for speculation about the universal features of romantic love. But the contrasts are, if anything, even more remarkable.

1. In the European context, sexual appetite was regarded as impersonal, fleeting, indiscriminate. Love, in contrast, was personal, unchanging, and loyal. In Vaishnava bhakti, the personal in the sense of the specific life and identity of an individual was regarded as lowly, even degraded. This status applied equally to personal love-lust (*rati*) directed at a specific other individual. But the impersonal essence of love-lust, its *rasa*, inspired by the divine love-lust of Krishna and the *gopis*, was spiritual. When *devadasis* had love relationships with specific men, they were obliged to keep them short. The very fleeting character of such ties ensured they could not threaten the *devadasi's* capacity to feel and enact impersonal *shringara rasa*. The *devadasi's* disloyalty to specific other humans played a role in her life analogous to that of celibacy in the life of a Christian monk or nun. This is a very dramatic reversal of Christian thinking. The *devadasi's* holy love so completely transformed her sexual characteristics, in some experts' views, that even her sexual emissions became sacred, and access to them was doubtless for some a motive for pursuing a sexual relationship with her. In Europe, nuns became "brides of Christ," and Bernard of Clairvaux went so far as to read the *Song of Songs* as a story about the soul's ecstatic relationship with God. But these "sexual" relationships were "spiritual" in the sense that the sexual dimension is considered figurative or allegorical and

therefore not material. In contrast, it was the *gopis'* and the *devadasis'* very "material" love-lust that became spiritual. And some of those who meditated on the *gopis* or witnessed the *devadasis'* dance sought a similar spiritualized arousal.

2. The signs of uneasiness about sexual arousal, which can be found in both traditions, differ sharply. Promoters of courtly love felt the weight of the church's implicit condemnation of their views. The guarded, ambiguous quality of much courtly love literature certainly reflected, in the first instance, an inclination to avoid clerical condemnation as well as to head off spousal jealousy. But it cannot be ruled out that some writers were uneasy about the implications of their doctrine. Marie de France, Giraut de Borneil, and many others speak with great clarity and confidence. But several features of early courtly romance suggest the authors were aware that many readers would harbor mental reservations. Andreas Capellanus's about-face in the final section of the *De Amore* or Gottfried von Strassburg's use of the love phial in *Tristan and Isolde* may reflect such awareness, for example—or the fact that in the thirteenth-century romance *Queste del Saint Graal*, Lancelot is ranked below Galahad due to Lancelot's adulterous past.<sup>185</sup>

At Puri the development of the sibling Triad of deities, in place of a divine sexual couple, may likewise have been a bow to the anxieties of certain priests or palace officials about the dangers of open Tantric ritual or of openly glorifying adulterous love. Passages in some official texts from Puri suggest that priestly experts had a concept similar to the present-day Western notion of sexual arousal and that they regarded references to this state as requiring careful handling. Tripathi quotes an intriguing mid-fourteenth-century text, the *Kramdipika* of Keshava Bhatta, which, he says, had a strong influence on the worship manuals of Puri temple. The most secret mantras of chapter 8 of the *Kramdipika*, Tripathi points out, describe Purushottama with Lakshmi in an amorous posture, sitting on his left thigh, lotus in her left hand, right hand clinging to her husband, the god of love perturbing her body, her female organ getting wet. Tripathi paraphrases the passage as follows:

Her fickle, black eyes are fixed on the face of her consort like a black bee on a lotus flower. Purushottama is also emotionally stirred up . . . his eyes are rolling . . . he is embracing the young lady . . . with his strong left arm which is also holding a bow of sugarcane and his heart is filled up with the highest satisfaction derived through the embrace. . . . This divine pair is surrounded by thousands of young damsels of

185. Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 61.



the gods, demons, Serpents, Gandharvas, etc., looking languid due to the effect of liquor and love. “One should meditate upon the Deity in this manner and conceive Her as identical with one’s own self” adds the text.<sup>186</sup>

A still later text important at Puri, the very popular *Vaishnava Agama* from the end of the fifteenth century, treated the worship of the Trailokyamohana aspect of Vishnu (another love-related aspect, close to Purushottama) as very secret, only for a select few; it was said to cause *uddipana*. Tripathi translates this term as “emotional excitement.” The *Cologne Digital Sanskrit Dictionary* translates *uddipana* as “inflaming, exciting; affecting violently (as poison).” As a noun, it can mean “the act of inflaming, illuminating, lighting up; inflaming (a passion), exciting, animating, stimulating.”<sup>187</sup> When the “passion” it inflames is *shringara rasa*, one might guess that *uddipana* serves as a rough equivalent of the Greek term *epithumia*, discussed by David Konstan, and also a rough equivalent of the English expression *sexual arousal*.<sup>188</sup>

But it is important to recognize the differences as well as the similarities among these three terms’ meanings and ranges of reference. As discussed in the Introduction, the common sense of present-day Western societies suggests sexual arousal is a straightforward physiological state; but research has shown that it is actually shaped by social, personal, and emotional determinants that modulate its physiological signature in a variety of ways. *Epithumia*, as Konstan notes, was not considered by the Greeks to be a state significant enough to warrant special attention in the context of love stories and their plots—in sharp contrast to concepts of desire in the West since the troubadours. *Uddipana* appears to differ from both *epithumia* and the present-day Western notion of sexual arousal in that it was not assigned a bodily (as opposed to personal, literary, or spiritual) meaning.

In the tradition of aesthetic theory, *uddipanavibhava* was one of the “stimulative causes” of a *rasa*. A well-known eighth-century literary manual, the *Dhvanyaloka* of Anandavardhana, discusses a wide range of *uddipanavibhavas*.<sup>189</sup> In one passage discussed by Anandavardhana, the clouds of the monsoon season remind Rama of his beloved Sita, be-

186. Tripathi, “On the Concept of Purushottama,” 51.

187. Consulted on July 29, 2009, at <http://webapps.uni-koeln.de/tamil/>.

188. On the Greek term *epithumia*, see David Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 38; see also the discussion of Konstan in chap. 2.

189. Anandavardhana, *The “Dhvanyaloka” of Anandavardhana, with the “Locana” of Abhinavagupta*, ed. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, trans. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

cause he has never seen them without her. The clouds, Anandavardhana notes, are the *uddipanavibhava* of his longing for her.<sup>190</sup> In another passage, the lioness is the objective cause, and the bites and lacerations she leaves on a victim are the “stimulative causes” (*uddipanavibhava*) of an observer’s high degree of compassion.<sup>191</sup> In a similar fashion, the spring season and garlands of flowers can become the *uddipanavibhava* of *rati*. From these and many other examples, it is evident that *uddipana* does mean something like stimulation or excitement and may include, but is not restricted to, sexual arousal, as that term is understood in the Western expert tradition.<sup>192</sup>

Both of the Orissan texts discussed by Tripathi, of the mid-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, reflect what White and Donaldson call the “hedonization” of Tantra. They also suggest that, even in its hedonized form, sexual ritual caused concern, perhaps controversy, and was best practiced, some thought, only in secret. However, *shringara rasa* was considered dangerous not because it was “physical,” as opposed to emotional or spiritual, and not because sexual desire was an insidious and powerful bodily appetite. Instead, the danger of *shringara rasa* arose from the fact that it was a spiritual manifestation of love-arousal, a state that might threaten the strict control of women’s physical and spiritual powers which lineages relied on to maintain their purity status.

At Puri the priests handled the issue of divine, adulterous love-lust as they did other points of potential disagreement among the various cults and doctrines they drew upon. The priestly experts resolved conflicting views by folding them into various layers of meaning, according an esoteric status to some meanings, an exoteric status to others. Outer forms and inner meanings provided devotees with a selection of interpretations, but choices were made available differentially, according to varying levels of literacy and theological learning.

A likely inference is that many worshipers at Puri preferred not to know that, in the *devadasis’* Vaishnava bhakti, all aspects of Krishna’s divine sexual play were regarded as worthy of ritual invocation and meditation. However, one cannot conclude that it was specifically “desire” that inspired disapproval. It was more likely that, as White and Seymour suggest, high-caste householders feared the unleashing of female (spiritual and physical) sexual power that might follow for devotees of a cult involving meditation on an adulterous (even if divine)

190. *Ibid.*, 397.

191. *Ibid.*, 666.

192. Thanks to Rich Freeman and to a University of Chicago Press reader for help with the *Dhvanyaloka*.

relationship. Such meditation, they feared, could too easily become the *uddipanavibhava* for a breach of purity rules.

Christian doctrine, in contrast, treated the body as a nonspiritual or “material” thing and treated sexual “desire” as the manifestation of an appetite of the body. The taxonomic analysis of Christian theologians focused, then, on categorizing the various natural and unnatural sexual acts and rank ordering them according to their degree of transgression.

3. Both the bhakti tradition and the European courtly love tradition displayed a concern with secrecy, and, as a result, in both, language was employed to veil as much as to express, and silence often provided cover for behaviors or feelings others might regard as transgressive. However, the treatment of secrecy and of the multivocal capacities of language was very different in each case.

As in Europe, local and transregional maharajas made extravagant claims—about their divine status, their all-conquering warfare, their unlimited magnanimity. To stabilize the claims made by their subjects, South Asian rulers used copperplate and stone inscriptions in a manner reminiscent of the twelfth-century European use of charters drawn up on vellum and provided with princely seals. Subordinate lords were often unruly; usurpation and corruption often abounded. Among priestly elites in both regions, pious invention also abounded. In sum, the applicability of official language to actual practice was open to constant revision through coercion, contestation, and negotiation. The great differences between notions of rule and *dharma*, law and *shastra*, spirit and *rasa* cannot be explored here; their impact ensured that honor’s relation to the self diverged sharply in the two regions.

But one can note that in Bengal and Orissa, there was no need to enhance the status of the longing for association as there was in Europe during the Gregorian Reform. Such longing already enjoyed considerable religious and courtly prestige. In both court life and religious life, the threat of the longing for association to the preservation of lineage purity was carefully managed. In the bhakti context, the layering of meanings within sacred texts permitted concealment of those claims about spiritual love-lust that might inspire disquiet or disapproval among some householders. The layering of meanings in bhakti devotion was also imprinted on the layout of temple precincts and enacted in priestly and *devadasi* rituals. There was no need to elaborate a shadowy vernacular tradition.

Secrecy, ambiguity, and silence were aspects of courtly love language and practice in Europe because courtly love rejected but sought to coex-

ist with a prescriptive religious law code that offered a unidimensional view of all sexual excitement as an aspect of a physical “appetite” and outlawed it as such. Secrecy, ambiguity, and silence were aspects of bhakti language and practice in twelfth-century Bengal and Orissa because of the standard brahmanical strategy of folding together into a syncretic whole as many varieties of cult and belief as they could manage. In southern France, nonpriestly troubadours wrote songs that only initiates could fully understand. In Puri, priestly experts themselves assembled diverse texts and rituals in such a way that only initiates could understand it all.

Thus, in Puri, it may have been an “open secret” that *devadasis* and certain of their devotees sought ecstasy through the love-arousal of *shringara rasa*, that a certain *devadasi* entertained a wealthy courtier in her private rooms once or twice a month, and that certain Tantric practitioners met occasionally in the countryside at night for a ritual that involved meat, alcohol, and sex.<sup>193</sup> But there were no open secrets of the kind that young Henry feared when he heard certain accusers claim that his wife Margaret was having an affair with William Marshal. That is, there was no open secret of the kind that could be proven untrue by means of a duel.

This first of two comparative analyses suggests that, for all the similarities one can find, the central distinction between love and lust made by trobairitz and troubadours had no analogue in twelfth-century Orissa or Bengal. There were similarities in the emotional range and depth of the longing for association, in the deployment of language about it, in metaphysical speculation about the ecstasy of lovers. Nonetheless, the treatment of the longing for association in the twelfth-century bhakti-influenced practices of Orissa and Bengal differed sharply from its treatment in Europe in the same period. A similar palette had been used to paint a very different picture.

Marie de France, author of *Yonec*, would have agreed with the *devadasi* who told Apffel-Marglin that stolen love involved a deeper gift of the self than married love. But in Puri, stolen love was celebrated in the very inner sanctum of a great pilgrimage shrine.

193. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 157–58.

## Elegance and Compassion in Heian Japan

“You should treat any woman with tact and courtesy, and be sure that you cause her no embarrassment. You should never have a woman angry with you.” EMPEROR (GENJI’S FATHER) TO GENJI, IN MURASAKI SHIKIBU, *THE TALE OF GENJI* (CA. 1003–15 CE)<sup>1</sup>

In twelfth-century Europe, *trobairitz*, *troubadours*, *trouvères*, *Minnesänger*, and romance writers sharply distinguished between uplifting love, on the one hand, and mere sexual appetite, on the other. But, as seen in the last chapter, devotees of the roughly contemporary Vaishnava bhakti tradition of Bengal and Orissa did not make this distinction. Nor did bhakti devotees achieve spiritually significant emotional states by disciplining or governing a “sexual appetite” and subjecting it to the regulation of a “higher” emotion called love. Instead, love-lust in all its manifestations, from arousal to jealousy, became spiritual—*rati* became *rasa*—when it participated in the sublime circulation of generalized (rather than particular) feeling—for example, when its object was a deity such as Krishna.

In Heian Japan (794–1185 CE), one finds an understanding of sexual partnerships and a practice of love very different from that found in twelfth-century Europe as well as from that found in tenth- through twelfth-century Orissa. As different as the Heian configuration of sexual

1. Trans. Edward Seidensticker, 2 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1976), 1:159.

relationships was from the Orissan, however, it resembled bhakti sexual understandings in that no distinction was made between love and sexual desire comparable in significance to the distinction between love and desire-as-appetite that was central to European courtly love. Examining an additional non-Western configuration of sexual understandings and practices, that of Heian Japan, underscores the parochial and arbitrary character of the age-old ingredients of a Western outlook. Only in the West did expert doctrine specify that a bodily sexual appetite motivates all sexual behavior and only in the West did a counter-doctrine develop, beginning in the twelfth century, that “true love” is sharply different from, and disciplines, lust.

Aristocrats of the Heian period understood sexual partnerships as a single fabric, as arising from a range of feelings and behaviors that could not be broken, as it was in Europe, into two starkly different registers (the spiritual and the material). For them, sexual partnerships, insofar as these were this-worldly endeavors, participated in the inevitable frustration of all this-worldly desires. There was nothing special about sexual desires that made them different from, for example, desires for success as a poet or as an imperial official. The same genre of ardent poetry was used in exchanges between lovers, in exchanges between officials of different ranks, in exchanges between kinsmen, in exchanges between sisters or mothers and daughters.

However, even though all desire was said to lead inevitably to suffering, there was also a tendency to see sexual partnerships, like other social roles, as a matter of interest to the gods. Gods and spirits might intervene to advance a partnership they favored. Individuals who offended their sexual partners, who slighted their dignity or neglected them, might be punished by avenging spirits. Nonetheless, such transgressions did not arise from lust. Offenses against lovers—insult, neglect, or deception—were not attributed to the anonymous cravings of an appetite.

## The Heian Spiritual World

These two somewhat contradictory ideas—that all desires were inevitably frustrating and that proper conduct toward a partner helped ensure the favor of gods and spirits—corresponded, very roughly, to the presence of two religious traditions in Japan, Buddhism and indigenous *kami* worship. These traditions were blended, without becoming

indistinguishable, in the official religion of the Heian imperial government. Buddhism, brought from China beginning in the sixth century, along with Chinese notions of sovereignty, methods of government, and concepts of virtue, attracted much personal devotion in the Heian period. In the mid-Heian period of the tenth and eleventh centuries the most popular Buddhist currents—among them Tendai, Shingon, and Amidist—agreed in regarding the human world as a realm of frustration and misery. In this world, everything was ephemeral, insubstantial, and all desire therefore frustrating, leading only to longing and grief. The various Buddhist currents differed, among other things, in the specific sutras (holy texts) they relied on and the precise forms of devotion they recommended as the best means of cutting short the cycle of rebirth in order to gain access to the “other shore” of the Buddha.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to hundreds of Buddhist temples and monasteries, the Heian landscape was also peppered with thousands of local shrines to deities of indigenous origin, “the *kami* of Heaven and Earth,” who required frequent propitiation.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, the imperial house offered government support for twenty-two principal *kami* shrines, whose founding predated the arrival of Buddhism.<sup>4</sup> These were the shrines of the clan deities of the empire’s principal aristocratic lineages. *Kami* deities could favor the realm; they could favor their particular lineage; they were also, if not properly propitiated, a threat to the well-being of the human community.

It would be improper to distinguish too sharply between Buddhist and *kami* religiosity or to distinguish too sharply between Chinese understandings of the emperor’s spiritual mission and indigenous ones. Propitiation of the divine was important in all these strands of religious practice. For those Heian nobles who produced the great majority

2. Stanley Weinstein, “Aristocratic Buddhism,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 449–516; Toshio Fukuyama, *Heian Temples: Byōdō-in and Chūson-ji*, trans. Ronald K. Jones (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), 9–45, esp. p. 45; Allan G. Grapard, “Religious Practices,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 517–75; John R. Wallace, “Tarrying with the Negative: Aesthetic Vision in Murasaki and Mishima,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 52 (1997): 181–99. For the expression “other shore,” see John R. Wallace, “Reading the Rhetoric of Seduction in *Izumi Shikibu nikki*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 58 (1998): 481–512, see p. 500. See also Murasaki Shikibu, *Tale of Genji*, 1:250: Genji’s dead father, in a dream, says he fought his way across the sea to this shore. On this passage, see H. Richard Okada, *Figures of Resistance: Language, Poetry, and Narrating in “The Tale of Genji” and Other Mid-Heian Texts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 269–70.

3. Grapard, “Religious Practices,” 518.

4. *Ibid.*, 525–28.

of surviving documents, these strands blended relatively smoothly into a single religious sensibility.

The schools of Esoteric Buddhism that had won favor in Japan relied on sacred texts that identified a large number of otherworldly Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The bodhisattvas were particularly important in Japan, especially Kannon, the bodhisattva of Compassion. Bodhisattvas were figures who had paused on the route to full enlightenment to turn back with compassion toward the realm of humans and to offer them consolation as well as special (esoteric) methods of gaining access to enlightenment. Various Buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as Buddhist saints who had passed on to the next world, were regarded as requiring propitiation, not unlike *kami* deities.

At one level, then, official religion consisted of an elaborate framework of ceremonial occasions, of both Buddhist devotion and *kami* worship, whose proper performance was a matter of great importance. Almost all aspects of court and administration were infused with ritual significance. Ritual codes issued between 869 and 967 CE carefully regulated the performance of rites both in the palace and at the principal shrines; they also subordinated the Buddhist temples and rites to *kami* shrines and rites, thus preventing a “chaotic syncretism” and preserving a ritual primacy for the indigenous deities.<sup>5</sup>

In everyday religious practice, one turned to specific Buddhas and bodhisattvas in search of consolation for bitterness and grief and in the hope of winning escape from this world into a better one. In Amidaist devotion, escape from the endless round of reincarnations into the Western Pure Land was made easier than ever, contributing to the great success of devotion to Amida Buddha from the late tenth century on.<sup>6</sup> *Kami* deities, in contrast, were far more concerned with this-worldly matters, more likely to advance the worldly success of their favorites and their favorites’ lineages, especially the imperial house, and also more likely to feel resentment and to inflict punishment.

But this distinction cannot be pushed too far. Tendai Buddhism won additional imperial support after it adopted the view that “praxis was far more important than theory.”<sup>7</sup> Shingon Buddhism attracted support by its rainmaking rituals. Preaching that sin led to misperception and misperception to calamity, in the early ninth century Shingon

5. *Ibid.*, 545.

6. Weinstein, “Aristocratic Buddhism,” 507–16.

7. *Ibid.*, 540.



Buddhists explained their rainmaking rituals as the undoing of misperception. Claimed one early ninth-century text,

We find hell in what is in fact our Buddha-body, and fail to see the value of the seven jewels with which we are adorned. And thus even though it is time for rain to fall, the four horizons are blazing with heat: the sun burns everything, and rice and millet ears are all dry. . . . As the venerable monks chant the sacred scriptures, light clouds appear in the sky, and as the practitioners of meditation hold firm to their concentration, rain clouds gather on the horizon. Then, the sweet nectar of rain, that sublime ghee, obscures the skies and comes to wash mountains and valleys. . . . A bodhisattva's single spit can extinguish the fires of a hundred realms, and in a moment end the laments of all subjects.<sup>8</sup>

Gradually, then, Buddhism in the Heian era adopted instrumental aspects of an indigenous conception of the holy (which found confirmation in still other Chinese-imported ideas).<sup>9</sup> Allan Grapard has characterized Heian-era shrine ritual as “the performance of codified behavior on the part of a strictly defined social body within the confines of particular spatial arrangements at strictly defined times of the year, month, and day, and focusing on a specific relationship to a divine entity, expressed by purification and by various offerings among which the offering and sharing of food took precedence.”<sup>10</sup> The outlook implicit in such ritual was widely shared in Heian Japan. The Amidist prayer called the *nembutsu* was no exception. Offered as the ultimate shortcut to enlightenment for those too weak to accomplish any of the other Amidist shortcuts, *nembutsu* consisted of the constant repetition of Amida's name. Here too one finds the prevailing preference for purification through precise, invariant ritual performance.

A transgression could bring vengeance. If it were serious enough, vengeful spirits might set out to destroy a whole family line or even the whole realm. A victim of injustice might call upon the deities to protect her or avenge her or might, after death, become a demon and inflict vengeance.<sup>11</sup> Even military rebellions were regarded as emanations of spiritual forces.<sup>12</sup>

Typical of this way of thinking was the attribution of several disas-

8. Text attributed to the monk Kūkai, quoted and translated by Grapard, “Religious Practices,” 537–38.

9. On related Chinese ideas, see Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), e.g., pp. 103, 370.

10. Grapard, “Religious Practices,” 545.

11. See Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 269–86, 291–92.

12. Grapard, “Religious Practices,” 540.

ters to the angry spirit of Sugawara no Michizane (845–903) after he had died in political exile in 903.<sup>13</sup> Also typical was the general amnesty declared in the third month of 997 CE in order to alleviate the illness of Emperor Ichijō's mother, Fujiwara no Senshi. Included in the amnesty were two of her nephews, who had been exiled following a power struggle in 996. It was feared that Senshi's illness might have been caused by "spirits avenging the brothers' exile."<sup>14</sup> Also typical of such religiosity was the *kami* figure of Hashihima, associated with a bridge over the River Uji, near the capital city of Heian-kyo. Hashihima was depicted as a neglected wife, pining for her husband, jealous of her rivals. The implication was that a neglected wife might pray to her and also that a negligent husband risked feeling the deity's vengeance. Crossing the bridge at night, in particular, one might find oneself under attack.<sup>15</sup> But Buddhist figures could come to be feared in a similar fashion, as with the belief, following the death of the Tendai monastic patriarch Jie Daishi Ryōgen (912–85), that Ryōgen continued manifesting himself in defense of Tendai Buddhism as incarnations of the bodhisattva named Kannon, as the Dragon King, and even as the Devil King.<sup>16</sup> Buddhists also feared "hungry ghosts" (*gaki*), invisible creatures condemned to starvation as punishment for sins in former lives.<sup>17</sup>

From the combination of these two overlapping configurations, or "traditions," arose two consequences for sexual partnerships:

First, sexual partnerships, insofar as they involved a pursuit of satisfaction in this world, were, like all other human endeavors, doomed to frustration and loss. No distinction was drawn between emotional longings and physiological "appetites." Desires were not categorized this way, and, in any case, all were equally frustrating. What one de-

13. Janet R. Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles: The Sex Trade in Heian and Kamakura Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 92; Joan R. Piggott, "Court and Province under Regent Fujiwara no Tadahira," in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Mikael Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 35–65, see p. 52.

14. Naomi Fukumori, "Sei Shōnagon's *Makura no sōshi*: A Re-Visionary History," *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 31 (1997): 1–44, quote from p. 29; see also William H. McCullough and Helen Craig McCullough, "Introduction," in *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes: Annals of Japanese Aristocratic Life in the Heian Period*, trans. William H. McCullough and Helen Craig McCullough, 2 vols. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980), 1:3–66, see pp. 34–35, see also 1:210–11; G. Cameron Hurst III, "Kugyō and Zuryō: Center and Periphery in the Era of Fujiwara no Michinaga," in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Mikael Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 66–101, see p. 78.

15. Terry Kawashima, *Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 219–87.

16. Haruko Wakabayashi, "From Conqueror of Evil to Devil King: Ryōgen and Notions of Ma in Medieval Japanese Buddhism," *Monumenta Nipponica* 54 (1999): 481–507.

17. Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles*, 105.

sired, in desiring, was always the end of desire, something not available in this world. The end of desire was figured in Buddhist imagery as the extravagant luxuries and enjoyments of those lands where souls went when they escaped the cycle of rebirth. Thus, the longing for association was tinged with sadness, as well as with the spiritual implication that one's longing was really for escape to another world. In addition, in imitation of the bodhisattvas or of Amida Buddha, sensitive men and women could offer each other a kind of spiritual consolation amid the ruins of the present world.

It was through this combination of inevitable sadness and of possible spiritual consolation or compassion that a great range of emotional material became relevant to the longing for association in the Heian context. This spiritual dimension of love relationships in Heian Japan may be linked to the rise of bhakti devotional practices in South Asia, at least indirectly. Vijay Nath remarks the "growing projection of Vishnu as a compassionate god" as an important component of the Puranic Hinduism of the late first millennium CE.<sup>18</sup> This vision of Vishnu may have drawn on and offered competition to Buddhist ideas that had been carried to China and from there to Japan. However, it is worth noting that, as discussed in chapter 4, bhakti devotion as practiced at Puri in the twelfth century and afterward did not foreground Krishna's compassion. Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* does not dwell on such a divine feeling. Krishna's condescension takes the form of being willing to feel longing and regret for Radha.

Second, there was, as well, in Heian Japan, a proper way to conduct sexual partnerships and deviating from established norms might bring personal and political difficulties as well as supernatural punishment. Neither of the possible negative effects of sexual love—frustration or punishment—resulted from improper indulgence of a sexual appetite. As we will see, depictions of Heian gentlemen engaged in undue womanizing or those of ladies who entertained improper lovers treated them as unable to control their emotional sensitivity, including especially their capacity for compassion, rather than their appetites.

As long as they showed due regard for the persons involved, both men and women were able to sustain multiple, sometimes simultaneous sexual partnerships in the course of a life, some of which were considered "marriages," some of which were treated as of lesser importance and were usually of lesser duration. Of course, showing due regard for

18. Vijay Nath, "From 'Brahmanism' to 'Hinduism': Negotiating the Myth of the Great Tradition," *Social Scientist* 29 (2001): 19–50, quote from p. 21.

persons often turned out to be a difficult, even a delicate, task that challenged one's interpersonal skills and political instincts. (In addition, the rules were more restrictive for women than for men.) Some lesser partnerships had to be kept secret, for example; but it seems that often the effort made to keep it secret, even when it was not secret, was what counted.<sup>19</sup> The many questions and contradictions that arose concerning the proper conduct of love relationships, both "marital" and "extramarital," coupled with the explorations of sadness and consolation associated with love, created a context that inspired a certain kind of self-awareness that found expression in poetry, autobiographical texts, and fictional narratives.

### Kinship and Marriage among the Governing Elite

In addition to spiritual traditions, the emotional tenor of sexual partnerships in the Heian period was also shaped by the changing understandings of marriage, kinship reckoning, and gender that guided the conduct of the Heian governing elite. The fluidity of the Heian concept of marriage is a remarkable point of contrast with many other social settings. Also remarkable were the powerful matriarchal and matrilineal undercurrents that shaped the understandings of what was at stake in a sexual partnership. As in Europe in the eleventh century, so in ninth- through eleventh-century Japan, bilateral kinship reckoning was gradually being supplanted by patrilineal reckoning. As in Europe, this trend was linked with a decline in the formal authority of women. As in Europe, older standards retained informal significance and found expression in works of the imagination as well as in the practical working out of sexual partnerships on the basis of very personal emotional accommodations and very personal practical arrangements. As in Europe, the resulting ambiguity, uncertainty, striving, and disappointment helped stimulate a kind of reflection that found expression in literary texts. (However, the analogy cannot be pushed too far. Patrilineal reckoning was introduced in Japan in support of imperial sovereignty on a Chinese model. In Europe patrilineal reckoning was adopted in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in part to safeguard the independence of a multiplicity of smaller quasi-sovereign entities.)

19. See, for example, one woman's complaints about her husband's affair with "the lady in the alley," in *The Gossamer Years (Kagerō Nikki): The Diary of a Noblewoman of Heian Japan*, trans. Edward Seidensticker (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1964), 38–44. See below for further discussion of this document.

Prior to the seventh century CE in Japan, kinship reckoning appears to have been bilateral and marital residence uxorilocal. Young men, when they married, moved in with their wives and became subject to the influence of their fathers-in-law. The promulgation of Chinese law codes in the seventh and eighth centuries and the establishment of an imperial bureaucracy modeled on Chinese forms introduced a strong bias in favor of patrilineal reckoning.<sup>20</sup> But the impact of this bias was muted by the strict control of farmlands and other resources claimed by the central government, control so sweeping that it forced leading clans to give up all formal pretense to independent authority and to translate their status into bureaucratic office. Once the law codes were fully implemented, or as fully implemented as they ever were, by far the most important “possession” elite fathers could pass to their sons was access to imperial office.

In the new *ritsuryō* state of the eighth century (the “civil and criminal code” state based on the Chinese model), the imperial government attempted to exercise direct bureaucratic control of every household in the realm. Under the authority of provincial governors in some sixty-seven provinces, district chieftains were supposed to perform censuses of farming households every six or seven years and to reassign farm lands to reflect the labor capacities and needs of each household.<sup>21</sup> Tax liabilities were then assessed in kind on each household head in accordance with the household’s size and resources. Provincial governors were expected to oversee the collection of these in-kind taxes or tribute, made predominantly in the form of rice. Additional tax was also owed in many cases in the form of silk, iron, salt, fish, seaweed, and other products. These goods were collected in storehouses and then a specific proportion was forwarded directly to the capital. Some tribute was also payable as *corvée* labor, and provincial headquarters included workshops for production of specific goods. Archeological studies have identified the remains of extensive complexes of storehouses at old provincial headquarters.<sup>22</sup> At first, tribute reaching the capital may have been relatively meager. The capital was moved twice (largely for politico-religious reasons), finally settling at Heian-kyō. (Hence the

20. This account relies on Joan R. Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 167–235.

21. Dana Morris, “Land and Society,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 183–235.

22. Piggott, *Japanese Kingship*, 205.

“Heian” period; the city is now known as Kyoto). A system of trunk roads was constructed to bring in tribute and send out officials and commands. The crucial role of provincial governors as mediators between center and periphery was recognized in the careful supervision of their performance. In time, it was decided that governors would not be assigned to their families’ native provinces and would be moved frequently. An Office of Discharge Agents was established to review the records and receipts of each provincial governor at the end of his term.<sup>23</sup> A good report was required prior to reassignment.

The *ritsuryō* monarch ruled in accord with both Chinese and Japanese ideas of sovereignty. As the representative of heaven (in Chinese fashion) and descendent of the sun goddess Amaterasu (in indigenous understandings), the *tennō* (a term usually translated as “emperor”) performed, and supervised the performance of, state rituals that ordered society and propitiated the gods. The ethical and ritual correctness of the emperor’s conduct ensured the prosperity of the realm; emperor and ministers were linked through officialdom to every family, and the realm itself was imagined as a great spiritual family. Provincial governors were expected to visit every shrine and temple in the province each year to ensure that all religious duties were fulfilled. There were, in addition, a central office charged with oversight of *kami* shrines and another one that specialized in the selection of abbots for Buddhist monasteries.

Each of the approximately seven thousand upper-level offices was filled in principle on the basis of merit. In practice, recognition of prior social status heavily influenced the initial formation of the bureaucracy and continued to influence subsequent access to office. District chieftains were drawn from locally powerful clans, and there was a strong presumption of hereditary right for offspring of chieftains who had performed well.<sup>24</sup> Eldest sons of officials of the fifth rank and up (including provincial governors, midlevel ministerial officials, and members of the Council of State) were allowed to begin their careers at the fifth rank; in practice other male offspring often did so as well. That is, sons of fifth-rank or higher bureaucrats were permitted to begin their careers at the Junior Lower Fifth Rank, the minimum rank for provincial governorships.<sup>25</sup> This recognition of heredity in access

23. According to Joan Piggott, this office was particularly important, and constantly behind in its work, in the late ninth and early tenth centuries; see Piggott, “Court and Province,” 41–42.

24. Piggott, *Japanese Kingship*, 198–204.

25. *Ibid.*, 180, 182.

to office was crucial to the accommodation of the existing elite within the new system. But, in accord with Chinese ideas, such recognition followed patrilineal reckoning.

District chieftains, provincial governors, and their staffs were remunerated by prebend. Each was allocated certain "sustenance households," whose tribute supported them. Higher officials in the capital were also remunerated in this way; a member of the Council of State might rely on the tribute of from one to three thousand households distributed in various provinces.<sup>26</sup> Such an official had every reason to cultivate a cooperative relationship with the district chieftains and governors of provinces where his sustenance households were located, as well as to favor the selection of his protégés to govern those provinces.

At first, the position of women within this new system remained significant. The Chinese-inspired law codes imposed patrilineal reckoning, monogamy, and patriarchal authority. But, in complete defiance of the law, Japanese families continued to operate very differently in practice.

Marriage continued to be uxorilocal or duolocal.<sup>27</sup> That is, husbands moved into their wives' households or else formed visiting relationships with their wives. The majority of marriages were probably monogamous, but it was common among men with sufficient incomes to have two or three wives. When they did so, they often lived in the household of a principal wife (usually the wife of the first marriage) and had visiting relationships with their other wife or wives.

Residences and some other properties were usually passed from mothers to daughters. Once a second or third daughter married, it was common for parents either to move out to a new residence or provide a new residence for the newlyweds. Husbands provided residences only very rarely, usually when they far outranked their wives and could not be expected to live in the wife's lowly dwelling. The emperor and princes of the Imperial House, for example, provided their own residences; a new wife was assigned an apartment within the husband's mansion, her parents furnished it appropriately, and the august husband then "visited" the wife.<sup>28</sup>

Marriages occurred at a young age, and the wife's parents often

26. For example, Fujiwara no Tadahira, as Minister of the Right, received prebends from about two thousand households in 920 CE; see Piggott, "Court and Province," 44.

27. William H. McCullough, "Japanese Marriage Institutions in the Heian Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967): 103–67; Hurst, "Center and Periphery," 67; Peter Nickerson, "The Meaning of Matrilocality: Kinship, Property, and Politics in Mid-Heian," *Monumenta Nipponica* 48 (1993): 429–67.

28. McCullough, "Japanese Marriage Institutions," 116–17; Hurst, "Center and Periphery," 72.

handled childcare for daughters who were barely out of childhood themselves. Sons-in-law, especially early in their married life, remained sensitive to their father-in-law's authority. They relied on their male kin for official appointments but on their fathers-in-law for advice concerning the day-to-day conduct of life. In this way, a father might win substantial advancement in his career by marrying a daughter to a man from a higher-ranking family.

Between 592 CE and 770 CE the office of emperor was held by women as often as by men. Recent research shows that, although women usually ruled only as a result of succession disputes or during the minorities of male heirs, their authority was nonetheless as great as that of male emperors. However, after 770 CE, rising resistance to direct rule by women put an end to the practice. The household of the empress—that is, of the principal imperial consort, formerly an independent institution—was gradually subsumed within the imperial palace, and the empress's female officials were supplanted by male palace officials. The principal consort's place in state ritual, previously alongside the emperor, was reduced as well.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, the ninth and tenth centuries saw the rise to prominence of dowager empresses. As mothers or grandmothers of reigning emperors and ranking heads of the Imperial House, imperial consorts often enjoyed great authority and influence after, rather than during, their husband's reign. The clan known as the Northern Fujiwaras, in fact, climbed to the heights of political power in the tenth and eleventh centuries in part by successfully marrying its daughters to members of the Imperial House. In this way, Fujiwara males exercised the influence of fathers-in-law or grandfathers over a series of emperors and could rely on the help of their daughters, sisters, and aunts who served as principal imperial consorts and dowager empresses.

By such accommodations, the matrilineal dimension of kinship reckoning—and traces of matriarchal authority as well—were preserved within households, while patrilineal reckoning (and male authority) found clearest expression in the all-important distribution of offices and the resources attached to office. Aristocratic households could not survive without access to the flow of resources from the provinces. This flow was tied in large measure to imperial office, and appointments to imperial offices were deeply influenced, informally, by the solidarity

29. Fukutō Sanae, with Takeshi Watanabe, "From Female Sovereign to Mother of the Nation: Women and Government in the Heian Period," in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Mikael Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 15–34.



of patrilineal “clans.” These clans were made up of men who did not live with each other but whose genealogical connections were carefully tracked and who had regular meetings, leaders, and shared a clan deity and shrine. When they left the palace grounds, members of these aristocratic patrilineal clans resided apart from each other in households constituted by matrilineal succession and under the management of grandmothers, mothers, and groups of sisters. There, these men often bowed to the influence of fathers-in-law.

From the first establishment of the *ritsuryō* system, bureaucratic control of provincial resources was constantly undermined by “patrimonial” tendencies.<sup>30</sup> That is, there was steady pressure to form hereditary blocks of landholdings—estates, in effect—that could provide elite households with an independent base of power. Such blocks were formed in a number of ways. When new farmland was opened up in the seventh and eighth centuries, it was granted tax-exempt status.<sup>31</sup> Lands devoted to the support of shrines and temples were also tax-exempt. The tax-exempt holdings of clan shrines, which in some cases grew into very large estates, could provide resources to clan leaders. Priests and monks of other shrines and temples, when their lands were threatened by greedy local officials and governors, sought protectors in the capital. It was not uncommon for such protectors to gradually acquire a proprietary outlook toward their protégés’ estates and to accept lavish gifts. In the late ninth and early tenth centuries, provincial governors pressured the central authorities to accept ever-higher proportions of “fallow” and “waste” lands, thus reducing the assessments made on their provinces and giving them more generous margins to make favorable arrangements with local notables or high-level protectors for mutual enrichment. High-level officials in the capital, sidestepping provincial governors, sometimes sent out agents to manage the affairs of their sustenance households and negotiate directly with local elites. Sometimes they “worked out deals with district chieftains to receive these payments directly.”<sup>32</sup>

The 940s were a period of crisis.<sup>33</sup> Two officials, one sent out to suppress piracy, the other to deal with tax revolts, both turned on the central government and became leaders of rebellion. Shortages became

30. On these patrimonial tendencies, see Piggott, “Court and Province.”

31. For details of this system, see Morris, “Land and Society,” 216.

32. Piggott, “Court and Province,” 44.

33. George Sansom, *A History of Japan, to 1334* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 151; Piggott, “Court and Province,” 53–54; Sasaki Muneo, “The Court-centered Polity,” with introduction by Joan R. Piggott, in *Capital and Countryside in Japan, 300–1180*, ed. Joan R. Piggott (New York: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2006), 227–44.

so serious in the capital that imperial banquets were postponed and months passed as the government tried to assemble a force to send against the rebels. In subsequent decades, the government reduced its supervision of provincial governors substantially. The censuses were suspended. Land was reclassified in larger units, each owing a specific tax assessment, no matter who farmed it. The *ritsuryō* state, which survived at this point only on paper in many respects, gave way to a new system, a “court-centered polity.”<sup>34</sup>

The flow of tribute to the capital never fully recovered. Lower-level officials now served without receiving any prebend. To help deal with this problem, some palace officials were permitted to serve as provincial governors in absentia and to send out “custodial” governors (*zuryō*) who were expected to share tax income with them. Appointments to governorships of the wealthier provinces were now handed out to candidates who promised special private gifts to the government—the rebuilding of a mansion or palace gate after a fire, for example. High-level nobles also formed mutually beneficial relationships with provincial governors, supporting their continuation in office in return for a steady flow of gifts. Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1028), for example, as document examiner for the emperor and head of the council of senior nobles, received over seventy horses as gifts from several candidates for office prior to the season of appointments in 1016 CE. Later, several provincial governors provided him with everything he needed for the sumptuous rebuilding of his principal wife’s residence, the Tsuchimikado mansion, where he had lived since their marriage in 987.<sup>35</sup>

When informal patrimonial holdings could be passed down, inheritance was reckoned, as with office holding, by patrilineal descent. As a result, as the bureaucracy’s functioning gradually broke down again, beginning in the late eleventh century, patrilineal descent reckoning grew in importance. By the twelfth century, social life was beginning to take on a “feudal” configuration in which patrimonial holdings, carved out in various ways and passed on through patrilineal reckoning, became the bases for organizing independent military forces. Simultaneously, the institution of marriage changed, as uxorilocality and duolocality gradually gave way to virilocal residence. The matrilineal facets of the Heian period were gradually submerged.

Despite these tendencies, throughout the Heian period and beyond, the concept of merit was never drained of all significance. On the

34. Sasaki, “Court-centered Polity.” See also Morris, “Land and Society,” 217–21.

35. Hurst, “Center and Periphery,” 90–91.

contrary, the elite lavished great care on the education of the younger generation, both sons and daughters. Men were expected to master the Chinese classics and to display ethical behavior as well as fluency in Chinese and skill in calligraphy and in archery, dance, music, ritual movement, elegance of dress, and quickness of wit. Women were often trained in Chinese as well but were expected to feign ignorance of it, and they were trained in their own gender-appropriate literary, calligraphic, and musical skills, skills in garment making and screen painting, and in their own notions of elegance, refinement, and reserve. Both men and women were expected to acquire expertise in the composition and appreciation of various genres of poetry. Women were taught to write in *kana*, Japanese syllabic writing.<sup>36</sup>

Family, education, and merit were supposed to go together. Family ties alone were not enough to make a successful career, even though they were crucial to one's first appointment and extremely useful thereafter. Clan identities and maternal ties, on the one hand, and bureaucratic methods of evaluation and deliberation, on the other, were in constant tension with each other, as well as with court-centered evaluation of luxurious dress, literary and musical talent, conversational brilliance, and (for men) excellence in archery and dance. The result was a highly competitive atmosphere in which every aspect of the person might come into play, and certain forms of self-expression were given extraordinary emphasis.

## Heian Literature

One outcome of this atmosphere was the production by a series of female authors of literary "classics," whose seemingly "modern" depiction

36. Piggott, *Japanese Kingship*, 170–76; Edward Kamens, "Terrains of Text in Mid-Heian Court Culture," in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Mikael Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 129–52; Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 160–64; Tomiko Yoda, *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Constructions of Japanese Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 81–110; Helen Craig McCullough, "Aristocratic Culture," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 390–448; Joshua S. Mostow, "Mother Tongue and Father Script: The Relationship of Sei Shōnagon and Murasaki Shikibu to Their Fathers and Chinese Letters," in *The Father-Daughter Plot: Japanese Literary Women and the Law of the Father*, ed. Rebecca L. Copeland and Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 115–42; S. Lea Millay, "The Voice of the Court Woman Poet," in *Crossing the Bridge: Comparative Essays on Medieval European and Heian Japanese Women Writers*, ed. Barbara Stevenson and Cynthia Ho (Houndsmill: Palgrave, 2000), 91–116.

of subjective experience has inspired great international interest since the Meiji Restoration. A number of scholars have recently warned against the rush to celebrate the subjectivity of Heian literature as an anticipation of the modern self.<sup>37</sup> H. Richard Okada, for example, follows Katagiri Yōichi in insisting on the undimmed importance in Heian poetry of the “word spirit” or *kododama*. Rejecting the notion that poets attempted only to achieve “elegance” (*ga*) in their compositions, Katagiri argues that poets sought to maximize the spiritual force of their language. Heian poetry displays a “quality of incantatory technique,” as Okada translates Katagiri’s term *jujutsusei*.<sup>38</sup> Paul Atkins notes that the composition of *waka* was considered a “sacred art” and that poems could be “interpreted in ways that revealed hidden, mystical meanings.”<sup>39</sup> Modern readers easily miss this aspect of the period’s literature, especially in translation. As Terry Kawashima notes, a poem describing a dream in which one met one’s lover was not just the evocation of feeling; it was also an attempt to conjure such a meeting into existence.<sup>40</sup> To receive a poem from someone was to be the object of an incantation, and it was important to respond properly.

Not just imperial court ceremony but all of daily life was filled with ritual observances aimed at propitiation or at the avoidance of pollution. Each day the god Taihakuji moved to one of eight directions, and during that day it was forbidden to travel in that direction. The year of one’s birth determined other directional prohibitions. One night in every sixty, a person had to go sleepless, to prevent certain dormant poisons from doing away with her or him in an unguarded moment.<sup>41</sup> Women had to stay away from court during menstruation and birth to avoid defilement of the court.<sup>42</sup> If, by accident, pollution

37. The establishment of these texts as “classics” predates the Meiji Restoration of 1868, but the debate over the “modern” feel of their subjectivity dates from the late nineteenth century. See Yoda, *Gender and National Literature*; Kamens, “Terrains of Text”; and Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, for critiques of the anachronistic tendencies of “modern” readings. See also Norma Field, *The Splendor of Longing in the “Tale of Genji”* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 3–17.

38. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 85–105.

39. Paul S. Atkins, “The Demon-Quelling Style in Medieval Japanese Poetic and Dramatic Theory,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 58 (2003): 317–46, quote from p. 317. See also Marian Ury, “A Heian Note on the Supernatural,” *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 22 (1988): 189–94; R. Keller Kimbrough, “Reading the Miraculous Powers of Japanese Poetry: Spells, Truth Acts, and a Medieval Buddhist Poetics of the Supernatural,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32 (2005): 1–33.

40. Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 160.

41. Edward Seidensticker, “Introduction,” in *The Gossamer Years (Kagerō Nikki): The Diary of a Noblewoman of Heian Japan*, trans. Edward Seidensticker (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1964), 7–29, see pp. 17–18.

42. Fukumori, “Sei Shōnagon’s *Makura no sōshi*,” 12.

occurred following a breach of any of these numerous rules, an individual was required to undergo a period of isolation and propitiation before returning to normal social life.

There were both Buddhist and *kami* notions of the power of incantation. But the revival of Japanese poetry written in *kana*, the “feminine hand,” in the tenth century was associated with a revaluation of indigenous traditions. The vogue for Japanese themes in panel painting also reflected this trend. This trend in literature and art was probably associated with the replacement of the strict *ritsuryō* system with the modified “court-centered polity,” the promulgation of new regulations for *kami* shrine rituals, and the simultaneous rise of the “Fujiwara Regents’ House”—that segment of the Northern Fujiwara clan that won the battle of influence at court, relying on, among other things, the extraordinary charisma of its daughters. It was as if the high noon of Heian cultural coherence and of Fujiwara influence, from 969 to 1074 CE, derived from a delicate, and temporary, balance at once between bureaucratic and patrimonial power, between patrilineal and matrilineal tendencies, and between indigenous and Chinese-origin influences. But, if so, this was also based on a balance between belief in the word spirit (*kododama*) of literary language and more “aesthetic” notions of elegance (*ga*).<sup>43</sup>

Both word spirit and elegance derived from the way language evoked deep feelings, especially feelings of longing and sadness. Terms for these feelings were discussed at the time and have been the subject of much discussion since. They include *koi*, “longing”;<sup>44</sup> *monoomoi*, “thinking about things”—described by Norma Field as the “condition of constant longing (usually) produced by fruitless attachment”<sup>45</sup>—and *mono no aware*, literally “the ah-ness of things,” that aspect of the world that leads one to sigh.<sup>46</sup> Love poetry, according to Sonja Arntzen, was pervaded with a tone of “yearning or lamentation.”<sup>47</sup>

After a century of relative neglect, since the compilation of the *Man'yōshū* collection in the late eighth century, interest in Japanese-

43. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 89; H. McCullough, “Aristocratic Culture,” 410–11.

44. Atkins, “Demon-Quelling,” 324, 327, 338; Royall Tyler, “‘I am I’: Genji and Murasaki,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 54 (1999): 435–80, see p. 448.

45. Field, *Splendor of Longing*, 39.

46. See Sonja Arntzen, “Introduction,” in *The Kagerō Diary: A Woman's Autobiographical Text from Tenth-Century Japan*, trans. Sonja Arntzen (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1997), 1–50, see pp. 5–6. This term was central to the critical thinking of the eighteenth-century Japanese scholar Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801); see Field, *Splendor of Longing*, 6–7; Yoda, *Gender and National Literature*, 30–37, 112–15.

47. Arntzen, “Introduction,” 6.

language poetry was revived in the late ninth and was sanctioned by an imperial anthology entitled the *Kokinshū*, completed about 905 CE. The issuance of this imperial anthology has been called an effort to “revitalize the incantatory aspects that were a regular component of the ancient songs.”<sup>48</sup> The preface to the collection extolled poetry, which “moves without physical effort heaven and earth, makes spirits, both alien and familiar, who are invisible to the eyes, feel pity, harmonizes the relations between men and women, and soothes the hearts of fierce warriors.”<sup>49</sup> Noteworthy in this conception of poetry was the idea that spirits as well as men and women could be moved to pity by a carefully crafted poem. Elegance and incantatory power were measured by the effectiveness of a poem in evoking certain prestigious feelings, especially feelings tinged with sad longing. In contrast to explicit ritual incantation, such poems were believed to be powerful because “a deity, inadvertently moved by the grief or longing of the poet, typically exercises its powers on the poet’s behalf.”<sup>50</sup>

The *Kokinshū* contained 1,111 poems of the *waka* genre; more than 450 were anonymous, but of the more than 120 authors’ names provided, almost thirty were women, two of whom, Lady Ise and Ono no Komachi, wrote forty of the included *waka*.<sup>51</sup> Lady Ise (ca. 875–938) gained her sobriquet from the circumstance that she was daughter of the custodial governor of Ise when she became a lady-in-waiting to the principal imperial consort. But, because the Ise Shrine was also the hereditary shrine of the divine first empress, ancestor of the Imperial House, Lady Ise’s sobriquet also suggested something of the pre-Chinese, pre-Buddhist female origins of imperial sacred power. Lady Ise’s skill in the composition of *waka* was so widely admired that her presence was mandatory at imperial *waka* poetry contests. In one round of a poetry contest in 913 CE, the emperor wished to name Lady Ise the winner, but a male poet’s supporters insisted he call a draw.<sup>52</sup>

Consisting of five lines of verse and totaling 31 syllables in the pattern 5-7-5-7-7, the *waka* form was well suited to the pursuit of incantatory effects. Because they were written in the phonetic syllabary called *kana*, poems of the *waka* genre visibly displayed the sounds of spoken

48. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, quoting Furuhashi Nobuyoshi, 91.

49. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 90.

50. Kimbrough, “Reading the Miraculous Powers of Japanese Poetry,” 11.

51. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 113–14; on Ono no Komachi, see Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 123–74.

52. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 112–30.

Japanese, and *waka* composers eagerly exploited word associations and puns to thicken the polysemy of these brief capsules of meaning. The *Kokinshū* established the use of “pivot words” (*kakekotoba*) as characteristic of the *waka*.<sup>53</sup> Pivot words, often relying on puns, linked specific kinds of meaning together, bridging between a world of “nature,” which was understood to be filled with spiritual forces, and the social world. Through the pivot word and the meanings that pivoted on it, personal longings and losses were tied to features of the landscape and their protective spirits. A *waka*, as celebrated in the *Kokinshū* and other tenth-century collections, was at once a prayer and a message, embodying a formulation that set the reader’s mind wandering—across natural (i.e., spiritual) landscapes as well as social landscapes—to seek out its implications. Also, it was hoped, the poem moved both readers and spirits to pity.

Okada, following Furuhashi Nobuyoshi, furnishes the following early example of a *waka* relying on pivot words, the anonymous *Kokinshū* 433:

AFuFi [Heartvine] and katsura [Laurel],  
 now you’ve become someone only rarely met,  
                   as rare as Heartvine Festival days;  
 how could I not consider you heartless as the laurel tree?  
 [kaku bakari / aFuFi no mare ni / naru Fito wo / ikaga turasi to/ omoFazarubeki]<sup>54</sup>

The word *aFuFi*, which begins the second line of the poem, means heartvine and also “meeting day.” In the context of a *waka*, where puns and double entendres are privileged methods of complicating the message, *aFuFi* points therefore unmistakably to the “heartvine meeting day,” that is, the Kamo Festival, one of the most important of annual imperial rituals, in which heartvine cuttings were featured. The deities of the two Kamo shrines near the capital had gained great importance as protectors of the city since the emperor’s residence had been moved to Heian-kyo. A Kamo priestess and an imperial messenger brought

53. On pivot words, see two essays in the anthology edited by Barbara Stevenson and Cynthia Ho, *Crossing the Bridge: Comparative Essays on Medieval European and Heian Japanese Women Writers* (Houndsmill: Palgrave, 2000): S. Lea Millay, “The Voice of the Court Woman Poet,” 91–116; and John R. Wallace, “Romantic Entreaty in the *Kagerō Diary* and *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*,” 117–32. See also Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 91–99; Helen Craig McCullough, “Introduction,” in *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan*, trans. Helen Craig McCullough (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), 3–65; see p. 12.

54. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 94.

the emperor's offerings to the Kamo shrines each spring in a great procession.<sup>55</sup>

Laurel (*katsura*) was, like heartvine, also used prominently in the Kamo Festival. The word *katsura* does not even appear in the original poem, but, because of the indirect evocation of the Kamo Festival, *katsura* is readily discerned by the informed reader in the fourth line, behind the syllables of the two words *ikaga turasi*. A syntactic recombination of sounds allows one to identify an additional word meaning "heartless." (The translation above attempts to convey the meanings revealed by the pivot words rather than the surface sense.)

While individuals often labored over the composition of *waka*, the best poets composed rapidly, as if spontaneously, responding immediately to the *waka* they received from others.<sup>56</sup> Composition of such a poem, relying on pivot words and puns, required one to draw upon that barely conscious domain of linguistic competence where sounds and meanings are searched with great rapidity in the process of speech formulation and recognition. Heian nobles associated material from such boundaries of awareness, as they did the content of dreams, with the spiritual realm. The message of a *waka* might well be, in a way, news to its composer as much as to its recipient. Fate, past lives, and divine interests could come into play, as well as the cloudy character of a profound feeling.

Crucial to the spiritual power of pivot words was their knitting together of nature and society, as in *aFuFi*'s double meaning of heartvine and meeting day. In this instance, the natural objects point, in addition, to an important annual ritual of propitiation of a *kami* deity. The sense of this *waka* is, "You now visit me only once a year, no more than ritual demands." There is also, perhaps, a suggestion that proper devotion requires something more than the ritual minimum. The references to nature are simultaneously references to propitiatory ritual and thus invoke divine protection in relation to a desire to be visited.

Such a poem was not necessarily a love poem. Heian nobles, both men and women, frequently addressed each other with written notes; both men and women regarded the composition and receipt of such

55. William H. McCullough, "The Capital and Its Society," in *Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97–182, see pp. 180–81.

56. On the role of rapid composition, see, for example, Sei Shōnagon, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, trans. Ivan Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 135–36 [in the 1967 edition, 2 vols., same press, 1:120–21]. See also the comments by Mostow on this passage, in "Mother Tongue and Father Script," 124.



notes and accompanying poems as a part of the daily routine. It was both elegant and proper to append a well-crafted poetic reflection about the content of any note. In many circumstances it was appropriate to politely suggest a desire for closer ties, as this *waka* does. Often, recipients of such polite poems wondered if the author was truly interested; the answer might depend on the personal quality and originality of the *waka*.

Shorter, more elliptical and allusive than Occitan lyric, *waka* called even more powerfully for framing comments. Collections of *waka* from the early tenth century regularly provided such comments and often strung *waka* and comments together into a quasi-narrative. The first thirty-three *waka*, with their comments, in Lady Ise's own collection constitute a kind of story of her life and are sometimes referred to as her *nikki* (diary). Whether these poems and their comments provide reliable information about Lady Ise's life is unclear. Some other biographical compilations of the period appear to have been largely fictional.

In Lady Ise's collection, the following poem is explained, in its prefatory comment, as her response to a lover's expression of sorrow at the passing of time.

[Prefatory comment:] Seeing this [the man's poem], the woman [Lady Ise], despite her hurt feelings [apparently at his implicit admission of a loss of interest in her], is deeply moved.

[Poem:]

my tears too stream down	in concert with the passing showers
in my old home town	
the color of the autumn leaves	takes on a deeper shade.

[namida saFe / sigure ni soFite / Fiurusato Fa / momidi no iro mo / kosa]<sup>57</sup>

Okada explores the import of this poem as follows:

[The poem] shows a skillful use of two rhetorico-incantatory figures we have seen in poems composed by the *Kokinshū* compilers: *kakekotoba* [pivot-word] and *engo* [word association]. The morpheme *Furu* in *Furusato* (hometown) contains a pivot-word on "time passing": "old" and "fall, as in rain." The latter joins with *sigure* (autumn showers), *momidi* (autumn leaves) and *kosa masaru* ("hues growing ever deeper"—common lore held that autumn showers caused the leaves to turn) to form an associational pattern. The woman's tears form a semantic bond with the possible meanings in *Furu*: "time has passed and so we both have changed" and

57. Quoted in Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 122.

“my tears add their power (of sorrow) to the rains and thus turn the colors to a hue even deeper than on the leaves you found so splendid.” The season of autumn itself, moreover, plays on its equivalent, *aki*, in the sense of “grow tired of” (i.e., you have grown tired of me).<sup>58</sup>

In the language of *waka*, verbs lacked tense as well as person—both of which are supplied only by translations. This absence of personal reference enhanced the emblematic character of the complex feelings each *waka* set out to evoke. Lady Ise’s prefatory comments avoid naming either herself or her beloved (who was said in another text to be the imperial prince Nakahira), supporting this decontextualized impression. Tears join with autumn rain, helping to change the colors of the falling leaves. Lady Ise’s sadness blends with, and increases, the sadness of a season. Through this poem, her sense of loss gains exemplary significance, and she hopes, as the *Kokinshū* preface puts it, to make “spirits, both alien and familiar, who are invisible to the eyes, feel pity” and perhaps even to “[harmonize] the relations between men and women.”

### The Gossamer Years: Heian Subjectivity

These poems, filled with “rhetorico-incantatory figures” because they aimed at influencing both spirits and humans, were suitable instruments for the pursuit of personal aims, as these were understood in the Heian period. Their efficacy derived from a melding of the personal and the natural. In this melding, the “personal” consisted of that pinpoint of ambiguity that came into view as individuals sought to navigate the intersecting spaces of bureaucratic careers, uxori-local and polygynous marriages, and the emotional norms implicit in ritual performance, religious devotion, and literary convention. In this melding, the “natural” was at once a vast realm of references endowed with emotional significance and a concrete terrain of spirituality. The spiritual significance of “nature” was constantly evoked by the annual round of *kami* festivals; it was reinforced by the omnipresence of Buddhist temples and preachings of Buddhist monks; and it was a crucial ingredient in folk traditions about river spirits, demons, “fox-magic,” and dreamlike apparitions.<sup>59</sup>

In both South Asia and Heian Japan, the doctrine of rebirth made

58. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 123.

59. Atkins, “Demon-Quelling Style”; Ury, “A Heian Note on the Supernatural.”

gender contingent. The soul that was reborn did not possess a specific gender. The body was not considered to be part of a spiritless realm as in medieval Christian theology. Nonetheless, the link between the soul and the (gendered) body was even more tenuous than in Christianity. Several scholars have underscored the elastic character of thinking about gender that resulted in some instances.<sup>60</sup> In bhakti devotion, even the gendered person was immersed in the spiritual. Both male and female devotees loved Krishna in emulation of Radha, that is, as women.

In Japan, even though Buddhist doctrine counseled indifference to this world, even though Heian souls were only temporarily tethered to their specific gendered lives, nonetheless Heian spirituality imbued the here-below with spiritual forces and personae. As a result, the thread of this-worldly identity was not merely profane, and the intense concerns derived from a life's circumstances became part of a spiritually significant personal fate.

In self-expression and literary effort, the greater the skill and care expended in achieving an effect, the more one downplayed the difference between biography and fiction. Poems were carefully crafted; if they expressed something "real" it was, in part, because the noble Heian self was also, as far as one's education and efforts could make it, a carefully crafted artifact. Heian nobles, it has been remarked, "did not usually regard 'fiction' as a separate prose category." For them, tales "seem always to have been at least partly fictional."<sup>61</sup> Still, because Heian nobles were acutely aware that any utterance, any text, was part of someone's campaign of personal advancement—someone's personal striving—it incited great interest. As Murasaki Shikibu's fictional hero Genji put it, it is not national histories but "tales [*monogatari*—rich narratives, whether biographical or fictional]" that "record all that has happened in the world since the age of the gods."<sup>62</sup>

In the early tenth century, invention played a significant role in the biographical tales devised from *wakas* and their prefatory comments. Scholars still struggle today with the difficult question of this poetry's relation to actual lives.

At some point in the 980s CE, however, there appeared an entirely

60. Ruth Vanita, "The Self Is Not Gendered: Sulabha's Debate with King Janaka," *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 15 (2003): 76–93; Gregory M. Pflugfelder, "Strange Fates: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in *Torikaebaya Monogatari*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 47 (1992): 347–68.

61. McCullough and McCullough, "Introduction," in *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, 7.

62. Quoted in *ibid.*

new kind of text that showed the way for later authors to bring literary expression into a deeper relation with personal life. This was the *Kagerō nikki*—a title translated by Edward Seidensticker as *The Gossamer Years*, because *kagerō* refers to spider webs or insects glistening in the sunlight. *Nikki*, usually translated as “diary,” was used of a variety of textual genres and mixed genres, from true diaries (consisting of brief notes about events of each day, as an aid to memory) to more elaborate autobiographical accounts.

The *Kagerō nikki* is the story of a marriage celebrated in 954 CE. Its early passages consist of commentary on a series of poems that the couple exchanged during and after courtship; the account becomes more circumstantial as it approaches the year 971 CE. Most scholars conclude that the memoir was probably started in that year. The *Kagerō nikki* thus allows one to trace in its very unfolding the development from commented poetry to full-fledged prose memoir.

The author’s name is not known, although she is not anonymous, because she names others, including her husband and her son, who are known through other records. She wrote in an effort to explore the contrast between her life as she had known it and the lives of heroines of romantic stories she had heard. Her memoir, she mused, would be an object lesson to anyone who wondered about marriage to a high-ranking aristocrat.<sup>63</sup> This was a daring move, to endow an unheroic life with the significance of literature. The title *Kagerō nikki* derives from a comment at the end of book 1, “Indeed, as I think of the unsatisfying events I have recorded here,” wrote the author, “I wonder whether I have been describing anything of substance. Call it, this journal of mine, a shimmering [*kagerō*] of the summer sky.”<sup>64</sup>

The author dwells on the jealousies and frustrations she faced as the secondary wife of Fujiwara no Kaneie, a prominent Fujiwara nobleman. She is usually referred to as “Michitsuna’s mother,” after the son she had with Kaneie. Kaneie’s career cannot be examined in detail here. He held high office from an early age and, after many vicissitudes, was named regent in 986 and held the reins of power until his death in

63. Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen, “Self-Representation and the Patriarchy in the Heian Female Memoirs,” in *The Father-Daughter Plot: Japanese Literary Women and the Law of the Father*, ed. Rebecca L. Copeland and Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 49–88.

64. *The Gossamer Years*, trans. Seidensticker, 69. See also the more recent translation *The Kagerō Diary*, trans. Sonja Arntzen (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1997), 163, where the text reads “. . . this could be called the diary of a mayfly or the shimmering heat on a summer’s day.”

990.<sup>65</sup> This crowning success probably came after the *Kagerō nikki* was completed. Kaneie was involved in at least eight known love relationships, of which three were “marriages.” This was not at all unusual for a nobleman of his prominence and power.

Nor was the author’s situation unusual. As she makes clear in her account, she was the daughter of a lower-level official, a man who hoped for a provincial governorship. Following her marriage to Kaneie, in 954, her father found himself quickly made governor of a province, albeit a minor province in the distant north. He soon departed, leaving the author, her mother, and the rest of the household in the capital under Kaneie’s care. For her father, and for her, her marriage to Kaneie was a stroke of luck. It seems likely that Kaneie was first attracted to the author by her remarkable literary skill, which is very much on display in her memoir. As more than one scholar has noted, almost all the great authors of the period were, like Michitsuna’s mother, daughters of provincial governors, a stratum that embraced literary education as crucial preparation for a successful career. Like the men of the Fujiwara Regents’ House, these ambitious men also hoped that their exquisitely cultivated daughters would win for them the favor of higher-ranking personages.

It is easy for a modern reader to perceive in the words of Michitsuna’s mother a theme of “protest” against the polygynous marriage system of her day. But closer examination of the memoir undercuts or at least complicates such a reading. Kaneie was a busy man, and necessarily his habitual residence was with his principal wife, Lady Tokihime. From the beginning, it was understood that his marriage to Michitsuna’s mother must be a visiting marriage. Nonetheless, the author finds herself in the grip of resentment at his neglect within only a few months of their marriage. A modern reader may find this resentment all too easy to understand. But by the standards of his day, it is not obvious that Kaneie was at fault. Did the author have a right to expect better treatment? Perhaps Michitsuna’s mother was, for whatever reason, simply unable to accept her secondary position. Or, even more intriguingly, perhaps it was the love relationship itself that overturned expectations on both their parts, bringing the author to long for a full-time lover and bringing Kaneie to a point of indecision in which he vacillated between a desire to spend more time with her and a desire to honor the expectations of his principal wife and her kin.

65. For an overview of Kaneie’s career, see William H. McCullough, “The Heian Court, 794–1070” in *Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 20–96; see pp. 64–67.

The complaints of the author of *The Gossamer Years* began with the very first love note she received from the man who was to be her husband. Her sense of taste was offended. "The paper was rather unbecoming for such an occasion, I thought, and the handwriting was astonishingly bad. Having heard that he was a most accomplished penman, I wondered indeed whether he might not have had someone else write it. I was half-inclined not to answer, but my mother insisted that a letter from such a gentleman was not to be ignored."<sup>66</sup> For some time, the author continued to receive letters and poems from Kaneie; she had one of her ladies compose replies. But Kaneie sensed the interference of this other woman and demanded more direct communication. Finally, one of his poems incited her to a direct reply, and in the ensuing exchange she wrote of her misgivings, and Kaneie replied that "my heart seemed to die within me."<sup>67</sup>

As the time of their marriage drew near, the author notes that her own poetic compositions "seemed a bit trite and old fashioned." Translator Edward Seidensticker found that "all the poems involved in the courtship are quite conventional."<sup>68</sup> The resistance she expressed toward his approaches was no more than what was expected of proper young ladies, just as proper young men were supposed to be tireless in their pursuit of the lady's favor. Although the author showed no sign of softening to Kaneie's pleas and his daily visits, suddenly the reader discovers that at some point they were married. Apparently an agreement had been struck between Kaneie and the author's father, who just as suddenly left for a post as provincial governor—doubtless his reward for offering his daughter. Kaneie pledged to the author's father, before the latter's departure, that Kaneie's faith would be as "enduring as the pines of Sue no Matsuyama" (37). But soon the frequency of his visits dropped off, and his new wife began to send him poems about her loneliness, her sense of betrayal, and her anguish.

Michitsuna's mother did not express jealousy about Kaneie's principal wife; she even wrote a note of condolence to Lady Tokihime, when she heard that Lady Tokihime also had to endure Kaneie's neglect (41). But Michitsuna's mother was exasperated when she heard about an affair Kaneie was having with a woman she called "the lady in the alley." She was appalled when Kaneie provided this woman of questionable

66. *The Gossamer Years*, trans. Seidensticker, 33–34.

67. *Ibid.*, 35.

68. *Ibid.*, 169, n. 7. In Arntzen's translation, it is only one of her poems that she regards as trite (p. 65). The page numbers of the following several references to Seidensticker's translation appear parenthetically in the text.

background with an apartment in his main residence, after the lady in the alley had borne him a son. The author was likewise delighted when, after the baby died, the woman was forced to move back to her alley and knew the bitterness of neglect. It was not the affair itself that offended her, the author insisted, so much as Kaneie's way of conducting it: "He pretended that there was nothing unnatural about his behavior, nothing at which I could take offense; but I found his glibness quite distasteful and wished that he had the courtesy to hide his new affair somewhat more cleverly, perhaps to keep it out of sight for a while, as he could very easily have done, under the cloak of court business" (38). To make matters worse, the author had herself given birth to a son, Michitsuna, by this time, yet she had not won any additional attention or care from her husband on that score.

Her sister, who lived with her, was also in a visiting marriage; her sister's husband visited her with dutiful regularity, the author notes. "Before long, however, he began to find the atmosphere of the place oppressive," due to the author's unhappiness, and he "took her away to a house where, he said, he could visit her in somewhat lighter spirits. My gloom increased" (39).

Four years into the marriage, the author wrote Kaneie a long poem of complaint, recalling Kaneie's promise of faithfulness to her father.

Your words, that autumn we met, soon changed their color,  
 Like the leaves of the wailing grove where I must dwell.  
 Then my father was off among the winter clouds,  
 And my tears boiled up like a sudden winter storm.  
 He sought your promise never to forsake me.  
 "What foolish fears!" I thought.  
 But soon the white clouds came between us too.  
 Blankly, I watched. You were gone like the morning mists. (45)

The author attributed her unhappiness to past sins.

My load of sin from other lives is heavy,  
 Else why should I drag myself on, unable finally  
 To forsake this wretched world? (45)

In this long poem of 958 CE, the author recalled an earlier stage of their marriage which was apparently happy (although she failed to mention such a moment in her memoir).

There was a time when nothing came between us,  
 You and me; and should I leave the world,  
 Memory would cancel out the profit,  
 And I would weep again. (46)

Kaneie answered with a long poem of his own, in which he complained of times when he had come to see her or his son but was turned away.

I did not forget, my purpose was as always.  
 I sought to see the child, and was turned away.  
 Like the waves that break on Tago in Suruga,  
 I was frowned upon by a mountain, a smoldering Fuji,  
 Wreathed in clouds of smoke. (47)

Kaneie denied any misbehavior and placed the blame for his infrequent visits squarely on her.

And where is the harem with which you have adorned me?  
 You tell me I am fickle, you press me to say  
 Which of my loves is the loveliest. Surely here  
 Is the heavy crime [sin] you speak of.  
 Do not wait. . . .  
 Go now—find someone who will cherish you  
 As you deserve. I am not made of stone.  
 I shall not block your plans. (48)

Her jealousy and bitterness, Kaneie complained, was the very sin, or crime, that drove him away. He offered an amicable divorce, so she could find a more attentive lover—perhaps disingenuously, because the implications of a divorce might have been disastrous for her father's career.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the memoir includes passing references to other suitors sending notes or coming to visit the author. She had choices. One cannot even be sure they were all dismissed out of hand.<sup>70</sup>

69. McCullough indicates that wives had the ability to divorce and often exercised it; William H. McCullough, "The Capital and Its Society," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97–82, see p. 141.

70. According to McCullough, wives enjoyed a "limited measure of sexual freedom in the sense that although premarital sex and adultery were not socially condoned in women, they seem not to have been uncommon, and even if the relationship was discovered, the woman was not ordinarily



Not long after this exchange of long poems, the marriage improved enough to give the author pause. “Things were of course still far from perfect, but as I turned the problem over and over in my mind, I concluded that my unhappiness was part of my inescapable destiny, determined from former lives, and must be accepted as such.”<sup>71</sup> After Kaneie was promoted to a post that gave him freedom to stay away from the palace if he wished, the marriage took an even sharper turn toward greater intimacy. “Sometimes we had two and three days together in pleasant idleness.” They spent a forty-five-day period of penance together in her father’s country house, during which time Kaneie apparently only occasionally visited his principal wife (48–49). The author refers to this as a “somewhat happier period,” which may have continued for a year or more. By her own account, the author found happy periods rather lacking in interest. Of the year 963, for example, she remarks, “The new year too began uneventfully. I had his full attention, and when that was the case, everything was pleasant” (50).

The author’s preoccupation with sadness and resentment was noticed by her own family. After the author’s mother died in 964, members of her family stayed with her during the required year-long period of mourning and purification. Death was defiling, and during this time Kaneie, to stay free of defilement, did not visit (or when he visited, remained standing), but he made all the arrangements for the forty-ninth-day rites, “and the attendance was consequently large” (54). At the end of the mourning period, as her sister made preparations to leave, both women were overcome with tears. But a relative rebuked them. “‘Control yourselves, control yourselves,’ someone said, ‘this is hardly a lucky way to begin a trip.’” Kaneie also “scolded me for my inauspicious weeping, but I could not help myself” (55–56).

By 967, Kaneie had been promoted to first secretary in the Imperial Secretariat, and his affairs did not permit him to visit as often as he wished. He had the author’s household moved to a location close to his own, so that he could come to her without a carriage and retinue. “And with that, one would think, my happiness should have been complete” (63).

As these passages indicate, the author of the *Kagerō nikki* expressed

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subjected to physical or other punishment. If she was discovered in adultery, her husband might divorce her, but that was not certain, and perhaps not even customary.” See McCullough, “The City and Its Capital,” 141–42.

71. *The Gossamer Years*, trans. Seidensticker, 48. The page numbers of the following several references to this work appear parenthetically in the text.

repeatedly a certain perception of her own character, which took the form of wondering at the true foundation of her unhappiness. Kaneie was not the only one who expressed frustration with her dark turn of mind. Her sister's husband sought to escape the gloom. Family members rebuked her "unlucky" tears. One of Kaneie's sisters, Lady Jōganden, an imperial consort, made a similar remark when the author complained of receiving "no word at all" from Kaneie. "'No word at all'—what an unlucky thing to say," she wrote back. "I see in a dream the one I would meet, but cannot cross over to that far bank; and must you add to my ill fortune?" (65).

Although melancholy was of great religious significance within the Buddhist tradition, the author's frequent episodes of bitterness and grief frightened many around her as "inauspicious." In their view, she went too far. The sadness of a well-worked *waka* was supposed to attract empathy, not drive its recipient away with the pointedness of its criticisms. Spirits would also be put off by her unfortunate complaints, her relations warned her. The author herself was intermittently aware of this lapse from the emotional norms of her community, but she could not help herself. At times, she ascribed her experiences to "destiny" and to "my load of sin from other lives." At other times, she renewed her complaints of the misbehavior of others toward her, especially of her husband's neglect.

In one passage, the alternation between these two points of view is depicted as occurring within a few moments.

One day [in 970 CE], as I sat looking out at the rain, knowing that today there was less chance than usual of seeing him, my thoughts turned to the past. The fault was not mine, there was something wanting in him. It had seemed once that wind and rain could not keep him away. Yet, thinking back, I saw that I had never been really calm and sure of myself. *Perhaps, then, the fault was in fact mine: I had expected too much.* Ah, how unwise it had been to hope for what was not in the nature of things. [Emphasis added.] (93)

The author's ability to record her own shifting self-awareness and to bring before the reader the circumstances that lead her to moments of anguish, moments of happiness, and also moments of disturbing self-regard makes this memoir an extraordinarily appealing text. Among all the works under consideration here, it is unmatched for its portrayal of the difficulties faced by a specific person in navigating a life that, by her own admission, was not all one color. By comparison, Chrétien de

Troyes's *Lancelot* and Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* are ideological. The emotional experiences of their main characters are determined by the love doctrines that the authors wish to inculcate in the reader. The author of the *Kagerō nikki* does not set out to preach; she undercuts her own tone of complaint by remembering the periods of happiness, by carefully recording the complaints others made about her melancholy, and by carefully presenting her own moments of self-doubt.

Lady Tokihime, Kaneie's principal wife, agreed with the author that Kaneie possessed "an inconstant heart" (41). But at no time in the text is Kaneie's interest in women treated as the expression of an "appetite" in conflict with the demands of "true love." The author has difficulty accepting her own jealous preoccupation with Kaneie as proper. At the beginning of 969 CE, for example, she wrote out a wish for the New Year's good-luck bag: "That he may be with me thirty days and thirty nights a month." This was considered to be quite funny.

My people were delighted. "Send that, just as you have said it, to [your husband]—it should indeed bring good luck."

My sister got herself out of bed to join in the sport. "That should do better than any number of charms and oracles," she laughed.

I sent the message with my son. [My husband] was a figure of considerable importance and his mansion was crowded with well-wishers. Though he was in a hurry to be off to court, he took time to write an answer. . . . "Is it to take care of your excess love that we have had to put an extra month into the calendar?"

I wondered if he had taken the joke a bit too far. (71)

This passage underscores the incantatory power of language; the author's extravagant wish is given a certain power by its inclusion in a good-luck bag. This more instrumental use of language (in comparison with the author's futile grieving) wins the delighted approval of her ladies and her sister. Kaneie, not surprisingly, misses the humor of the situation and treats her wish as another example of her selfishness. There is no standard of "true love" available that the author could enlist in support of her preoccupation with Kaneie.

The author's complaints about the "lady in the alley" say nothing of poorly controlled appetite—no remarks about insatiable desire, wandering eyes, sin, or debauchery. Instead, she focuses on Kaneie's failure to hide the affair in the proper manner. "The Prince's [Kaneie's] visits to the alley meanwhile came out quite into the open," she complains, "and it even appeared at times that he had become somewhat restive in

his relations with the lady in the main house [Lady Tokihime].” When he moved this questionable lady and her son into his own residence, he made “a commotion that could be heard through the whole city.” He came right by the author’s own gate, “in the worst of taste, I thought. And why, my women loudly asked one another, had he so pointedly passed our gate when he had all the streets in the city to choose from? I myself was quite speechless and thought only that I would like to die on the spot” (42).

All of Kaneie’s relationships with women are love relationships. His inconstancy is not a conflict between heart and libido, but an inability to fine-tune his affections (or discipline them) in such a way as to give each lover her due. The connection between love and politics is accepted as an inevitable fact of life, without comment. Kaneie’s offer of a provincial governorship to the author’s father is passed over as if it is not worth mentioning.

A similar exchange of marriage for promotion is discussed later in the memoir. In 972 CE Kaneie asked the author to take one of his daughters by another woman into her care. The girl was twelve years old at the time. By the spring of 974, word had gotten out that the young girl was a beauty with training and poise. The author tells how her adolescent son was suddenly offered a good administrative position as vice chief of the Right Stables. Shortly afterward, the boy’s new superior began making visits to the author’s house. He had heard of the young woman and wanted to see her. Kaneie was not opposed, but the author at first refused to let the man in. She felt the girl was too young for marriage. Her son’s new superior, however, played the role of the ardent suitor. He sent messages and made visits, although he was not allowed to speak with the girl. Finally, he made it painfully clear that he would not wait. If he was not given the young woman as a wife within a brief delay, the boy would lose his position. The outcome of this episode is not stated in the memoir. Nonetheless, the author explains carefully that her objection has to do not with the exchange of position for marriage—although she finds the man expresses it too crudely—but with the girl’s young age (147–67).

Here as elsewhere, love is not set in contrast to other motivations, to lust or to desire for office or wealth. Love is not treated as a high and virtuous state calling for heroic action. Instead, love is woven smoothly into the fabric of motivations that lead one through life and is closely linked with longing for higher social status, whether through marriage or career, as it is closely linked with longing for spiritual release.

## The Celestial Splendors of the Heian Elite

Body and soul, physical and spiritual, were not distinguished by the Heian elite in the manner common among twelfth-century European Christians. Heian understanding of the difference between this-worldly matters and the realm of the divine also differed sharply from the understandings of Puranic Hinduism deployed in bhakti devotion in Orissa and Bengal at that time. However both bhakti and Heian spirituality shared one negative characteristic. As in Orissa and Bengal, so in Heian Japan, it was impossible to distinguish between a seductive attractiveness that inspired lust and a lordly grace and beauty that inspired devotion or true love—a distinction fundamental to twelfth-century troubairitz and troubadour conceptions of the contrast between the physical and spiritual realms. This distinction was so sharply drawn by the troubadours that Sarah Kay argues they divided women into two different genders.<sup>72</sup>

In the Heian world, the emperor was lifted above the rest of humanity, floating at the threshold between earth and heaven. The elaborate ritual of palace life and the significant resources expended on such ritual reflected the emperor's quasi-divine status. As such—in sharp contrast to Hindu rajas—the emperor was not expected to be an active figure and certainly not a military leader. If the emperor needed military protection, this fact itself was something of an embarrassment, suggesting a failure in propitiation of the gods or in ethical behavior. The emperor's affairs and the needs of his family and of his realm were taken care of by his officials, priests, and servants, just as these officials, priests, and servants were taken care of, in turn, by their own subordinates.

In this context, closeness to the emperor and the refinement and ritual correctness that were required of those close to the emperor transformed material things—including bodies and artifacts—making them purer, more spiritual. The very beauty of luxurious things and high-ranking people, of their skills and their expressions, was not merely a pleasing surface appearance, visible only to the human eye, but a transforming spiritual quality.

Just as indigenous religious thinking associated the emperor with the sun goddess, so the thinking of the great Buddhist sutras encouraged

72. Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 84–131; see discussion in chap. 2.

the Heian elite to conceptualize the spiritual as a kind of extremely refined and purified, unbelievably luxurious and abundant version of the here-and-now. The most widely used Buddhist sacred text, the *Lotus Sutra*, for example, spoke of the realms of the innumerable Buddhas in very concrete terms. “In order to seat these Buddhas,” says the World Honored One in the verse section of the sutra’s chapter 11 (“Emergence of the Treasure Tower”),

I have employed transcendental powers,  
 moving immeasurable multitudes,  
 causing lands to be clean and pure,  
 leading each of these Buddhas  
 to the foot of a jeweled tree,  
 adorned as lotus blossoms  
 adorn a clear cool pond.  
 Beneath these jeweled trees  
 are lion seats,  
 and the Buddhas seat themselves on them,  
 adorning them with their brilliance  
 like a huge torch burning  
 in the darkness of the night.

A wonderful incense exudes from their bodies,  
 pervading the lands in the ten directions.  
 Living beings are wrapped in the aroma,  
 unable to restrain their joy,  
 as though a great wind  
 were tossing the branches of small trees.<sup>73</sup>

Purified spaces, jewel-encrusted trees, brilliant lights, extraordinary aromas, according to the *Lotus Sutra*, characterized the places that enlightenment opened up to the faithful.

The cult of Amida Buddha, which rose in popularity in the late tenth century, reinforced the elite’s belief in the spiritual associations of luxury and taste. Devotees of Amida Buddha taught that anyone could escape from the endless round of reincarnations by one of two relatively simple techniques. The first was to visualize the pure Western Land of Amida Buddha in detail, according to the directions of the *Visualization Sutra*. The second, even less difficult, was to practice the

73. *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 177.

*nembutsu*; that is, to recite the name of Amida Buddha repeatedly, striving to believe firmly in his compassion for the lowly souls of this world and in his promise to bring his devotees, after death, to his pure land, where they would be free of the burden of further rebirths. Fujiwara no Michinaga, the greatest of the Fujiwara leaders, as death approached for him in 1027, went to the Amida Hall at his Hōjōji temple complex and died there reciting the *nembutsu*.<sup>74</sup>

The pure Western Land was described in the *Visualization Sutra*, which offered the image of a world of unimaginable and very tangible splendor and majesty. The aspirant to rebirth in this western “Land of Utmost Bliss” is urged to contemplate the land and the divine beings found there in concrete detail. To begin, the devotee must face west and regard the setting sun. Beyond the sun, even brighter, is the pure land. The ground there is made of pure beryl held up on columns of diamonds that are hung with golden banners. “Each jewel emits a thousand rays of light, each ray in turn having eighty-four thousand colors.” The description is fantastic, but the vision, if one can achieve it, becomes more real than words: “If you attain a state of *samadhi*, you will see this ground so clearly and distinctly that it will be impossible to describe it in detail.”<sup>75</sup>

Next, one is to imagine seven rows of trees, each tree being sixty thousand miles high, adorned with seven-jeweled blossoms and leaves. The ponds of the Land of Utmost Bliss are made of soft, pliable jewels; streams pour forth from the ponds, each the color of the seven jewels, with banks of gold. There are millions of bejeweled pavilions with spirits playing divine music. In this exalted landscape, Amida Buddha emerges from a lotus throne. Its smaller petals are over a thousand miles in length. Within is a dais made of eighty thousand diamonds. From the dais four columns with jeweled banners spring forth, each as

74. As Mimi Hall Yienpruksawan states, “There is no concrete evidence that modern conceptualizations such as the ‘cult of beauty’ account in any real sense for the attention to physical splendor, what Tadazane calls the ‘truly marvelous’, at Byōdō-in and specifically for the Amida Hall, which was posited, not on court romances or poetry, but on Buddhist aesthetics and the *Kanmuryōjūkyō* [*Visualization Sutra*] in all of its visionary power”; see her “What’s in a Name? Fujiwara Fixation in Japanese Cultural History,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 49 (1994): 423–53, quote from p. 445. To make this point is to agree with other scholars on the “incantatory” dimension of the refined and the beautiful in Heian times. See also Mimi Hall Yienpruksawan, “The Phoenix Hall at Uji and the Symmetries of Replication,” *Art Bulletin* 77 (1995): 647–72, see p. 647; Fukuyama, *Heian Temples*, 46–48.

75. From *The Sutra on the Visualization of Buddha of Infinite Life*, in *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, translated from the Chinese by Inagaki Hisao and Harold Stewart (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center, 2003), 317–50, quotes from pp. 324–25. (*Samadhi* is defined by Siegel as unification of subject and object; see Lee Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in Indian Traditions as Exemplified in the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva* [Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978], 256, n. 106.)

large as a thousand million mountains. A canopy covers them, studded with millions of jewels, “each emitting eighty-four thousand rays shining in eighty-four thousand different tints of golden color.”<sup>76</sup>

The architecture of the period attempted to evoke the images of heavenly luxury that the Heian elite associated with the emperor and with the Buddha. The aristocracy lived in large, tile-roofed wooden halls, lifted up above the ground on posts. A proper mansion consisted of a main hall facing south, overlooking a courtyard embraced by two smaller halls or wings, connected to the main hall by covered walkways. Within the courtyard was a garden, often including a pond situated so that, viewed from the gate, the main hall appeared to float above the earth. Some temples were being constructed along similar lines, only with even greater care and expense lavished on ornamentation.<sup>77</sup> Michinaga’s temple complex, completed by 1020, exhibited a number of “structural innovations, from extensive use of elongated halls and galleries to their asymmetrical arrangement around a lake after what is known as the *shinden* mode of domestic architecture.” The effect was to create an “illusory world,” said one source. Said another, “It’s like being in another world.”<sup>78</sup> In the Amida Hall of this complex, Michinaga had placed “nine 16-foot-tall gilded images of Amida, each representing this Buddha in one of the nine traditional divisions of Pure Land.”<sup>79</sup>

The Phoenix Hall, completed for Fujiwara no Yorimichi in 1052, is a rare surviving example of the period’s palace and temple architecture. Great care was lavished on the structure and on its gilt statue of the Buddha to ensure they aided devotees who were striving to visualize the Western Pure Land. Inside the temple, an elaborate program of sculptures and paintings depicted divine spirits playing music as well as numerous bodhisattvas, filled with compassion, crowding down through the clouds to offer help to the poor souls of this world.<sup>80</sup>

For the Heian elite, beauty was otherworldly without being abstract or immaterial. But beauty was also tinged with a sense of melancholy that drew in part upon the Buddhist teaching that all desire in the present ephemeral world of birth and death was doomed to frustration.<sup>81</sup>

76. *The Sutra on the Visualization of Buddha of Infinite Life*, 329.

77. On the *shinden*-type of architecture, Seidensticker, “Introduction,” 21; McCullough, “Aristocratic Culture,” 390–91. On its relevance to temple design, see Fukuyama, *Heian Temples*, 71; Yengpruksawan, “The Phoenix Hall,” 652.

78. Yengpruksawan, “The Phoenix Hall,” 652.

79. Weinstein, “Aristocratic Buddhism,” 513.

80. Yengpruksawan, “The Phoenix Hall”; Fukuyama, *Heian Temples*, 46–79.

81. Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 136.



The author of *The Gossamer Years* reproached herself for longing for something that could not be. But she was struggling with a common dilemma of the Heian elite, whose own elevated social status relied on elaborate markers of elegance and ethereal beauty that could evoke ideas of a perfect pure land beyond the sun. Longing for something that could not be was a structural expectation of refined status. Michitsuna's mother's original and personal formulation of such longing struck a note that would resonate widely.

The early eleventh-century *Tale of Genji* developed the narrative possibilities of *The Gossamer Years* into a prodigious fictional epic of personal destinies. The author, Murasaki Shikibu, refers repeatedly to beauty as something linked to the spiritual realm, something that makes only brief appearances here below. Her hero, Genji, was the fictional son of an emperor, excluded from the imperial family due to the low birth of his mother. He was both exalted and humble, both insider and excluded. With little at stake, ready for adventure, he traded on his extraordinary beauty, understood as a quality replete with spiritual significance. Reminiscing about Genji as a child, the Fifth Princess says, "You were so pretty when you were little that it was hard to believe you were really meant for this world, and each time since I have had the same thought, that you might have been meant for somewhere else."<sup>82</sup> Referring to Genji's son by the imperial consort Fujitsubo, the author says, "Laughing and babbling, the child was so beautiful as to arouse fears that he would not be long in this world."<sup>83</sup> Later, as Prince Momozono watches Genji participate in the Kamo River festival, he is troubled by Genji's beauty. "Genji had matured and did indeed quite dazzle the eye, and the prince thought with foreboding that some god might have noticed, and was making plans to spirit the young man away."<sup>84</sup> Genji's son Yūgiri, by his primary wife, Aoi, prompted similar concerns. "The child was so beautiful as to arouse forebodings."<sup>85</sup>

Beauty was not just a physical characteristic but displayed itself in speech, demeanor, dress, and taste as well. Izumi Shikibu, divorced wife of a provincial governor, was thrilled in spite of herself by the attentions of imperial prince Atsumichi. She found his appearance "ravishing." "From beneath his soft, voluminous costume with its great,

82. Murasaki Shikibu, *Tale of Genji*, 1:348.

83. *Ibid.*, 1:140.

84. *Ibid.*, 1:163.

85. *Ibid.*, 1:169.

billowing sleeves could be seen the skirt of an incredibly beautiful underrobe. Every detail was as she would have wished, and she felt as if her eyes must be playing her false."<sup>86</sup> Such details were as important, in her evaluation of him, as the spiritual qualities of the poetic messages he sent.

This trend in Heian thinking leaves its trace in many passages of *Genji*. On his way to visit his former lover, the Rokujō Lady—whom he had inexcusably neglected—Genji experienced a moment of pleasure in his own beauty.

It was over a reed plain of melancholy beauty that he made his way to the shrine. The autumn flowers were gone and insects hummed in the wintry tangles. A wind whistling through the pines brought snatches of music to most wonderful effect, though so distant that he could not tell what was being played. Not wishing to attract attention, he had only ten outrunners, men who had long been in his service, and his guards were in subdued livery. He had dressed with great care. His more perceptive men saw how beautifully the melancholy scene set him off, and he was having regrets that he had not made the journey often.<sup>87</sup>

Serving as imperial chancellor in his mature years, Genji became more lavish than ever in his pursuit of fashionable elegance. When the Akashi lady, an obscure woman raised in the provinces, met Genji on the road by chance, she was taken aback by the number and sophistication of his attendants. She “felt as if she were gazing at a realm beyond the clouds.”<sup>88</sup> Later, Genji carefully arranged for the ritual reading of the *Lotus Sutra*, in a magnificent style, with only the most venerable and erudite sages participating as readers. The event inspired much favorable comment: “It was all very grand [people said] so lavish and in such impeccable taste that it made one think that the Pure Land had come down to this world. Genji must be an incarnation of a Blessed One or perhaps a messiah even. How can such a man have been born into this world of sin and corruption?”<sup>89</sup> The spiritual meaning people attached to beauty, grandeur, luxury, and taste, so clearly brought out in this passage, was tied to the special role attributed to the emperor.

A ninth-century imperial administrator, when first granted the

86. Izumi Shikibu, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary: A Romance of the Heian Court*, trans. Edwin A. Cranston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 170.

87. Murasaki Shikibu, *Tale of Genji*, 1:186.

88. *Ibid.*, 1:282.

89. *Ibid.*, 1:295.

extraordinary privilege of entering the emperor's presence, wrote the following poem:

Seeing chrysanthemums  
 In the celestial realm  
 Above the clouds,  
 I was deceived  
 And took them for stars.<sup>90</sup>

Imperial lady-in-waiting Sei Shōnagon, in her *Pillow Book*, written about 1000 CE in a resolutely cheerful style, described the transformation of a commoner, when he was named Imperial Chamberlain of the Sixth Rank: "To think that he is allowed yellowish-green robes of figured material and cloth that even young noblemen of the finest families are forbidden to wear! . . . A Chamberlain of the Sixth Rank cuts a magnificent figure when he arrives with an Imperial mandate or when he brings the sweet chestnuts for the Great Council banquet. Observing how he is treated and entertained, one could imagine that he has come down from heaven."<sup>91</sup> Genji, when his beloved Fujitsubo was named empress, expressed his misgivings in similar fashion:

She would now be quite beyond his reach.  
 I see her disappear behind the clouds  
 And am left to grope my way through deepest darkness.<sup>92</sup>

The late eleventh-century *Eiga monogatari*, written to glorify the career of Fujiwara no Michinaga insisted that his "flowering fortunes" will be remembered for a thousand years.<sup>93</sup> Although the structure of the text mirrors that of the *Lotus Sutra* and the author lavishes attention on Michinaga's Hōjōji complex of Buddhist temples, the work nonetheless treats Michinaga himself as if his accomplishments were exempt from the futility, frustration, and transitory character of this-worldly action. "The famous description of the Hōjōji and its dedication," remark the translators, William H. McCullough and Helen Craig McCullough, "is

90. Fujiwara no Toshiyuki, *Kokinshū*, 269, quoted and translated by Helen Craig McCullough, "Introduction" to *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), 33.

91. Sei Shōnagon, *Pillow Book*, 109–10.

92. Murasaki Shikibu, *Tale of Genji*, 1:149.

93. McCullough and McCullough, "Introduction," in *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, 20–21; see also *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, 2:515.

more detailed than that of any other single subject in the book, but in kind it follows a familiar pattern—the admiring, exclamatory account of aristocratic splendor and opulence.”<sup>94</sup> Splendor and opulence were, in the view of this and other Heian authors, not merely temporal, not merely this-worldly; when staged by the grand persons of the imperial aristocracy, they were materially transformed, closer to heaven.

### Spiritually Meaningful Love Affairs

As with their mansions, temples, and dress, a celestial quality attached to the nobility’s love affairs and indeed to all their personal relationships and feelings. Commoners were incapable of this kind of connection, this kind of sentiment. Those who were capable of it were partially exempt from the degeneracy of the age, even when their affections and intimacies succumbed to the corrosion of time.

In *The Tale of Genji*, the description of one of Genji’s amorous involvements permits a glimpse of the Heian elite’s understanding of the difference between high and low sexual relationships. The “shining Genji” represents a kind of upper limit within the aristocracy. Everything about him is in accord with perfect taste. His destiny, including his whims and his transgressions, constitutes a kind of divine intervention in this world. At one point, he meets the housemaid Naishi in a palace walkway. They have had several sexual encounters before. But Genji’s interest in her was, as he well knew, superficial and insincere. She, like many women, is anxious to encourage any kind of interest on his part, however fleeting. This is a tie that is spiritually bereft, but it is not a lust-driven relationship, on either part. Naishi tries to entice Genji with a poem: “Sere and withered though these grasses be, / They are ready for your pony, should you come.” But Genji’s reaction is cold. “She really is too aggressive,” he thinks. He replies with an insult:

“Were mine to part the low bamboo at your grove, [he said,  
It would fear to be driven away by other ponies.  
And that would not do at all.”

He started to leave but she caught his sleeve. “No one has ever been so rude to me, no one. At my age I might expect a little courtesy.”

These angry tears, he might have said, did not become an old lady.

94. McCullough and McCullough, “Introduction,” 20.

"I will write. You have been on my mind a great deal." He tried to shake her off, but she followed after.<sup>95</sup>

A modern Western reader might take this conversation as "bawdy" or "ribald." The maid's reference to a pony coming to her grasses appears coarse. Genji regards her as "aggressive." He retorts with a none-too-veiled reference to her many other lovers. But her fault does not lie in being subject to a passionate urge. Her fault is that she is too direct, too unqualified. Her graceless verses offer Genji no way out—he must either give in or else openly reject such an open offer. She leaves him no route of retreat. This is ignoble and unseemly. It shows an inability to understand what his position, what his preferences might be. His first reply is therefore equally unambiguous. When that does not work, he tries to get rid of her with a polite but transparent dismissal: "I will write. You have been on my mind a great deal."

Low-ranking persons such as Naishi were not supposed to be capable of genuine understanding of the other person's position. The author of *The Gossamer Years*, languishing under the neglect of her husband, reports that a certain lower-ranked lady expressed strong empathy for her suffering. "I have always thought Her Ladyship rather remarkable," this unidentified woman wrote to a friend, "but my admiration for her has grown since you have all gone away [to a mountain retreat]. . . . We 'low-born ones,' though we may not be good at expressing ourselves, can understand a tragedy such as hers." The *Gossamer* diarist, much to her surprise, was moved by this expression of sympathy from someone so humble: "So it is that at such times the most insignificant things will affect one deeply."<sup>96</sup>

In *The Tale of Genji*, an aunt departing for the provinces visits her niece the "Safflower Princess" to invite her to come along. The niece, once Genji's lover, has sunk into poverty in part because of Genji's neglect. The aunt never aspired to much, having settled for a husband who was a provincial administrator. She wants to empathize, but she has no success. She "was trying very hard to weep, but the triumphant smile of the assistant viceroy's wife was not very well hidden. 'To the end of his days your royal father looked upon me as a disgrace to the family. But I do not hold grudges, and so here I am.'"<sup>97</sup> Perhaps she held

95. Murasaki Shikibu, *Tale of Genji*, 1:144.

96. *The Gossamer Years*, trans. Seidensticker, 107.

97. Murasaki Shikibu, *Tale of Genji*, 1:296.

no grudges, but the urge to gloat got the better of her. Hers was a truly inferior spirit.

Compassion was a characteristic emotion of divine figures; compassion required an ability to grasp the other's suffering—what would today in English be called “empathy,” a recently invented word.<sup>98</sup> The ability to appreciate and to share another's emotional sufferings was, as a result, a crucial marker of the elegant, spiritually elevated gentlemen and ladies of the capital. In contrast to the assistant viceroy's wife, elevated persons, both men and women, were easily brought to tears. In the poetry, autobiographies, and fictions of the period, Heian aristocrats never tired of mentioning tears. References to tear-soaked sleeves, no matter how often they were repeated, never seemed to become trite. To invoke one's own tears, in a note or a poem, was to issue a challenge to one's correspondent: Are you sufficiently elevated to be able to appreciate what I suffer?

Sei Shōnagon, parodying this preoccupation, tells the story of a palace dog named Okinamaro, who had been beaten for attacking a palace cat. His appearance much altered, the dog reappeared the following day. Shōnagon seeing the dog, but thinking it was not Okinamaro, remarked. “Poor Okinamaro! He had such a dreadful beating yesterday. How sad to think he is dead! I wonder what body he has been born into this time. Oh, how he must have suffered!” But at that moment Okinamaro began to tremble and to shed a flood of tears. When Shōnagon recognized him he “stretched himself flat on the floor and yelped loudly, so that the Empress beamed with delight.” When the emperor heard of the dog's tears, he came rushing to see. “‘It's amazing,’ he said with a smile. ‘To think that even a dog has such deep feelings!’ When the Emperor's ladies-in-waiting heard the story, they too came along in a great crowd.”<sup>99</sup> Despite the occasional laughter of Sei Shōnagon and others, however, Heian courtiers insisted on taking tears as an infallible sign of deep feeling.

Deep feelings of sadness, in turn, because they suggested weariness with the world of death and rebirth, were a sign of a higher spiritual endowment and a challenge to others to demonstrate their elevated empathy. The most common approach of the male suitor, therefore, was to insist that the intensity of his longing for the beloved had plunged him

98. Earliest usage reported in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 1904 (consulted online December 9, 2009); see also Peter Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 247.

99. Sei Shōnagon, *Pillow Book*, 32–33.

into deep suffering and to beg for compassion, just as devotees prayed to the Eleven-Headed Kannon or Amida Buddha for compassion.<sup>100</sup> To such cliché-ridden claims, self-respecting women were supposed to reply with skepticism. But persistence and persuasive poetry offered the chance to bring a woman around. In 1003, Prince Atsumichi, son of retired emperor Reizei, was mourning the loss of a brother who had recently died. But he also took an interest in Izumi Shikibu, the divorced wife of a provincial governor, who had been his brother's lover. At first, the prince sought to arouse her compassion for his own grief. Their unfolding love affair was later narrated in Izumi Shikibu's self-exculpating defense of their liaison, the *Izumi Shikibu nikki*, which is now routinely ranked among the Heian classics.

Izumi Shikibu was a famous poet who had drawn notice initially by writing a striking *waka* that was read as an expression of longing for retreat from the world, and was honored by inclusion in an imperial anthology.

From darkness  
 into the path of darkness  
 must I enter:  
 shine upon me from afar,  
 O moon above the mountain crest.  
 [kuraki yori / kuraki michi ni zo / irinubeki / haraku ni terase / yama no ha no  
 tsuki.]<sup>101</sup>

The poem turns on the word *tsuki*, which means both “moon” and “way” in the sense of a spiritual path.<sup>102</sup> Izumi Shikibu had apparently been brought up in the entourage of the Dowager Empress Masako, learning poetry in a circle of women courtiers and attracting princely attention by, among other things, her literary prowess.

After several exchanges of poetic notes, Prince Atsumichi came one night to her home concealed in “a rather inelegant carriage.” But she kept him outside on the veranda and spoke with him only through a

100. On devotion to the Eleven-Headed Kannon, see Samuel C. Morse, “The Buddhist Transformation of Japan in the Ninth Century: The Case of Eleven-Headed Kannon,” in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Mikael Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 153–76.

101. Text and translation from Edwin A. Cranston, “Introduction,” in *The Izumi Shikibu Diary: A Romance of the Heian Court*, trans. Edwin A. Cranston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 3–125, see pp. 6–7; see also Michele Marra, “The Buddhist Mythmaking of Defilement: Sacred Courtesans in Medieval Japan,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (1993): 49–65, see p. 62.

102. On *tsuki* as a pivot word, see Millay, “The Voice of the Court Woman Poet,” 96–97.

screen. He was disconcerted. “[The moonlight] is so very bright,” the Prince complained.

“Being old-fashioned, I pass my time indoors and so I cannot feel at all comfortable out here. I feel miserable; please allow me to sit there as the lady’s companion. She will surely see I am definitely not like those others who might have been visiting the lady.” So His Highness spoke and the woman exclaimed to the effect, “What are you saying! I have thought to only converse with His Highness this one night. To when does His Highness refer when he says, ‘on those occasions when visiting the lady?’”<sup>103</sup>

Izumi Shikibu responded to the prince’s inquiries by emphasizing her own grief-stricken state.

Listening to  
the sound of the rain  
at my window,  
I have been brooding—all night.  
What type of thing is this?  
[yo mo sugara / nani goto o ka wa / omoitsuru / mado utsu ame no / oto o  
kikitsutsu]  
—though deep inside my quarters, I am strangely soaked.<sup>104</sup>

The prince was moved, she reports. “This woman is by no means unworthy of my regard,” he said to himself.<sup>105</sup> He wrote back:

With the sound of rain  
I have sent you my “thoughts”  
—you in that house wanting eaves,  
locked and without husband: And how might you be?  
[ware mo sazo / omoyaritsuru / ame no oto o / saseru tsuma naki / yado wa  
ikani to.]<sup>106</sup>

This elegant *waka* turns on the pivot word *tsuma*, which could mean either “eaves” or “husband,” linking her current isolation to the human

103. Translation by Wallace in “Reading the Rhetoric of Seduction,” 503; in the Cranston translation of Izumi Shikibu, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, see p. 134.

104. Translation by Wallace in “Reading the Rhetoric of Seduction,” 504.

105. Izumi Shikibu, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, 141.

106. Translated and quoted by Wallace, “Reading the Rhetoric of Seduction,” 504; in the Cranston translation of *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, see p. 141.



need for shelter in bad weather, and from there to the human need for safety from the ills of this world.<sup>107</sup>

His visits to her became more frequent. But one night he saw another carriage waiting outside. Convinced another man was visiting her, he quickly returned home. In a note he reproached her for her fickleness. In her later account Izumi Shikibu conceded that she had received many amorous notes from gentlemen in that period, but she insisted that she had accepted no advances. The owner of the carriage the prince saw was visiting another wing of her building. At the time, however, she refused to offer any explanation to the prince. She simply replied:

No matter what befalls,  
even if we can never meet again,  
I shall not grieve:  
one thing only I cannot bear:  
unending bitterness.

[au koto wa / tomare kōmare / nagekaji o / urami tae senu / naka to narinaba.]<sup>108</sup>

John Wallace suggests that Izumi Shikibu actually wished to encourage the prince's fear of rivals.<sup>109</sup> Several times she claimed to yearn for the quiet repose of a Buddhist monastery; in this way, too, she may have sought to rouse Prince Atsumichi to decisive action.

Finding I know only more  
the pain of this world  
as the days of rain pass  
—if only today's endless scenery  
would be a flood to wash me away.  
—Is there a shore waiting to catch me?<sup>110</sup>

When Prince Atsumichi expressed his empathy for Izumi (instead of playing up his own suffering), isolated as she was in a rundown house, he moved beyond cliché. These were the moments she found the prince most convincing. One night he said to her,

107. See Cranston's note on this *waka* in *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, 249–50.

108. Izumi Shikibu, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, 147.

109. Wallace, "Reading the Rhetoric of Seduction."

110. Translation by Wallace in "Reading the Rhetoric of Seduction," 500; in the Cranston translation of *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, see p. 140.

"If after I have taken you to live with me I should go off somewhere and become a monk, and we could no longer see each other, I suppose you would feel disillusioned?"

What could he be thinking of, she wondered. Was it possible that such a thing could happen? Overcome by a wave of poignant emotion, she wept uncontrollably. Outside the rain was falling softly, mixed with sleet. The Prince did not doze off even for a moment, but filled the night with many tender vows of devotion extending even beyond this life. His bearing was so sympathetic and lacking in any trace of coldness that she longed to go and live with him so that he could know exactly what she felt in her heart. She resolved to take the step. But if he were to do as he suggested? Then she too could do no other than to fulfill her fundamental desire by abandoning the world. The thought was sad.<sup>111</sup>

The prince had been urging Izumi Shikibu to move into a wing of his mansion. Despite her longing to do so, she resisted. Repeatedly the prince asked her to reconsider, assuring her that her new surroundings would be safe and welcoming. There would be rumors, but not so many as if he were seen constantly going through the streets at night to her broken-down dwelling. Other men would not dare to visit her once she was housed in his mansion. Early in the year 1004, she finally agreed to move to Prince Atsumichi's compound, where a private apartment had been prepared for her. Izumi Shikibu's situation was greatly improved; as a resident of his mansion, she enjoyed the prince's full and open protection. However, some were outraged at the prince's step; his primary wife moved out of the palace in anger. His relationship with Izumi Shikibu became an open scandal—it was not proper to permit a provincial governor's daughter to supplant such a highborn lady. Nevertheless, the prince braved the gossip, even appearing with Izumi Shikibu in public.

Thus these two lovers, unlike the housemaid Naishi, exemplified the mutual approach of a truly uplifting love affair. Neither tried to prove her or his love by contrasting it with lust—that is, by embracing self-denial or heroic risks. Neither promised fidelity or exclusivity, although Izumi Shikibu did insist that she had accepted no one else. Each began by alluding indirectly to a sad, intense longing for the other and, as the other's welcome of such feeling became clear, moved toward open expression of it. Each sought empathy for sorrow and attempted to offer consolation in suffering. The man was persistent, even insistent;

111. Izumi Shikibu, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, 182–83.

the woman was retiring, reluctant, continuing her resistance even after both understood she was willing. A relationship established in this way was not merely lustful, nor was it imbued with the ethereal quality of *fin'amors*. It was spiritual and physical, because its physicality was transformed by the high status of the parties, of their dress and their literary talents and, above all, by their capacity to restrain their longings, in case they were inappropriate, and to comprehend the other's feelings. This self-consciously cultivated emotional capacity was displayed, in particular, through their literary talents, but also in their mutual embraces.

Deep feelings, skillfully expressed and skillfully appreciated by the other, lifted the parties out of the ordinary, closer to the heavenly. In this context, to make love to a partner was to permit oneself to enjoy her or his compassion to the fullest: "The Prince was moved to pity at these words," "The Prince had been moved by the more than usually forlorn tone of the lady's recent reply," "Recalling how extraordinarily touching a figure he had presented in the early light of dawn, she wrote," "He was touched by her childlike sincerity which was quite beyond anything for which people gave her credit," "His bearing was so sympathetic and lacking in any trace of coldness."<sup>112</sup> With no need to prove that their love was not lust, in a world where all desire was frustrating and compassion was the stance of the gods vis-à-vis human life, Heian lovers displayed to each other, not heroism, but sad, intense longing and insightful compassion.

## The Sublime Loves of Genji

Andrew Pekarik has provided a valuable analysis of the Heian vocabulary of love.<sup>113</sup> There was only one term to name attraction for a person of the opposite sex, *suki*. Pekarik shows how varying levels of intensity and kinds of attachment could easily be described using this term and its derivatives, without distinguishing, as Westerners do, between an "appetite" (lust) and an emotional involvement (love). In *The Tale of Genji*, *suki* provides the root for a variety of descriptive terms. *Sukiwaza* (*suki*-act) and *sukigoto* (*suki*-event) refer to love affairs or casual liaisons. *Sukigokochi* (*suki*-feeling) and *sukigokoro* (*suki*-mind) describe the

112. *Ibid.*, quotes from pp. 136, 141, 144, 148, 182–83, respectively.

113. Andrew Pekarik, "Rivals in Love," in *Ukifune: Love in the Tale of Genji*, ed. Andrew Pekarik (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 217–30.

inclination to have such affairs. “These words have only mildly negative connotations in the many contexts in which they appear in *Genji*,” Pekarik remarks.<sup>114</sup> Lower-ranking courtiers who were preoccupied with their secret affairs were called *sukimono* (*suki*-person).

The word *sukizukishi*, which Pekarik translates as “promiscuous,” had a strong negative connotation. But this term was not applied to persons who had many affairs. It was applied to persons who were not discreet in their management of such affairs or who mistreated their partners by ignoring the respect due their rank. Most of Genji’s improprieties, Pekarik explains, “are matters of unkindness and neglect rather than passion.”<sup>115</sup> Genji’s father, the emperor, admonished him severely at one point: “You should treat any woman with tact and courtesy, and be sure that you cause her no embarrassment. You should never have a woman angry with you.”<sup>116</sup> Within these limits, the emperor implied, one may have as many lovers as one wants. Pekarik concludes that Genji came close to obeying his father. “Genji keeps most of his secret affairs properly secret, marries those he should, and keeps the rest handy at home.”<sup>117</sup>

Norma Field, in contrast, argues that the plot of the *Tale of Genji* turns on a series of grave sexual transgressions committed by Genji. She agrees with Pekarik that most of these transgressions are not so much illicit sexual acts as failures to keep improper liaisons within the bounds of discretion. But there is one great exception, Genji’s liaison with Empress Fujitsubo (his father’s principal consort)—an affair that violates not an incest prohibition but a prohibition against approaching women who are consorts of the emperor. However, this relationship is treated as a divinely willed connection, resulting from Genji’s “hunger for a mythic dimension of the self,” in Field’s words, and confirmed when Genji and Fujitsubo’s son becomes emperor.<sup>118</sup> Royall Tyler also believes that this outcome—implicitly accepted by Genji’s father—permits the reader to see Genji’s relationship with Fujitsubo as something other than sinful.<sup>119</sup>

Of all the groups in Heian society, Buddhist clerics were the most consistent in their negative judgments of sexual activity. But, while they were occasionally strict in their punishment of sexual activity

114. *Ibid.*, 218.

115. *Ibid.*, 221.

116. Murasaki Shikibu, *Tale of Genji*, 1:159.

117. Pekarik “Rivals in Love,” 222.

118. Field, *Splendor of Longing*, 18–33, quote from p. 25.

119. Royall Tyler, “Rivalry, Triumph, Folly, Revenge: A Plot Line through ‘The Tale of Genji,’” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 29 (2003): 251–87, see pp. 258–61.

among monks, especially when it occurred on sacred ground, Janet Goodwin concludes that, in sharp contrast to twelfth-century church authorities in Europe, “Buddhist authorities wasted little effort in fact on regulating lay sexual activity.”<sup>120</sup>

Sexual abstinence among lay persons was considered appropriate during periods of penance. Many also practiced sexual abstinence during travel to temples and shrines—but not all. Along the river routes to the principal pilgrimage shrines, female entertainers called *asobi* congregated, coming out on small boats to sing and display their charms to passing pilgrims.

When Fujiwara no Yorimichi (992–1074) passed such a group, on his way to the Mount Kōya shrine in the company of dowager empress Shōshi, he dismissed them, telling them they could entertain the group on its return. But other high-ranking courtiers did not hesitate to banquet with, and sleep with, *asobi* when traveling both to and from sacred shrines. The *asobi* are spoken of as belonging to matrilineal descent groups, with no husbands, and were said to pray to the deity Hyaku Dayū to bring them lovers. Some were admired for their extraordinary skills. Ōe no Masafusa (1041–1111) said of them, “Their voices halt the clouds floating through the valleys, and their tones drift with the wind blowing over the water. Passersby cannot help but forget their families. . . . From the highest nobility down to the hoi polloi, the women invite all to their bamboo-matted chambers and bestow favors upon them. Some men make these women their wives and mistresses and love them until death. Even wise men and princes are not exempt” (18–19). Fujiwara no Akihira (986–1066) wrote to a friend,

One bright moonlit night, a band of several of us want to head toward Kaya and take our pleasure with *asobi* in the vicinity of Eguchi. How about it? A single lifetime is not so long—it passes in a blink. In one evening of delight, we’ll forget that we must grow old.

People’s hearts are not alike, any more than their faces. Won’t those who have no liking for such things surely sneer at our experiences? Don’t leak this dream to others!

His friend agreed, calling the idea “the blessing of a lifetime” (17). These and similar remarks have prompted some scholars to insist that *asobi* had a sacred status, having descended from female shamans or

120. Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles*, 85. The page numbers of the following several references to this work appear parenthetically in the text.

actually being female shamans themselves. Janet Goodwin, in a recent careful study of the *asobi* phenomenon, concludes that the evidence cannot support such a strong interpretation. Instead, she suggests that the activities of *asobi* displayed “the interpenetration of sacred and secular realms—the permeability of the boundary between *hare* [sacred] and *ke* [ordinary]. Instead of being stuffed in an airtight container, religious experience colored daily life and helped to produce its linguistic currency. If *asobi* had shunned the sacred, that would have been the surprise” (102). Whatever the precise degree of participation of *asobi* in the sacred, their status still contrasted sharply with the condemned status of twelfth-century European prostitutes, secondary wives, and low-ranking concubines, who were systematically outlawed by the church and stripped of their rights. The sharp separation of sacred and profane characteristic of twelfth-century Christianity had no parallel in Heian Japan.

There were some who disapproved of *asobi*, as Akihira’s request for secrecy suggests. One courtier who avoided sleeping with *asobi* explained that he simply had “no taste for such things,” without criticizing his companions (25). The strongest criticism of frequenting *asobi* found by Janet Goodwin was a comment by Ōe no Yukitoki (955–1010), who concluded, “We must sigh in regret at such a persistent custom. Why don’t we take our hearts that are so fond of making love and embark upon the road to loving wisdom?” (16). But, from a Buddhist point of view, a similar observation could apply to all loving human relationships. In Heian Japan “desire” was not distinguished from “love,” nor was “sexual desire” condemned as a peculiarly dangerous bodily appetite.

In the great Heian classic, *The Tale of Genji*, as with the autobiographical writings examined above, *The Gossamer Years* and the *Izumi Shikibu nikki*, the vicissitudes of the characters’ destinies turn on men’s misjudgments and inconsistencies in fulfilling the duty owed to each lover. Early in *The Tale of Genji*, for example, there is an episode that may have been modeled on Izumi Shikibu’s affair with Prince Atsumichi or else on Kaneie’s affair with the Lady in the Alley. While visiting his aging nurse in her place of retirement, Genji noticed that some refined young ladies were occupying a rundown house next door. (The state of the building strongly suggests that their men are neglecting them.) He was intrigued. He told his servant to fetch some flowers from their garden, a kind of flower called “evening faces.” But the ladies in the house overheard his order. The flowers were delivered to him on a fan. On the fan he found a poem. The poem was written

in a disguised cursive hand that suggested breeding and taste. He was interested.

"I think I need not ask whose face it is,  
So bright, this evening face, in the shining dew."

.....  
A rather practiced and forward young person [Genji thought], and, were he to meet her, perhaps vulgar as well—but the easy familiarity of the poem had not been at all unpleasant, not something to be pushed away in disdain. His amative propensities, it will be seen, were having their way once more.

Carefully disguising his hand, he jotted down a reply on a piece of notepaper and sent it in by the attendant who had earlier been of service.

"Come a bit nearer please, then might you know  
Whose was the evening face so dim in the twilight."<sup>121</sup>

But Genji left before the young lady had managed to compose a response. In these poems, the name of the flower, *yūgao*, "evening faces," provides the pun that serves as a pivot linking human and natural realms.

Genji had his servant make inquiries. It appeared the young lady was the sister-in-law of a provincial governor; she was well brought up and quite beautiful. Disguised in travel dress, Genji paid her a visit. But he did not let her see his face at first. After several rendezvous at her dilapidated house, Genji began to long for more frequent meetings in a safe place. He dreamed of moving her into his mansion, in spite of the gossip that would follow. But he hesitated. Like Prince Atsumichi, Genji also had a primary wife who was conscious of her prerogatives. Genji was of two minds about the whole affair, unsure of his own feelings, vacillating. The young woman, whom he called "Evening Faces," was mystified by this high-ranking suitor who refused to identify himself. She was a bit frightened: "Yes, she might well be frightened. Something childlike in her fright brought a smile to his lips. 'Which of us is the mischievous fox spirit? I wonder. Just be quiet and give yourself up to its persuasions.' . . . Won over by his gentle warmth, she was indeed inclined to let him have his way. She seemed such a pliant little creature, likely to submit absolutely to the most outrageous demands."<sup>122</sup>

Then, one morning before sunrise, Genji decided to move her to an out-of-the-way villa. They spent the whole day there together. "She was more at ease with him now, and he thought her charming. Beside him all through the day, starting up in fright at each little noise,

121. Murasaki Shikibu, *Tale of Genji*, 1:59–61.

122. *Ibid.*, 1:67.

she seemed delightfully childlike. He lowered the shutters early and had lights brought."<sup>123</sup> But during the night an evil spirit came to him in a dream. It was the soul of a high-ranking lady, the Rokujō Lady, whom Genji had seduced, then neglected. "You do not even think of visiting me," the spirit said. "Instead you go running off with someone who has nothing to recommend her, and raise a great stir over her. It is cruel, intolerable." He awoke in alarm, grabbed his sword and woke up a maid. They found nothing. Yet his fragile young lover had fallen into a trance. Soon she was dead, and Genji was stricken with grief.

In this episode, Genji enjoys a discovery, exploring the sweet companionship of an elegant, if poverty-stricken, young lady, who is unusually pliant without being vulgar. He manages to find a way to spend more time with her by moving her, not to his own mansion, but to an isolated villa. However, without realizing it, he thereby affronts an older, more established lover, the Rokujō Lady, who seems to be modeled on the author of *The Gossamer Years*, and whose jealousy and resentment turn out to be capable of inflicting a supernatural death on the young woman.<sup>124</sup>

Spiritual forces are never far away when Genji involves himself in a love affair. Exiled far from Heian-kyo, Genji receives a message from his dead father, who appears to him in a dream, reassuring him that his exile is only a retribution for slight wrongs and unintended trespasses, telling him to put his faith in the Sumiyoshi gods, *kami* deities. The next day, a lay priest who is devoted to the gods of Sumiyoshi comes to fetch Genji, as directed in a dream. This priest is a member of the Akashi family, linked through ancestors three generations back to the court of Emperor Daigo (887–930 CE). He has passed the skills and refinement of that venerable court on to his daughter, who, despite having been educated in rural obscurity, proves to possess prodigious musical and literary refinements. The priest tells Genji that he has been praying for years to the gods of Sumiyoshi in hopes of finding a suitable husband for his daughter. He explains to Genji that in his daughter's careful upbringing and in his hopes for her future marriage lay a whole plan for his and his lineage's rehabilitation and return to the capital. He sees Genji's arrival as an answer to his prayers, and he now prays to the gods and Buddhas that Genji will take his daughter as a wife. A pretext for their meeting is found in Genji's interest in her skill on the thirteen-string koto. An exchange of poems follows, carefully

123. *Ibid.*, 1:70.

124. On this episode, see Field, *Splendor of Longing*, esp. pp. 45–51.



supervised by the priest. The young lady is suitably reluctant; in fact, she is crushed under the sense of her own inferiority to Genji, who is after all, despite his exile, an emperor's son.

Their brief interval of love is ended when Genji is recalled to the capital; he leaves the Akashi Lady behind, pregnant and grief-stricken. Before departing, he gives her a robe as a memento "that will add yet another layer . . . of intensity to the inevitable longing . . . an indescribable robe bearing a wondrous scent: how could one's heart not be deeply colored."<sup>125</sup> But later, after meeting her by accident on a pilgrimage to the Sumiyoshi shrine (again, the gods intervene), Genji will bring her and the daughter she has borne him to Heian-kyo. The old priest and his wife join her there. In the end, the Akashi Lady's daughter becomes an imperial consort. Although his relationship to the Akashi Lady is, in one sense, just another example of Genji's tendency to become pre-occupied with any attractive young lady he happens across, it is, on another level, the realization of a divine plan, the Sumiyoshi gods' way of answering an old priest's prayers. Through their intervention, the Akashi family is brought, not just back to the capital, but to the very height of Heian social and political preeminence.<sup>126</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus Genji's love is never "true" in the sense that courtly love is true, nor is it ever mere "lust." He is no Don Juan who offers convenient lies, claiming to love in order to satisfy his libido: that is a strictly European vision. His infatuations are sometimes fleeting; sometimes they endure. Either way, they are manifestations of divine beauty, of sublime elegance, and even of supernatural intervention into this world of futility. It is not apparent to Genji or to his partners, when they first meet, which of his ladies will end up neglected and destitute or even slain by a vengeful spirit and which of them will be lifted to the summit of the social order. But the spiritual aura that accompanies his elegant demeanor, his literary refinement, and his overwrought sensitivity to others promises that a love affair with Genji is part of one's destiny. Even if it goes badly, bringing suffering and isolation, that may only be a side-effect of some more marvelous working out of fate.

Such remarkable conjunctions of feeling and fate, as imagined by

125. Quoted by Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 277.

126. Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, 269–86.

the Heian elite, are what give the Heian literary vision its extraordinary, if deceptive, appearance of modernity. It is the way the personal and the spiritual “interpenetrate,” as Janet Goodwin puts it, that made seemingly modern fiction possible in the Heian period. As in modern literature, so with Heian sensibility, every aspect of individual experience is infused with significance. But in the Heian case, this comes about through a cast of mind that is at once Buddhist and resistant, in the end, to the Buddhist doctrine of the general futility of this world.

When high-born, well-educated gentlemen and ladies were overcome with a longing for association with a splendid partner, they were, of course, succumbing to a futile desire that could never be satisfied in this life. Such longing was bound to evoke sadness. Yet, at the same time, they were aspiring to a spiritual connection, one perhaps favored by connections in past lives or by *kami* deities. The *wakas* that they composed for their beloveds were expressions of this sad longing and also incantations aimed at eliciting the compassion and intervention of the gods and spirits.

If a suitable beloved were to respond with compassion and admit to longing in return, the partnership they established was something more than a futile, this-worldly effort to satisfy desire. It was a collaboration that created a fleeting likeness of that salvation offered by the marvelous other lands of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Fine, fluid calligraphy on a piece of scented paper that was just the right color, powerful pivot words at the center of a poem so quickly composed that it must reflect deeply felt emotion, carefully worked patterns on a scented silk robe, the light of the sunset reflected off a carefully tended garden pond shining like jewelry, conversation from behind an elegant curtain in the thickening night—such things brought transitory relief from trouble and care.

Pursuit of such partnerships often led to disappointment even when the desired partner was won over, as the diary of Michitsuna’s mother reminds us. Most of the fictional Genji’s beloveds soon found this out as well, one way or another. Izumi Shikibu’s beloved prince died only three years after she was installed in his palace, leaving her homeless and destitute. But disappointment did not necessarily tarnish the vividness of the dream. Such a dream could, in a way, be realized only in the imagination. Just as Buddhist enlightenment was to be pursued through constant prayer and meditation, so the longing for association was cultivated. Ruminating on the beloved became a prestigious activity, sign of one’s highly developed sensibilities.

Partnerships with less-exalted lovers were not without their spiritual

delectations. A wide spectrum of sexual partnerships, high and low, could provide spiritual satisfactions, each type of partnership doing so in its own way. Sexual relationships could be questionable and disreputable, even scandalous, without being mere bodily grasping and release. The most obvious type of such scandalous, yet not merely material, sexual ties were those between *asobis* and their clients. The men who sought the company of *asobis* easily waxed lyrical about their uplifting performances of sexual allure. “Their voices halt the clouds floating through the valleys,” rhapsodized Ōe no Masafusa. “In one evening of delight,” promised Fujiwara no Akiria, “we’ll forget that we must grow old.” What Janet Goodwin concludes about the *asobis* could apply to virtually all sexual partnerships of the Heian elite. They represented “the interpenetration of sacred and secular realms—the permeability of the boundary between *hare* [sacred] and *ke* [ordinary]. Instead of being stuffed in an airtight container, religious experience colored daily life and helped to produce its linguistic currency. If *asobi* had shunned the sacred, that would have been the surprise.”<sup>127</sup>

Deviations from sexual and gender norms were handled in a similar fashion. As with any deeply felt course of action, a physiological man who chose to live as a woman and a physiological woman who chose to live as a man were assumed to be in a stage that they were fated to pass through. Gregory Pflugfelder’s study of the twelfth-century *Torikaebaya monogatari* identifies three determinants of gender and sexual identity. *Torikaebaya monogatari* is the tale of two siblings, a brother and sister. The brother displays a strong preference from early childhood to live as a woman; the sister, to live as a man. These preferences are the first determinant of their identities and are eventually accepted by their parents, who strive to conceal their physiological mismatch with their preferred gender roles. These preferences are treated as an outcome determined by fate. In previous lives, their father learns in a dream, “their paths were crossed, and in retribution a goblin [*tengu*] changed the boy into a girl, the girl into a boy, and caused you no end of sorrow.”<sup>128</sup>

But, the father is told, thanks to repeated prayers, the goblin’s trick has become reversible. Now a third determinant of identity comes to the fore: habit. Each sibling must strive to adopt the ways of the other gender (their own by physiology); hair and dress are particularly important, but outlook and behavior are also crucial. It appears each is only partially successful, but successful enough to enable them to

127. Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles*, 102.

128. Pflugfelder, 353, quoting *Torikaebaya monogatari* 149, 3:181.

switch places, each adopting the social identity of the other. In this way, their “nonconforming state” (*yozukazu*) is corrected and never revealed to the world, and their family does not become a “topic of conversation.”<sup>129</sup> The tale employs no taxonomic terms, no diagnostic terms, no equivalent to *homosexuality*, to *sodomy*, to *perversion*. Deeply felt desire is an outgrowth of fate, the product of previous lives. One can be reborn either male or female, and either human or animal. Gender and sexuality are, in Pflugfelder’s words, “de-essentialized: like all else in the world of appearances, they are no more than an impermanent guise.”<sup>130</sup>

This powerful link between desire (of all kinds) and fate, in conjunction with the equally powerful sense that the capacity for empathy is tied to rank and to spiritual insight, ensured that the longing for association could flourish as a prestigious personal quality. Longing was expressed through highly elaborate displays of compassion, clothed in prescribed forms of glamour and luxury, seclusion and movement, learning and reverence. These forms had been carefully developed, in turn, to enhance the expression of nuances of feeling.

129. *Ibid.*, 351–52.

130. *Ibid.*, 355.



## CONCLUSION

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These three case studies, of twelfth-century Europe, of twelfth-century Bengal and Orissa, and of tenth- and eleventh-century Heian Japan, yield evidence of similarities and differences at many levels. That some of the similarities derived from mutual influence cannot be ruled out. As noted in the Introduction, courts governed by elaborate codes of conduct were found in all three areas, as were religious practices involving priests, monks and nuns, elaborate temple-based worship, sacred texts, meditation, and models of moral reform. Over a long enough time horizon, it is likely that these general features owed a good deal to mutual contacts.

However, there is little evidence of mutual influence over a shorter time horizon. The *nikki*, or diaries, of tenth- and eleventh-century Japan and the romances of twelfth-century France are starkly different in conception. The resigned compassion that Prince Atsumichi expressed in elegant *wakas* to Izumi Shikibu was a far cry from the militant heroism Lancelot displayed in rescuing Guinevere. Prince Atsumichi dwelt on shared suffering that seemed beyond alleviation (“You in that house wanting eaves [*tsuma*], locked, and without husband [*tsuma*]” and “—If only today’s endless scenery would be a flood to wash me away. —Is there a shore waiting to catch me?”). He spoke repeatedly of his hesitation to approach her. Lancelot, in contrast, spoke little, crossed sword bridges, fought formidable knights, and tore iron bars out of windows for his beloved. Losing her favor caused the only kind of suffering he found unbearable. There is a yawning gap, as well, between the *GitaGovinda*’s vivid descriptions of Krishna and Radha’s love play, on the one hand, and the Gregorian

reformers' acute fear of sexual pollution, on the other. Romanesque sculptures of *Luxuria* on twelfth-century monastic churches—her figure emaciated, with serpents sucking at her sagging breasts—stand in sharp contrast to the youthful dancing Yoginis and *apsaras* and the explicit figures of Tantric sexual ritual adorning contemporary temples in Orissa.

Within a transcontinental context of shared technological possibilities and mutually influencing religious, political, and courtly trends, this study has explored three modes of understanding of longing and sexuality that developed independently as quite distinct realizations of human possibilities. These independent variations are worth comparing, but comparison must be carried out at the level of whole contexts. "Love" is not a separable feature of human experience independent of social life. Emotions do not exist prior to social organization or cultural form, but arise from an interaction between social organization and cultural form, on the one hand, and our capacity to feel, on the other. In real time and space, cultural form is not, in any case, stable, unified, or consistent. Nonetheless, the three cases exhibit such great contrasts that, even across local variation, conflict, and change, stable differences are evident in (1) understandings about the structure of the world and of the place of the human self-body within it, and (2) the uses of language in such a world. In view of these very substantial contrasts, it is all the more remarkable that we found striking similarities among all three cases in the characteristics of (3) longing for association. Each of these points will be taken up in turn.

## 1. The Structure of the World

The world appeared quite differently constituted to elite actors in Christian Europe, Orissa and Bengal, and Heian Japan. But each "world" was shaped by a bundle of doctrines and practices in historical motion. We are comparing specific moments in continuously unfolding and contested histories. Maneuvers, conflicts, and compromises, among and within groups, in each case constantly helped to reshape the apparent construction of the world. Especially relevant here are the varying ways in which a spiritual spectrum (from low to high, polluted to pure) was envisioned, the apparent composition of the human self in relation to that spiritual spectrum, and the corresponding local practices of self-mastery, self-adornment, and connection with others.

### A. *The Christian Variant*

European Christian theologians saw a clear-cut line between a temporal or earthly realm and a spiritual one. In the spiritual realm, fallen angels (consigned to hell) struggled with heavenly influences over the fate of the individual soul. In the earthly realm, lifeless “material” combined with various kinds of “souls.”

The twelfth-century European notion of the material realm was of a rule-governed nature, knowable through reason, which gained spiritual significance only through occasional divine interventions, such as the creation of Adam and Eve or the endowment of saints and saints’ relics with miraculous powers. When a Christian was healed by a saint’s touch or by the dust from a saint’s tomb, normal rules of causation were suspended to permit this “miracle.”<sup>1</sup> God’s will also made itself felt in the outcomes of war, trial by combat, and ordeal. It is true that, for many, perhaps most, Christians, the landscape appeared to be full of spiritual forces and miraculous events. The birth of a human being itself participated in the miraculous. The human soul, a spiritual component, was combined with lifeless “dust” to create an amalgam, a hybrid being. Nonetheless, salvation hinged not on miracles but on issues that were internal to the somewhat mysterious and paradoxical body-soul amalgam. Due to original sin, this hybrid was condemned to live in an earthly domain of imperfection, change, and decay.

Within the human self, the spiritual and the earthly realms met but did not blend or merge. Body and soul interacted intimately with each other while remaining separate. The senses, appetites, and passions of the body made themselves felt on the soul as vivid impressions, impulses, urgings, and imaginings.<sup>2</sup> The appetites produced impulses to act that were appropriate to the survival of the body and the physical survival of the species. As Peter Lombard put it, “What food is to the health of man, coitus is to the health of the human species. And neither is without carnal delight” (“Quod enim est cibus ad salutem hominis, hoc est concubitus ad salutem humani generis, et utrumque non est sine delectatione carnali”).<sup>3</sup>

1. Even miracles could be explained as adjustments of natural processes—for example, speeding them up; see Caroline Walker Bynum, “Metamorphosis, Or Gerald and the Werewolf,” *Speculum* 73 (1998): 987–1013.

2. The way this happened was variously understood; see chap. 1; see also the discussion in Damien Boquet, *L'ordre de l'affect au Moyen Âge: Autour de l'anthropologie affective d'Aelred de Rievaulx* (Caen: Publications du CRAHM, 2005).

3. Peter Lombard, *Sententiae Libri Quatuor* (1154), Liber Quartus, Distinctio XXXIII, Caput 1, in *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844–65),



However, after the fall of Adam, as a punishment for original sin, the impressions and impulses that the body made upon the soul, especially those deriving from the sexual appetite or *libido*, became stronger and much more difficult to resist. By threatening to displace spiritual concerns, these bodily impulses could quickly bring about the soul's ruin. Yielding to sexual urges, even in a temperate and natural way, was considered polluting; such an act left a permanent taint on the soul. The best choice was lifelong virginity. Keeping bodily appetites under strict control was necessary in order to engage in the constant prayer and meditation that permitted the development of spiritual affects, especially love of God for his own sake. Constant prayer and meditation were also the best way of maintaining strict control of bodily appetites, urgings, and imaginings.

The Gregorian Reform was a movement that strove to trace the dividing line between spiritual and earthly realms more carefully than before and to reorganize social life so that earthly practices and institutions were properly separated from and subordinate to spiritual practices and institutions. At stake was the salvation of souls.

Because the Christian soul had to be free to choose faith and to travel a difficult path toward spiritual excellence, it followed that the church had to take over regulation of all human sexual behavior. Christians had to be protected from rape and forced marriage. They had to be permitted legitimate marriage as a safe outlet for sexual urges, if they were unable to master such urges. Those who were capable of greater restraint had to be free to choose the clerical state. Lay persons had to be taught to limit their sexual acts to Christian marriage, and within marriage to engage in coitus only for the purpose of procreation, or, at worst, as a safe alternative to sinful fornication. They had to learn, as much as possible, to avoid consenting to pleasure even when engaged in the legitimate coitus of married couples.

Many of these requirements had been articulated as early as the fourth century, but it was not until the eleventh century that a political situation favorable to sweeping Church reform emerged. In a period of political fragmentation, a movement in favor of sexual abstinence and in favor of restraint of violence between Christians spread among the people of the burgeoning towns. Wandering preachers and urban rebels denounced clerical indiscipline, spearheading change. As some of the movement's proponents rose to influence within the clergy, they

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vol. 192, col. 925.

sought to enhance the papacy's central authority, along the lines of inherited imperial institutional forms. They used the papacy, in turn, to impose uniform changes across Christendom. In this way, a many-sided reform campaign got under way.

By the late eleventh century, some prelates were trying to compel aristocrats to recognize Church authority over sexuality and marriage. They insisted that aristocrats marry for life, shed secondary wives, and avoid partners from within the same kin group. The position of aristocratic women was threatened in several ways by these changes. Expanded incest prohibitions meant marrying women to husbands far from home, where they were less able to assert their inheritance rights. Charismatic female rulers faced increasing difficulty imposing their authority and ensuring their prestige. Married far from their male kin, subject to one husband's authority for life, marginalized and mistrusted, many highborn women were expected only to give birth to legitimate heirs and otherwise remain invisible.

High-ranking women of the early twelfth century, such as Empress Matilda, Philippa of Toulouse, or Ermengard of Narbonne, successfully resisted the trend. But from 1150 or so, aristocratic women were less successful, as can be seen in the experience of Louis VII's sister Constance as wife of Count Raymond V of Toulouse in the 1150s and 1160s; of Eleanor of Aquitaine after the failure of her sons' rebellion in 1173; of her daughter, Jeanne of England, as wife of Count Raymond VI in the 1190s; and of Marie of Montpellier as wife of Peter II of Aragon from 1204. Like many other twelfth-century women, they resisted such treatment strenuously, although with limited success.

While many aristocrats sought to evade the new rules, few believed they could oppose the reformers on their own terrain. The German emperor was able, within certain limits, to depose popes and name new ones more to his liking. But even this powerful monarch often failed to win favorable treatment from the Church. Most aristocrats and territorial lords found indirect ways to resist or ignore the Church's new obsession with sexual danger. The literature, iconography, and practices of courtly love embodied one such indirect method of resistance.

The courtly love literature conceded the dangerous power of sexual appetite. But its authors did not concede the separation between bodily and spiritual realms as laid out in Christian theology. Neither did the courtly love authors revert to the ancient Platonic strategy of treating love of another person as the first step on a ladder of spiritual enlightenment. Instead, they glorified specific this-worldly love between two

individuals, asserting such love was ordained by God and under God's protection. In effect, the bodies of true lovers were purified by love, and their sexual appetites, guided by love, could find satisfaction without sin. By spiritualizing love, the promoters of courtly love also upheld aristocratic women's capacity for courtly grandeur and for rule, treating *fin'amors* as a sexualized form of homage, devotion, and loyalty to a ruling figure.

Courtly love represented a radical dissent from the Gregorian Reform's vision of cosmic order. Courtly love treated the strict Christian regulation of sexuality as a threat, as a source of testing that also could bring tragic separation and death to lovers. Defying Christian theological doctrine, lovers proved that their love was not mere appetite. They rejected sexual advances from alternative partners; they resisted capture and abduction. In some instances, they even refused the beloved until she or he had been tested and proven true. If, in the end, true lovers were able to secretly enjoy each other's love in peace, for a night or for a lifetime, they experienced the highest earthly form of happiness, a happiness far greater than mere sexual gratification, a happiness that was in no way a stage or a bridge to some higher spiritual state but existed for its own sake. Thus, courtly love existed in a world similar in structure to the world of Christian theology. But, in this other world, love opened up a separate conduit of spiritual influence in the world and within the body. Like the devoted prayer of nuns and monks that might bring God's mercy and the gift of grace, true love was a program of spiritual activity that brought God's approval and might also lead to innocent sexual touching.

### ***B. Bhakti in Orissa and Bengal***

In contrast to Christian theology, South Asian textual traditions of the period did not separate out a "material" realm that was opposed to a spiritual one. In South Asian traditions, palpable substances were themselves spiritually ranked. The regulation of marriage to achieve clan or *jati* endogamy was a strategy aimed at preserving the "spiritual" qualities of the substance of the family.<sup>4</sup> The practitioners of Kaula rites aimed at achieving what one might call "physico-spiritual" powers, such as the power of flight, immortality, or victory in battle, through the consumption of forbidden substances—the five m's of

4. Ronald B. Inden, *Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture: A History of Caste and Clan in Middle-Period Bengal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

meat (*mamsa*), fish (*maca*), wine (*madya*), black grain cakes (*mudra*), and the female fluid of coitus (*maithuna*).

The innovations of “Puranic Hinduism,” likewise, did not rely on a metaphysical split between spirit and matter. Even though the emphasis was increasingly placed on the “experience” of the devotee—that is, on her or his state with regard to *bhava*—even though distinctions of caste and *jati* were played down to a degree, there was no attempt to develop a polarity pitting inner domains against outer ones, in the sense of spiritual versus physical. The *bhava* concept itself referred to states such as anger, which twelfth-century Christians would have regarded as “affective,” as well as to states such as illness, sweating, or trembling, which were “bodily” or “material” states by Christian reckoning. To transform *bhava* into *rasa* was not accomplished by turning away from an outward, physical sphere toward an inner spiritual one. Instead one participated in rituals aimed at inducing gods and goddesses to enter into and stay in their temple effigies and to accept offerings: one offered them fine foods and clothing, baths and perfumes, music and dance. Such offerings included, at Puri and numerous other temples, music and dance set to the words of the *Gitagovinda*. These offerings were transformed when accepted, and the leavings of the gods and goddesses were distributed to devotees, who gained access to *rasa* by enjoying them. Such “leavings” included food offerings and at some temples, for a privileged few, temporary liaisons with *devadasis*.

Prayer and meditation—in conjunction with temple worship or independently of it—could also enable one to taste *rasa*. But prayer and meditation involved the same myths and divine relationships as celebrated in temple ritual, such as those derived from the Puranas or the *Gitagovinda*. Many Vaishnavas believed that, by means of contemplation, every soul was able to join in play with Krishna through spiritual identification with Radha. Contemplation of Krishna and Radha’s play was, however, contemplation of “real” play—not of a mysterious spiritual tie that could be apprehended only through the “metaphor” or “allegory” of play. Krishna is only one aspect of Vishnu, but the relation of aspect to whole is not the same as the relationship of a textual allegory to its spiritual meaning. According to Jayadeva, Krishna condescended to long for Radha as the chain linking him with the world. To deny that Krishna and Radha had a “real” adulterous sexual relationship would have been as radical in a Vaishnava context as, in a Christian context, to deny that Jesus was “really” crucified.

As the retired *devadasis* of Puri told Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, stolen love (*cora priti*) was superior to married love. Because it was illicit, it

required a deeper commitment of the self. Trobairitz and troubadours might well have agreed on this point. That is, the beliefs of these dissenters from Christian orthodoxy harmonized quite well, on this one point, with the beliefs of the very upholders of a priestly orthodoxy in Orissa. So far was the distance between Poitiers and Puri.

Many South Asian kings enhanced their own stature by close association with temple worship of the new kind. Like gods and goddesses, kings and their queens were treated with lavish care by teams of courtiers and ladies-in-waiting. These courtiers and ladies mastered a set of skills, to one degree or another, in a manner parallel to the priests and *devadasis* of the temples—skills described in Sanskrit manuals and including training in literary and theatrical expression, self-adornment, and in music and various arts. Courtiers and ladies-in-waiting were also expected to possess a refined awareness of rank expressed in subtle emotional and gestural cues. Men and women of the court should know the proper way to approach a lover and should have competence in the “science of love.” Court literature, in fact, focused on love, its proper conduct, its highs and lows of feeling, and its vicissitudes. As a court poet, Jayadeva did not have to venture into unknown territory to write his sacred text.

Kings presented themselves as manifestations of gods. As such, the sexual refinements of their courts were part and parcel of their divine ways. Ganga kings, for example, presented themselves at first as Purushottama’s representative; later, the whole realm was dedicated to Purushottama, and the king was officially designated the god’s “deputy” (*ravut*) and “son” (*putra*).<sup>5</sup> Ganga king Narasimha I (1238–64) was depicted on a swing, under an enclosing arch—similar to contemporary depictions of Purushottama and Durga—with adoring female figures at his feet who could have been either worshiping *devadasis* or admiring courtesans. As Smith notes, this Ganga king saw himself as “both a divine being and the chief worshipper of the supreme lord.”<sup>6</sup> *Shringara rasa*, as felt by the admiring female attendants, was fundamental to this duality and to his royal authority.

Emotions and “appetites,” in this system, were not separated out as manifestations of a lower “bodily” nature. During any given life or incarnation of the soul, the body-soul, as a whole, was located on

5. Hermann Kulke, “Early Royal Patronage of the Jagannatha Cult,” in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, ed. Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 139–55, quote from p. 151.

6. Walter Smith, “Images of Divine Kings from the Muktesvara Temple, Bhubaneswar,” *Artibus Asiae* 51 (1991): 90–106; see p. 93 and fig. 10, p. 98.

one level of refinement or another, one level of relative pollution or another. Courtiers' consumption of food, use of clothing, pursuit of sexual partnerships, appreciation of poetry were all appropriately elevated. In the bhakti context ritual and meditation were able to move the body-soul upward, within the limits of each body-soul's inherent capacity for spiritual improvement. This upward movement was carried out by cultivating in oneself the feeling of devotion, of bhakti. The love-lust of *shringara rasa* was simply one variant of such feeling.

### *C. Suffering and Destiny in Heian Japan*

In Heian Buddhist doctrine, souls were constantly reborn in this world until, having achieved enlightenment, they were born once and for all into a land beyond suffering. There was more than one such pure land, each associated with a great Buddha figure. Most popular in the Heian period was the Western Pure Land of Amida Buddha. With its ground of beryl, held up on columns of diamonds, its sixty-thousand-mile-high bejeweled trees and its ponds of pliable jewels, Amida Buddha's Western Pure Land offered transcendence not (as in European Christianity) through disembodied existence in a realm that could be apprehended only through Platonic abstraction and allegory but through an unimaginable surfeit of tangible wish fulfilment, in a realm whose tangible materiality was fixed and eternal like that of jewels. Successful contemplation of such a pure land involved apprehension of it in concrete detail, beyond one's capacity for description. Reborn in such a paradise, the soul's status was fixed once and for all; there was no need for desire or action.

In contrast to the permanent glories of such a paradise, the possibilities of this world were grim. All desire, all purpose was doomed to frustration; life inevitably meant suffering. There was no need to distinguish sharply between appetites, passions, desires, purposes, or acts of the will, as Christian theologians did in Europe. There was no need to stigmatize sexual desire as especially polluting or dangerous. Buddhist monks, to be sure, were expected to strictly regulate their enjoyment of food, sex, and possessions. But the laity, immersed in the affairs of this world, were not expected to make heroic efforts to disengage themselves from it. Indeed, the appeal of Amida Buddha, among other Buddhist figures, derived in large measure from his compassionate provision for shortcuts that the laity could easily learn to escape the world of continual rebirth.

*Kami* deities, that is, deities of indigenous origin, appear to have

been more interested in this world than Buddhas and bodhisattvas. At the principal imperial shrines, the Great Shrine of Ise, the Kamo Shrine, and Usa Hachiman Shrine, *kami* deities were propitiated to ensure divine protection of the realm. The indigenous Sumiyoshi deities play a central role in one phase of the plot of *The Tale of Genji*, ensuring the return of the Akashi Lady's family to imperial prominence through the female line. In response to prayer, *kami* deities seemed more likely to intervene to influence the fates of their devotees—or to punish those who had mistreated their devotees. Buddhist experts were not averse to competing on this terrain, leading the faithful in prayers for rain or promising to cure illness. The *kami*-Buddhist distinction was not a sharp one. Nonetheless, the renaissance of Japanese-language poetry, written in the “female hand,” in the tenth century seems to have coincided with a deepened awareness of the presence of *kami* spirits in the natural world of trees, rivers, and seasons and of their constant presence as an audience of poetry.

The powerful pivot words of *waka* poetry, puns often linking personal desire with features of the natural landscape such as rain or fall foliage, adorned the expression of *mono no aware*—a wistful melancholy. Such melancholy was perfectly consonant with the Buddhist view of the present world as inherently frustrating. But, if well expressed, melancholy might move the *kami* spirits, who were linked with the realm of nature invoked in the poem, as well as humans. The fabric of everyday poetry, including love poetry, smoothly combined Buddhist and indigenous features.

Shaped by thinking that was both Chinese and indigenous in origin, the figure of the emperor was lifted above the everyday world. He seemed to live “above the clouds.” The iconography, architecture, and ceremony of the imperial court reinforced these associations with elevation. Palaces, like temples, were built in the *shinden* style on wooden posts, lifted several feet above their surroundings. They were open to the air. Wings on either side of the main hall surrounded courtyards with carefully tended gardens and artificial ponds. Reflected in the glassy surface of the pond, the palace or temple seemed to float above the earth.<sup>7</sup> The emperor's principal function was as mediator between heaven and earth, guarantor of divine favor. He oversaw the staffing and ritual of *kami* shrines and Buddhist temples and monasteries. He

7. William H. McCullough, “The Capital and Its Society,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97–82, see pp. 142–49; Toshio Fukuyama, *Heian Temples: Byōdō-in and Chūson-ji*, trans. Ronald K. Jones (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), 71.

ordered special prayers and rituals in time of drought, epidemic, or warfare. By his life he provided an ethical example to all.

But the emperor was not so far lifted out of this world as to be free of frustration or suffering. On the contrary, it appears that the court's elevated status was apparent, in part, through the emperor's heightened awareness of the ephemeral and inherently frustrating character of this world. Melancholy and grief were highly prized sentiments. The shedding of tears and the enjoyment of poetry full of sadness, regret, and longing were part of the daily routine of the high-and-mighty.

The aristocracy of service—consisting of imperial bureaucrats of the fifth rank and higher and their families and clans—sought to model their way of life on the emperor's. Their mansions echoed imperial architecture on a smaller scale. Their wardrobes, their perfumes, their hairdos, their Chinese literacy, their literary, calligraphic, and musical skills imitated those of the highest courtiers around the emperor. In fact, many provincial governors trained their daughters so carefully that women of this stratum were often recruited as ladies-in-waiting to the empress, and their literary creations—mostly *waka* and *monogatari*, but also diaries and scrapbooks—came to dominate the Japanese-language literature of the period.

In these ways, through the blend of Buddhist and *kami* devotional practices, through the elevation of an imperial court that remained subject to the suffering of this world, and through careful training and cultivated ambition, Heian aristocratic life took shape as a domain of striving for a vision of elegance that was at once imperial and spiritual. A hallmark of aristocratic elegance was a heightened awareness of others' suffering that associated one with that absence of striving and that sensitivity to melancholy that were characteristic of emperors and great spiritual leaders. The higher realms were associated with these higher sentiments. A fresco at Amida Buddha's surviving temple at Uji, for example, depicts gods and bodhisattvas descending in a crowd from the clouds, full of compassion, to save the suffering souls of this world.

A blend of patriarchal kinship reckoning (derived from Chinese law), indigenous bilateral kinship reckoning, and matrilineal marriage practices ensured that women had an important role in aristocratic striving for status and enjoyed a certain independence in the working out of their own careers. From this concatenation of pushes and pulls developed certain kinds of sexual partnerships. In them, each party was free to choose or reject the other but with parental involvement in cases where these partnerships united young couples in "marriages." Marriage was a rather ill-defined status; whether a partnership became



a marriage depended very much on context, that is, whether the partners were of suitable background to be married to each other. But it also depended on the emotional quality of the relationship. This latter factor also influenced whether the marriage lasted. The vicissitudes of such relationships, especially those in which a highly literate woman was the lower-ranking member of the couple, provided material for extremely self-conscious genres of narrative text, the autobiographical *nikki* and novel-like *monogatari*.

Love, in these texts, did not have to prove that it was free of lust. Instead, lovers sought to involve their beloveds in compassionate appreciation of their sufferings, uncertainties, and hopes. The literary quality of the writing was also supposed to indicate the author's prestigious capacity for perspective, compassion, and self-awareness. Good enough writing also moved spiritual powers to favor one's cause. Lovers strove to express their compassion, their appreciation of the other's suffering, and their eagerness to alleviate that suffering. In this, they made themselves like the bodhisattvas or Amida Buddha, figures of divine compassion for the suffering of the living. At a crucial moment in the mutual wooing of Prince Atsumichi and Izumi Shikibu, for example, each figure mused about leaving this world for the retirement of a monastery. In this way, each partner sought to ratchet the other's compassion and longing higher.

## 2. The Nature of Language

### *A. Shared Sovereignty and Aristocratic Speech in Europe*

The routine uses of silence and the routine contention over explicit claims that shaped aristocratic speech in twelfth-century Europe provided the habits of language use that shaped courtly love literature. Understanding aristocratic speech can offer a new perspective on the long-standing debates about courtly love's character.

If a twelfth-century aristocrat wished to recover a piece of land or recover the right to collect a toll, she or he had several options, including (1) resuming control quietly and attempting to avoid notice, (2) retaking the land or the toll gate violently, with witnesses, as the first step in establishing a legitimate claim, and (3) going to one's own lord to assert one's legal claim to the property or toll. One's opponent, confronted with any one of these moves, might also attempt any one of them in response. Any of these choices, then, might lead to armed con-

flict, or to a trial by combat ordered by an overlord, or to a judgment pure and simple of an overlord. Within such a system, the tendency was to remain silent about a claim. Silence was best if one could not enforce the claim, and it was also best if one could exercise one's rights *de facto*. Open insistence on a claim was counterproductive unless one was prepared to impose it with violence or, alternatively, one was certain that an effective overlord would impose it with violence. Claims, once imposed, were true. That is, they enjoyed the force of one's own sovereign authority, however slim, buttressed by the authority of any other lord who judged the claim legitimate. In addition, God's will, it was said, was made known in the outcome of violent encounters.

It appears that this way of handling aristocratic claims developed from at least two sources. The Germanic aristocrats of the invasion period and Merovingian period (fifth through seventh centuries) thought in terms of collective defense of honor according to the rules of the feud.

The Carolingian monarchy (eighth and ninth centuries) sought to revive central authority. The Church cooperated closely with the royal court in developing the doctrine that the Carolingians' astonishing victories were proof of God's favor. But after 814 CE, Carolingian expansion came to an end, and the dynasty's authority declined. Appointive offices gradually became hereditary in western regions of the old empire. Soon holders of these offices lost authority over their subordinates. Due to Carolingian practices of hypogamy, an ever-larger circle of aristocrats was able to claim descent from a Carolingian or from a great officer of Carolingian times, and thus thousands were able to assert a hereditary right to a share in Carolingian sovereign authority. By the eleventh century, every local viscount and castellan, viscountess and lady castellan knew how to proclaim her or his legitimacy, to issue decrees, collect tolls and dues, judge cases, and organize the collective military force of her or his kin. And most of them had a genealogy ready to support such claims. Aristocratic claims, whether articulated or not, were now not only closely associated with collective honor but also clothed in the dignity of sovereignty. This is one reason the warrior elite of this period has gained the reputation of being "turbulent"; to be "turbulent" was simply to flaunt one's small share of sovereignty.<sup>8</sup>

In the eleventh century, the new Gregorian regulation of sexual practices was at first interpreted within this context of shared sovereignty,

8. Stephen D. White, "The Politics of Anger," in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 127–52.

and the associated strategic use of language. Aristocrats continued for a long time to control their own marriages—which were all-important matters in the prevailing systems of alliance and inheritance. They did so by deftly ignoring or pointing out, as need arose, the incest prohibitions that blocked a marriage or justified its dissolution. They did so by shopping for prelates (or, in some cases, popes) who would support their claims and by offering counter-gifts or political support in appreciation. Males did so by quietly continuing a long-standing practice of polygyny, ignoring clerical denunciation of “adulterers” and “concubines” and favoring the children of secondary wives as best they could. When the church successfully prevented aristocrats from marrying within prohibited degrees of kinship, many turned to primogeniture as a new strategy for keeping blocks of possessions together across generations.

A difficult process of conflict and accommodation between aristocracy and reformers over matters of sexuality and marriage reached its height in the twelfth century. In the same period, aristocratic courts welcomed the purveyors of a new vernacular literature of love. Courtly love authors made a strategic concession to the Gregorian Reform. They accepted the church’s condemnation of all sexual pleasure. But they did so only to better defend and idealize a kind of longing for association that could render sexual pleasure holy.

One can see this in the love songs of the *trobairitz* and *troubadours*, in those of northern *trouvères* and *Minnesänger* in the German-speaking courts, and in the romances of Bérout, Chrétien de Troyes, and others. These authors implicitly accepted the Gregorian teaching that *concupiscentia* was a bodily appetite responsible for sexual craving that could easily overwhelm the soul. But they quietly rejected the teaching that *concupiscentia* was responsible for all forms of attraction bringing male and female partners together. Instead, they insisted, there was a form of true love, a sublime feeling that endowed those who gave themselves to it with a certain self-mastery. True love required lovers to put the good of the beloved above their own good and thus, among other things, to discipline their sexual appetite just as carefully as monks and nuns did. Some authors, such as Giraut de Borneil or Gottfried von Strassburg, stressed that love, through the joys it brought and the self-improvement it inspired, was its own reward. However, this sublime feeling offered an additional reward to at least some of those who proved capable of living by it. They found ecstasy in the arms of the beloved, an experience a “hundred times” better than the mere satisfaction of desire.

The authors of vernacular love literature did not make these claims

openly. They did not write Latin treatises or love chronicles.<sup>9</sup> They wrote lowly vernacular literature—songs and narrative poems suitable for performance at a lay court. The songs were filled with elusive references to real persons but nothing definite; the romances were set in the long-ago. Texts in these genres were mere fictions, entertainments. But at the courts of rulers such as Count Raymond V of Toulouse, Count Philip of Flanders, Henry II of England, Richard Coeur de Lion, Countess Marie of Champagne, and German Emperors Frederick Barbarossa, Henry VI, and Frederick II, to name but a few, authors of vernacular love literature contributed directly to the development of the ideology and practices of chivalry and thus to the legitimacy of rule by a chivalrous lord or king.

Courtly love literature could not present itself as doctrine, given the necessity of steering clear of the church's formidable, repressive machinery. Yet in the end the courtly love ideal wielded far-reaching influence, paving the way for a profound remaking of gender norms among the aristocracy and literate townspeople. The figures of love rhetoric and the structure of love narratives preserved the familiar features of aristocratic speech. Love relationships were to be quietly enjoyed if possible, but lovers were also expected to actively resist violent assault on their sexual autonomy and to take violent action in defense of their access to each other. The extreme concern for preserving the beloved's honor, so often evoked as the first duty of a lover; the frequently encountered difficulty of communicating with her or him; the rarity of open admissions that one's beloved returned one's love—these and other features of courtly love literature reflect the continued impact of aristocratic speech on its forms.

### ***B. The Layered Orthodoxies of Bhakti Religiosity in Orissa and Bengal***

Like their European counterparts, South Asian rulers made extravagant claims and adjudicated their claims through the violence of war. As in Europe, ambitious rulers sought to absorb competitors by first defeating them and then generously permitting them to become subordinate allies. Polygynous marriage of rulers to subordinates' daughters cemented such alliances (whereas in twelfth-century Europe, marrying

9. The exception of Andreas Capellanus's *Ars amoris* is, according to Don Monson's reading, no exception, because Andreas concluded that sublime love was impossible. See Don A. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

daughters down helped ensure the loyalty of subordinate lords).<sup>10</sup> As in Europe, generosity was crucial to the legitimacy of rulers and aristocrats, and written records, in the form of stone and copperplate inscriptions, recorded gifts to temples and to communities of priests while simultaneously affirming the titles and virtues of the donor.

However, written law was less prominent than in Europe; royal and priestly experts relied on their ability to interpret, as they saw fit, the voluminous normative literatures of the Sanskrit tradition. Ordeal and trial by battle were unknown. Instead, in many South Asian contexts, there seems to have been a tolerance for multiple truths, linked with the belief that persons different in descent, rank, and occupation were not expected to espouse a single orthodoxy. This open attitude to the articulation of doctrine and to the ritual practice of worship may help explain the absorptive quality of the cult of Purushottama at Puri.

Puri priests linked the local god of an indigenous cult with the Vaishnava figure of Purushottama, who was to be worshiped in union with his consort Lakshmi. The priestly experts satisfied Shaiva aspirations by providing Purushottama with a brother, Balabhadra, a form of Shiva. They introduced both Tantric and bhakti elements into the daily round of temple ritual. But for those who might frown on Tantric or bhakti sexual doctrines, Purushottama's female companion became identified not as a consort, but as his sister, Subhadra.

Some of this layering was openly known and practiced. For example, the sibling gods Purushottama, Balabhadra, and Subhadra were considered a triad, depicted together in thousands of icons and statuary. At the annual Car Festival in Puri, the three sibling gods were taken on elaborate chariots to Gundica temple by the sea, where sea breezes gave relief from the hot weather. Before 1950, *devadasis* provided entertainment for them during the long hot days.

But on the fifth day of the Car Festival, with *devadasis* in attendance on her, Lakshmi was brought from the main temple to Gundica, angry at having been left behind. Thus three gods became four. A magic dust was thrown on Purushottama "to make him want to return to Lakshmi."<sup>11</sup> Later, on Purushottama's return to Puri temple, *daita* priests

10. Compare Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 51–56, with Martin Aurell, "Stratégies matrimoniales de l'aristocratie (IXe–XIIIe siècle)," in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen Age: Accord ou crise?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 185–202.

11. Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 258.

and *devadasis* would enact an argument between husband and wife, he begging to be readmitted to their home, she still angry that he left without her. The relation between sexual partnership and divine power (muted in the image of the sibling triad) was now openly enacted, but it was also tamed by treating Purushottama and Lakshmi as a married couple.

In other contexts, the layering of meanings at Puri was not obvious. One layer was public; the other layer was available only as esoteric knowledge, to those who were properly initiated. Thus, Apffel-Marglin was given two different explanations for the pilgrims' practice of gathering dust or alternatively of rolling in the dust in the area where *devadasis* danced. By one explanation, the pilgrims sought purification by contact with the dust from the *devadasis'* feet. But an esoteric interpretation, later revealed to Apffel-Marglin, linked the practice with Kaula ritual: the pilgrims hoped to gather some of the sexual fluid *devadasis* emitted when filled with *shringara rasa* during the dance. Likewise, the dance of the *devadasi* once a year to the song called the "34 of the bathing festival" was known to very few and was closed to all but priests and inner-division *devadasis*. This dance, during which the performer partially unwrapped her sari, was performed in complete darkness.

In Orissa and Bengal, local priests enjoyed far more autonomy than did local clergy in Europe. In principle, papal authority was expressed through explicit doctrine and through the official clarification of difficult points with interpretations that all were obliged to accept, on the model of Roman law and imperial decree. In contrast, the cult of Purushottama advanced by incorporation and accommodation of a great range of sometimes contradictory materials. As Jagannatha, Purushottama was lord of all, and each devotee could find practices, texts, and knowledge suitable to her or his background, inclination, and status.

In Orissa, worship at Puri was designed to accommodate and support the rule of a great regional dynasty. To make Puri's cult more inclusive, features of various cults and sectarian beliefs were layered over each other. No specific set of claims had greater authority than any other; the esoteric knowledge of the *rajagurus* and a few others permitted them to appreciate this multiplicity. In Europe the spiritual realm was understood to yield doctrines that were univocal, clear, and beyond dispute. In Europe the layering of truths (such as whether there was or was not such a thing as true love) and the cultivation of esoteric knowledge (such as the identity behind a nickname) found their home, not among priests promoting a regional cult, but among the lay aris-

tocracy, who attended mass in the morning, endowed monasteries in the afternoon, but listened to *cansos* of trobairitz and troubadours in the evening.

### *C. The Incantatory Power of the Heian Waka*

In Heian Japan, Chinese was the language of government and of Buddhist devotion; it was the language of ethical instruction and historical writing. It was also a language of literary expression. Only elite men and a few of the better-educated women of the elite received training in Chinese. The revival of interest in Japanese-language poetry in the tenth century may have been associated with a decline in effectiveness of the Chinese-language law code and a gradual decline in imperial authority. Japanese poetry was understood to possess an incantatory power. The cultivation of poetic skills by both men and women was therefore more than an elegant pastime.

In Heian Japan, the official texts of the Chinese law codes were applied only in certain circumstances, often having no direct effect on government operations. Statutory meanings were layered over with administrative ones, as well as with the meanings associated with aristocratic kin ties and clan ties. Patriarchal kin reckoning was layered over a still vibrant sense of matrilineal connection and matriarchal control of households. The great *kami* shrines were surrounded by Buddhist shrines and monasteries. Prayers to the Buddha and to *kami* deities alternated smoothly with each other. Aristocrats could shift back and forth from Chinese to Japanese forms of expression to indicate a wide variety of aims and status orientations.

The powerful pivot words of *waka* poetry, puns often linking personal desire with features of the natural landscape such as rain or fall foliage, enabled expression of *mono no aware*—a wistful melancholy. Such melancholy was perfectly consonant with the Buddhist view of the present world as inherently frustrating. But, if well expressed, melancholy might move those spirits linked with the natural phenomena invoked in poems. Recipients of *waka* poetry were obliged to make an appropriate response or else risk spiritual retribution. Through the writing of *waka*, therefore, one sought to shape one's destiny. The responses of others to one's poems revealed one's destiny. The *waka* that one wrote, shared, and saved therefore called for biographical narrative because they were themselves instruments for making one's way in life.

This special role for a genre of poetry in the unfolding of lives was reinforced by the prevailing sense that even if one gained everything

one desired or hoped for, it would not necessarily bring relief from suffering. If anything, suffering might increase due to advancement of one's social standing. Even the most exalted had reason to strive for poignant poetic expression of *mono no aware*, "which may be roughly defined" notes Helen McCullough, "as deep but controlled emotional sensitivity, especially to beauty and to the tyranny of time."<sup>12</sup>

Women enjoyed a subordinate, one might say residual, political significance. Residences and their surrounding properties, including sometimes rather grand palaces, were inherited through the maternal line. The empress and her ladies-in-waiting were crucial actors at court; dowager empresses sometimes dominated imperial affairs. Many heads of families, like those of the Fujiwara Regents' House, sought prestige and higher office by cultivating the skills and attractions of their daughters. This strategy was avidly pursued by the provincial governor stratum in particular.

Thus a concatenation of circumstances favored the development of a moving love literature—and of intensely felt sexual partnerships. The need to conceal illicit sexual partnerships was sometimes felt, but much less frequently and less intensely than in twelfth-century Europe. Marriage was loosely defined and easily dissolved. Some aristocratic males had two or more wives. Women were more likely than men to conceal their infidelities. As an imperial lady-in-waiting, Sei Shōnagon alluded in her writing to her many casual affairs. Kaneie suspected his wife also had lovers. Prince Atsumichi assumed that Izumi Shikibu had many suitors. Only the highest-ranking women, such as wives of members of the imperial family, were strictly forbidden to have lovers. Yet the *Tale of Genji* dared to weave its plot around an illicit relationship between Genji and imperial consort Fujitsubo. This fictional transgression apparently did not outrage *Genji's* many avid readers.

In practice, therefore, relationships inspired by the longings expressed in love poetry, whether or not they were extramarital, were greatly admired and could bring admiration, even fame, to the partners. As *The Gossamer Years* memoir shows, letters were not considered private. Everyone in the household read them, evaluating their literary style, their quality. And household members often collaborated in composing responses.

Under these circumstances the line between fiction and nonfiction

12. Helen Craig McCullough, "Aristocratic Culture," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, *Heian Japan*, ed. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 390–448, quote from p. 414.



was blurred. Autobiographical writings such as those of Michitsuna's mother, Sei Shōnagon, or Izumi Shikibu were supposed to be finely wrought reworkings of experience, not just reporting. And stories, *monogatari*, were understood to derive from life. As Genji put it, it is tales, *monogatari*, not histories that "record all that has happened in the world since the age of the gods."<sup>13</sup> The seeming "realism," in modern eyes, of much Heian-era prose derived from the prestige associated with an acute sensitivity to suffering in both oneself and others. This was an eminently elegant quality, a quality smiled on by the gods, a quality made visible in the constant exchange of *waka* and personal notes whose contents were quickly shared with others, preserved, and sometimes published.

The contrast with the status of fiction in twelfth-century Europe could not be greater. European courtly love literature in the twelfth century responded to two imperatives: (1) to disseminate a love doctrine that was in fact heretical, in a manner that would avoid the appearance of heresy, and (2) to celebrate lovers without endangering the reputations of any real people. Allusion and nicknames, as well as a preference for songs about unrequited love (which could dishonor no one), were solutions favored by *trobairitz* and *troubadours*. Just-so stories of long-ago knights and ladies were the answer found by authors of narrative romance. In this genre, fiction was itself a means of quietly enjoying something *de facto*, without making an explicit claim to it—in the standard aristocratic way. Plots turned not so much on love and the emotional experiences of lovers as on the demand for proofs that love was true, was something more than mere lust in disguise. Plots also turned on the intricacies of protecting honor while remaining true to love's imperatives. These were difficult issues, and much twelfth-century courtly love literature aimed to help readers and listeners think these issues through, but always within genres meant, ostensibly, only to entertain.

But love in Heian texts was neither true nor false. In Japan, desire-as-appetite, an empty sexual craving, indiscriminate and crude, was not a dangerous factor whose influence had to be suppressed by a higher feeling. Love was a variable interest or compassion that could become pre-occupying, obsessive. Lovers were constantly probing, not the truth of the other's love, but its contours and flavors, its elegance and sadness,

13. William H. McCullough and Helen Craig McCullough, "Introduction," in *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes: Annals of Japanese Aristocratic Life in the Heian Period*, trans. William H. and Helen Craig McCullough, 2 vols. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980), 3–66, quote from p. 7.

the evocative scents rising from the paper containing love's *wakas*, the powerful pivot words that invoked divine protection. The feelings and fates of lovers might or might not reflect the wishes of divine actors or the influences of past lives.

### 3. The Longing for Association

#### A. *Desire*

The everyday Western concept of sexual desire, in its twelfth-century theological version or in any of its modern versions, had no equivalent in Bengal and Orissa or in Heian Japan. To say this is not to deny physiological fact. Of course, physiological changes did occur in anticipation of, or response to, touching of the kind that can lead to emission of sexual fluids. But such changes do not appear to have been given special names in Bengal and Orissa or in Heian Japan.

The Sanskrit word *uddipana* seems at times close to the notion of sexual desire or arousal and probably included as one of its possible meanings the kind of state change present-day social scientists would call "arousal." For example, as noted in chapter 4, the fifteenth-century *Vaishnava Agama* warns that worship of Vishnu's Trailokyamohana aspect, a love-related aspect, is only for the few because it may cause *uddipana*. But in literary manuals, *uddipanavibhava* can be caused by such reminders of the beloved as the clouds of the monsoon season or garlands of flowers. These hardly fit with modern Western notions of sexually arousing stimuli. Another term, *kama*, and the related god, Kamadeva, with his five flower arrows that are "killing, stupefying, soporific, emaciating, [or] maddening," seem to have a sense that includes the Western notion of sexual desire or arousal. But Kamadeva's powers have a much larger range than simply arousing desire, as the effects attributed to his five arrows suggest. In addition, the famous *Kamasutra*, as Daud Ali explains, is a manual for courtiers that offers instruction in all aspects of courtier life. Only one of seven books is devoted to the "science of *kama*," that is, skill in lovemaking. As for this skill, Daud Ali's important conclusion is that, according to the Sanskrit manuals, pleasure in sexual caresses was possible only to someone who was well trained and performed according to stringent rules.

The "science of *kama*" was not the science of disciplining an unruly craving for pleasure; it was a science for transforming an activity so that it could be pleasurable to the spiritually elevated dignitaries of

a royal court. *Kama* was desire for the pleasure afforded by performing according to these rules. In contrast to Western Christian thinking, pleasure was not “natural,” not associated with a lower “animal” or “bodily” nature. The pleasure described in the *Kamasutra* was available only to persons of great refinement, as a fruit of that refinement. Because of Krishna’s divine status, he knows the science of *kama* perfectly; the pleasure of Krishna and Radha’s *kama* is, as a result, exemplary, overwhelming, a necessary dimension of their divine *shringara rasa*. Many Western-educated readers, when reading texts about sexual partnerships, are likely to rely unreflectively on a distinction between a lower “appetite” for sexual touching and a higher “sentiment” or “emotion” of love. But to introduce such a distinction into one’s reading of the *Gitagovinda* is to do a profound violence to the sense of the work.

According to Andrew Pekarik, Heian Japanese had only one term for attraction to a person of the opposite sex, *suki*, a term that did not distinguish between emotional and appetitive attractions. *Sukizukishi*, meaning promiscuous or “intensely *suki*,” was used as “a strong criticism in *Genji*.”<sup>14</sup> But, in contrast to the *Gitagovinda*, little was said in the aristocratic literature of the period about the actual performance of sexual touching. Such details were not appropriate in elegant writing, it appears. When the maid Naishi offers herself to Genji, she does so in an apparently too-explicit manner: “Sere and withered though these grasses be, / They are ready for your pony, should you come.” The suggestion of running, of athleticism, of eating grass was not at all to Genji’s liking, and he dismissed her with barely concealed disdain.

In one passage of her *Pillow Book*, Sei Shōnagon tells of the disturbing visit of a filthy old nun to the Empress Teishi’s residence. The nun dances ungracefully and sings sexually explicit songs about imaginary lovers. According to Naomi Fukumori, the nun’s appearance followed the death of Teishi’s father, an event that deprived the empress of political support. Her ladies-in-waiting may well have seen their own likely futures foreshadowed in the impoverished nun’s solitary wandering and her plaintive bragging about long-lost lovers. Fukumori notes that “the image of the brazen court woman who ends up destitute at the end of her life is something of a cliché” of the period, but Teishi’s ladies bravely laugh off the old nun’s antics.<sup>15</sup> For them, it is the nun’s state of abandonment and her resulting self-abandonment, not their own

14. Andrew Pekarik, “Rivals in Love,” in *Ukifune: Love in the Tale of Genji*, ed. Andrew Pekarik (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 217–30, see p. 219.

15. Naomi Fukumori, “Sei Shōnagon’s *Makura no sōshi*: A Re-Visionary History,” *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 31 (1997): 1–44, quote from p. 28.

lives as sought-after court ladies, that unsettles them. They may have avoided marriage out of loyalty to the empress, counting on her for their futures. But this miscalculation was not immorality. It was understandable, if tragic, imprudence.

In Heian Japan, as in South Asia and elsewhere, the question of how many sexual partnerships it was appropriate to have and under what circumstances was very important. Heian aristocrats were also greatly concerned about gossip—evaluative talk critical of their conduct of sexual relationships. But for them the concern was not to conceal from the public the details of their shameful indulgence of a sinful appetite. The concern for high-ranking women such as Sei Shōnagon was to turn away the negative judgments that followed when one yielded to suitors who later lost interest. For the figure of Genji, such loss of interest was not the result of the anonymous craving of an unregulated appetite. It was the result of an overwrought sensitivity to whatever beauty or suffering he found immediately before him.

Only in Western texts, and only from the twelfth century on, only in unofficial, sinful vernacular literature, can one find a polarity between love and lust drawing all details of sexual conduct and sexual partnerships into its field of force. Here desire is given an independent energy that reaches far beyond the immediate contexts of anticipating or engaging in sexual touching. In *Qan lo rius*, Jaufre Rudel worried that the *cobezeza* (*concupiscentia*) he felt for his beloved might drive her away, but he suggested that even this piercing pain would be healed by the joy of his love for her. Bernart de Ventadorn lamented in *Can vei la lauzeta mover* that, abandoned by his beloved, he was left with *two* things: “mas dezirer e cor volon” (“only desire and a yearning heart,” line 16). In *Sol qu’amors me plevis*, Giraut de Borneil exclaims, “tan soi sobreiauzens / e dezirans / qu’ieu muer!” (“I am so overjoyed / and desiring / That I die!” lines 45–47). For Uc de Saint Circ, desire was *desconoissens*, indiscriminate, whereas love was faithful. For all these songwriters, love did not exclude desire, but focused it and dominated it, rendering it innocent.

Romance authors contrived plots so as to test lovers’ fidelity to each other and their ability to master desire. Chrétien de Troyes’s Lancelot, in his quest to find and rescue Guinevere, shows not the slightest interest in the amorous hostess who stages a rape attempt in order to grant him rights over her body and who insists he get in bed with her. Yet Lancelot swoons at the sight of Guinevere’s comb. Marie de France’s Lanval turns aside the queen’s advances because he loves the mysterious lady who invited him into her tent.

Unlike desire, true love is not self-regarding; the lover puts the beloved's needs above one's own. This is one reason true lovers feel no jealousy. Captors like Meleagant and jealous husbands like King Mark or the husbands in Marie de France's *Guigemar* and *Yonec* are incapable of this selflessness and thus fail the test; their love is not true. Their craving is not indiscriminate and is thus at least a step beyond raw animal desire. But their suspicions and machinations are a danger to true love and fuel the plots of many romances. They want to possess; this is not love. They often use the indissolubility and exclusivity of marriage as grounds for imprisoning their spouses. In doing so, they endanger their own honor. It is not fitting for a king to suspect his wife, Arthur advises Mark in Bérout's *Tristan and Iseut*. In Marie de France's *Eliduc*, a wife shows her true love of her husband by separating from him when she sees that he loves another.

Only in Europe did desire, conceived of as a self-regarding appetite for sexual touching, provide a point of contrast against which love was defined. Courtly love was a contrasting selfless devotion, approved by God. It brought mastery of desire and thus made it possible to sustain sexual partnerships innocently.

### ***B. Longing***

Desire-as-appetite is present only in European sources, but some kind of intense longing is common to all three contexts. This longing includes a wish for sexual touching, but it also possesses features that make it incompatible with the notion of desire-as-appetite. The longing is for a wide-ranging partnership with a splendid person, a partnership that includes a "sexual" dimension in the sense that "sexuality" is locally understood—whether relying on the notion of *concupiscentia* (or *libido* in Latin, *dezir* in Occitan), or that of *kama*, or on the concept of *suki*. It is a longing focused on a single remarkable individual and is not indiscriminate. This longing is for a transformation or reorientation of the self in relationship to that unusual individual. One longs for the other's presence; one is anxious to protect the other and to advance the other's interests. If the relationship one longs for is hierarchical, the lover may be committed to obey the beloved's commands or may wish that the beloved prove obedient. One longs for, above all, mutual acknowledgement of shared love.

One longs for this complex, multifaceted collaboration with the other and for the frequent presence of the other because one appreciates the other's special characteristics. These characteristics may in-

clude the beauty of face and body (although only secondarily in Heian texts) as well as moral values and emotional orientations, facility with language, skill in various arts including arts of self-adornment, respect for others, high rank and the manners of high rank. This assemblage of characteristics is the outward sign of the individual's special, sublime, or spiritual status.

In all three cases, one of the principal ways in which love makes itself evident is through irresistible preoccupation with and rumination about the beloved. Lancelot is easily knocked off his horse as he daydreams about Guinevere. Radha complains that her mind "does not roam from concentrating on {Krishna} even by mistake," counting the multitude of his virtues: "It possesses delight, it pardons [him of his] transgressions from afar."<sup>16</sup> The constant repetition of refrains in Jayadeva's poetry suggests, as well, a kind of mental "rumination" on the part of the lovers and the devotee. Michitsuna's mother, author of *The Gossamer Years*, finds herself constantly fretting about Kaneie's neglect of her and wonders if her character is biased in some way toward the negative. The pivot words of many *waka* suggest how objects in one's surroundings (eaves, heartvine festivals, rain, fall foliage) conspire to call the beloved constantly to mind. Trobairitz and troubadours often follow a similar strategy; larks, hawthorn buds, nightingales, armies, hunting, pilgrimages are all grist for the lover's ruminations. Poetry as a genre facilitates the expression of the magnetic pull that longing can exercise on thought. The intensity of longing is compatible with the wide-ranging features of the relationship one wishes to establish or maintain. Many other goals one has in life become subordinate to this one goal and contribute to the intensity of this one longing.

As pointed out in the Introduction, current experimental psychology and neuroscience offer support for the idea that thought material can become "chronically accessible." Frequent or continuous thinking about a person or object or about a self-evaluation renders thoughts about this topic so highly "activated" that they easily pop into attention. Each time they do, they are activated still further. "Chronic accessibility" is this self-reinforcing cycle. Some chronically accessible thoughts or evaluations take on a self-evidence that protects them from disproof. Individuals become adept at seeing implications of a situation that seem to confirm these thoughts, while unable to attend to those

16. Jayadeva, *Gitagovinda*, II, 10: see Lee Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in Indian Traditions as Exemplified in the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 251; this quote follows the alternative reading given in p. 251, n. 79. Bracketed insertion is Siegel's, while the braces indicate author's insertion.

that do not. The shaping or undoing of chronic accessibility of certain thoughts has become a central focus of cognitive behavioral therapy, and its successes in treatment of a wide range of forms of suffering, including those currently labeled with diagnostic terms such as phobia, social phobia, anxiety, trauma, or depression, have further confirmed the utility of the concept.

Whether or not current theories about the deployment of attentional resources are correct, experimentalists have developed an analytical vocabulary for talking about attention that can be extremely useful. The manipulation of and training of attention is a crucial feature of every (more or less) stable cultural setting; it is crucial to any disciplinary regime for shaping the self. The movement of attention is fundamental to "common sense," simply because commonsense notions are just those that elude attention. The particular forms that the training of attention takes on are always revealing, therefore, about the contours of local common sense.

Texts from all three of the traditions examined here suggest local appreciation of chronic accessibility and local exploitation of its possibilities through repetition and training. Constant repetition of names, formulas, mantras, and prayers, as part of well-regulated daily routines, was a feature of religious practice in all three. In each case, one goal of such activities was to achieve a reshaping of the individual's patterns of deployment of attentional resources. In all three regions, repetition was also considered a valued means of protecting individuals from dangerous thoughts, possibly of demonic origin.<sup>17</sup> For some it was a method for bringing on high-value ecstatic or uplifted emotional states. Repetition was valued in religious architecture and artistic ornamentation as well, for the same reasons. Familiar messages were repeated over and over, in different genres and media, not just to instruct but to remind, and remind again, so that smoothly automatic responses could be shared by all members of a monastic community or all devotees of a shrine.

Longing for association with a divine figure was often a highly valued outcome of such religious discipline. Only in Bengal and Orissa was this kind of religious longing linked with longing for association with a sexual partner. Twelfth-century Christian leaders seem to have

17. Thomas E. A. Dale argues that monstrous images in Romanesque sculpture were intended to represent the content of the monk's wandering mind, when it strayed from its appointed course of prayer and meditation, and to warn the monk of the dangers of such daydreaming; see Thomas E. A. Dale, "Monsters, Corporeal Deformities, and Phantasms in the Cloister of St-Michel-de-Cuxa," *Art Bulletin* 83 (2001): 402–36.

sensed a great danger in such a link. Longing for a this-worldly sexual partner seemed to them to represent a competing alternative rather than a spiritually positive state. The *Song of Songs* did not trouble the reformers. In commentaries on this Old Testament text, its celebration of sexual partnership was treated strictly as a spiritual allegory—most commonly as an allegory about the relation between Christ and his church. Even when the *Song of Songs* was taken as treating the relation between the soul and God, the sexual pleasures described in the text were treated as symbolic of spiritual transports, as a riddle to be unlocked, not a description of physical pleasures.

Entering a religious community or going into ascetic withdrawal from life was regarded, in all three regions, as appropriate responses to setbacks in life, when these setbacks were likely to yield grief or fear that became self-sustaining through rumination. Withdrawal and prayer were, among other things, ways to combat the chronic accessibility of sad or fearful thoughts, attempting to drive them out through repetition of uplifting ones.

Individual lovers accomplished a similar transformation of themselves. Lovers could not rely on the specific prescriptions or help of a religious institution, except in Bengal and Orissa. But in all three regions, love literature did provide individuals with a great deal of guidance. Love literature provided models of, and models for, the emergence of “chronically accessible” thoughts about a beloved and the careful, effortful navigation required to sustain such thoughts without overstepping rules of etiquette or sinking too deeply into suffering. Doubtless, observation, as well as reports and advice from others, also conveyed much instruction.

In Europe, concern with the obsessive quality of love thinking was common. Andreas Capellanus defined love as a suffering that proceeded from sight followed by immoderate thinking (*immoderata cogitatio*). Once a man has seen a woman and begins to love, in Andreas’s view, love can easily gain a self-sustaining quality. “Thinking about her, he burns with greater love and attains greater thought.”<sup>18</sup> Troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn realized that he should not give himself over to the excesses of his fear and longing, reminding himself “A hundred times I do discover, when I think about this, / that I ought to have good sense (*sen*) and a sense of proportion (*mesura*) / (and I do have this but it lasts but a little time for me), / for, when I contemplate it, my joy

18. Quoted and translated by John W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 140.



turns to pain" ("cen vetz trobi, can m'o cossir, / qu'eu degr'aver sen e mezura / (si m'ai adoncs; mas pauc me dura), / c'al reuire.m torna.l jois en error"). To better manage his recurrent thoughts, Bernart opts for exile from court. Giraut de Borneil, however, is able to balance his folly (*foudatz*) with good sense (*sen*). True love, for Giraut, demands that he feel intensely but not think too much about it.<sup>19</sup>

The anonymous author of an early thirteenth-century Old French romance, the *Lai du conseil*, was greatly concerned about the problem of ungoverned thinking, as Donald Maddox has shown. Like Giraut, he did not find unregulated contemplation of the beloved to be always compatible with the qualities of the true lover. He warned against an affliction which he called *la bée*, which affected many young knights. These men were attracted to any "vivacious lady" (*dame enuoisie*) and they began to *baer*; that is, roughly, to hold the mouth open while regarding something. They are distracted (*ésbahi*) by her, but they lack the sense, valor, and courtesy to say anything about it. After their departure from this lady, they soon begin speaking ill of her to their friends. Women, too, could be affected and end in a quandary, unable to act. This was the preoccupied thinking of love but without the moral quality of resolution or commitment, without loyalty.<sup>20</sup>

In Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan and Isolde*, a principal effect of the love potion Tristan and Isolde mistakenly take is obsessive thinking. Tristan tries to put Isolde out of his mind. "Pull yourself together,' he tells himself, 'do not take any notice of it.' . . . Captive that he was, he tried all that he knew in the snare, over and over again, and long maintained his efforts." Honor retrieved him from Love thoughts; then Love assailed him anew. "Finding this life unbearable," Isolde, too, "made ceaseless efforts. . . . She twisted and turned with hands and feet and immersed them ever deeper in the blind sweetness of Love, and of the man." Love and Modesty warring within brought her to confusion.<sup>21</sup>

19. Ruth Verity Sharman, "The Theme of Love," in *The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil: A Critical Edition*, ed. Ruth Verity Sharman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27–36, quote and translation from pp. 32–33, where Sharman also points out the contrast with Giraut.

20. Donald Maddox, "Rewriting Marie de France: The Anonymous 'Lai du conseil,'" *Speculum* 80 (2005): 399–436; for *ésbahi* (line 423), see p. 424.

21. Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan and Isolde*, ed. Francis G. Gentry, trans. A. T. Hatto and Francis G. Gentry (New York: Continuum, 1988), 154–55; for the original Middle High German, see *Das Tristan-Epos Gottfrieds von Strassburg*, ed. Wolfgang Spiewok (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989). Here is the full quote from the translation: "'No, leave it, Tristan,' he was continually thinking to himself, 'pull yourself together, do not take any notice of it.' But his heart was impelled towards her. He was striving against his own wishes, desire against desire. He was drawn now in one direction, now in another. Captive that he was, he tried all that he knew in the snare, over and over again, and long

In South Asia, Anandavardhana, the influential eighth-century literary theorist, was the first to argue that *rasa* could be expressed only by *dhvani* (“suggestion”) and that suggestion, which brought *rasa*, was the ultimate purpose of literature.<sup>22</sup> The literal meaning could not bring *rasa*, Anandavardhana insisted. “When we watch a couple making love there is no experience of *rasa*,” explained Anandavardhana’s tenth-century commentator Abhinavagupta.<sup>23</sup> But a reference to bowers, for example, can bring *rasa*. Bowers are the friends of cowherd girls, because they aid women “who are engaged in secret love affairs.” Again, Abhinavagupta explains, “The blessed Krishna, residing now in Dvaraka, his memories awakened at seeing [a] cowherd, asks him [if all is still well with the bowers on Jumna bank] and then soliloquizes in a manner full of longing and with feelings of love awakened by memory of the *alambanavibhavas* [in this case, Radha and the *gopis*] and *uddipanavibhavas* [the bowers].”<sup>24</sup> By implication, the strongest thoughts of love are those that pop into attention unbidden when one encounters an unexpected *uddipanavibhava*, or reminder, of the beloved. Because one of the meanings of *uddipana* was “to light up” or “to enflame,” this term may have reflected the tendency of such thoughts to become self-sustaining.

Daud Ali remarks that there was a disease, *rajayakshman*, caused by “both pining for an absent lover as well as overindulgence in sexual intercourse. . . . Thinning as a result of pining for one’s lover is widely known in both literature and the prescriptive texts on love.”<sup>25</sup> But this was not necessarily something to be avoided. There was “a deeper notion of erotic love as affliction which was common among people of the court. According to the texts which were concerned with the subject, the whole dynamic of sexual attraction had the potential to evolve into

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maintained his efforts. The loyal man was afflicted by a double pain.” (p. 154). In the original Middle High German, it reads: “nein, / dahter alles wider sich, / ‘la stan, Tristan, versinne dich, / niemer genim es kein war.’ / so wolt et ie daz herze dar; / wider sinem willen crieget er, / er gerte wider siner ger: / er wolte dar unde walte dan. / der gevangene man / versuhtes indem strikke / ofte unde dikke / unde was des lange stete. / der getriuwe, der hete / zwei nahe gende ungemach” (lines 11745–63, p. 176). On Isolde, the original reads: “mit vüezen unde mit henden / nam si vil manege kere / unde versancte [ie] mere / ir hende unde ir vuze / in die blinden suze / des mannes unde der minne” (lines 11804–9, p. 177).

22. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, “Introduction,” in *The “Dhvanyaloka” of Anandavardhana, with the “Locana” of Abhinavagupta*, ed. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, trans. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 1–39, see p. 15.

23. Anandavardhana, *The “Dhvanyaloka” of Anandavardhana, with the “Locana” of Abhinavagupta*, ed. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, trans. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 221.

24. *Ibid.*, 248.

25. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 243.

forms of attachment which could be mentally and physically debilitating." According to the *Kamasutra*, there were ten stages of love. The first stage involved the eyes, the second "fixation of the mind" (*manasanga*). Later stages, especially those associated with separation, suggest the effects of obsessive rumination: loss of sleep, a turning away from other objects of the senses, physical emaciation. In the final stages of love, madness and death were possible.<sup>26</sup>

One of the problems of managing love affairs at court, Ali explains, was giving proper attention to established lovers when a new attachment was formed. Handling such situations was an essential part of *daksinya*, or courtesy. In one of Kalidasha's plays, the *Malavikagnimitra*, a king with a new, young queen, reassures one of his older consorts with the words, "Oh you with bimba like lips, *daksinya* is indeed the family vow of the Baimbika clan, so cast your long-eyed glances on me, for my life is dependent upon you."<sup>27</sup>

Thus, something like the "chronic accessibility" of thoughts about the beloved was considered inherent in the love state. Love necessarily involved some suffering, but in the *Kamasutra*, this was a reason to pursue rather than avoid sexual liaisons. "In most courtly texts love-suffering was, in fact, seen positively," Ali notes.<sup>28</sup> In the *Gitagovinda* and many other texts, Kamadeva is referred to as the "mind-churner" (*manmatha*), and the effects of his arrows, noted above, mostly had to do with disorderly thinking.

In Heian Japan, similarly, paying appropriate attention to a beloved was the crucial moral imperative of love relationships. Appropriate attention meant not too much and not too little, and the amount considered appropriate was a question both of the beloved's rank and of the significance of the relationship to both partners' lives. As Ramirez-Christensen notes, the author of *The Gossamer Years* depicts herself as possessed of a "seemingly insatiable craving for attention"; she is aware, at least some of the time, that her demands on Kaneie are out-of-bounds.

The word *omoi*, to think, to care, played an interesting role in the poetry of Izumi Shikibu.<sup>29</sup> Early in their exchanges of poetry, Prince Atsumichi told Izumi Shikibu that he regretted having opened his heart to her because it brought so much suffering. She replied,

26. *Ibid.*, 244.

27. *Ibid.*, 137.

28. *Ibid.*, 244.

29. John R. Wallace, "Reading the Rhetoric of Seduction in *Izumi Shikibu nikki*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 58 (1998): 481–512.

Kyô no ma no	But of today indeed,
Kokoro ni kaete	This suffering of yours;
Omoiyare	Imagine then, compare
Nagametsutsu nomi	What one must feel whose days
Sugusu kokoro o	Drag on and on in idle melancholy. <sup>30</sup>

Refusing his requests to visit her, she nonetheless encouraged him with replies to his messages. She wrote,

yo mo sugara	Listening to
nani goto o ka wa	the “sound of the rain
omoitsuru	at my window”
mado utsu ame no	I “have been” brooding—all night
oto o kikitsutsu	What type of thing is this?

The prince responded by sending her “his thoughts” in return.<sup>31</sup> Brooding, thinking, preoccupation, for Izumi Shikibu, at first inspired by grief at the death of an earlier lover, gradually shifted to concern with Prince Atsumichi. A spell of constant rain gave both lovers material for poetic reflection. When the Prince asked, “How are you surviving this tedious rain?” Izumi Shikibu drew the link between the weather and her own ruminations.

Ôkata ni	Nothing remarkable—
Samidaruru to ya	The same old rain that pelts us
Omouran	Every year, you think?
Kimi koiwataru	These are my tears of love
Kyô no nagame o	Falling in a deluge all day long! <sup>32</sup>

Incessant brooding, thinking, care were among the crucial signs of love that Heian lovers offered each other.

As Royall Tyler indicates, Genji’s father’s injunction to treat every woman with tact and courtesy was made in response to Genji’s tendency to forget. Genji’s offense was that, having begun an affair with the Rokujō Lady, he failed to visit her as frequently as he should, giving the impression he had abandoned her. “His late Highness thought very highly of [Rokujō] and showed her every attention, and I find it

30. Izumi Shikibu, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, trans. Edward A. Cranston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 133.

31. Wallace, “Reading the Rhetoric of Seduction,” 504.

32. Izumi Shikibu, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, 140.

intolerable that you should treat her as casually as any other woman."<sup>33</sup> Repeatedly, Genji offends by failing to attend to certain women as he ought. On his return from exile, for example, Genji neglected the Safflower Princess.

In these busy, unsettled times he apparently did not think of the Safflower Princess. It was the end of all hope, she thought. She had grieved for him in his misfortune and prayed that happy spring would come. Now all the clods in the land were rejoicing, and she heard of all the joy from afar, as if he were a stranger. . . . Sometimes, when she was alone, she wept aloud. . . . He had made such affectionate, earnest promises, and though it now seemed her fate to have been forgotten, it would not always be so. He would one day, upon some wind, have tidings of her, and when he did he would come to her.<sup>34</sup>

Thinking this way, the princess stayed on in an abandoned home, waiting for him. In a later episode, Genji's wife Murasaki notices that he has become preoccupied with a woman named Asagao, who has repeatedly refused his advances. "So this, thought Murasaki, was marriage. She had been too confident." But her ladies-in-waiting saw things another way: "It continues to be his great defect" they said to each other, "that his attention wanders."<sup>35</sup> Genji's attention is too easily swept up in thoughts of the latest woman to have inspired his interest. He is too prone to new longings, incapable of that reserve required by the due respect of persons. But at a higher level, his longings appear to be guided by spiritual forces.

Thus longing for association—the persistent, intense wish for a wide-ranging relationship with a splendid partner—made itself felt through preoccupation, rumination, brooding. A remarkable unanimity appears in the sources on this point. Despite profound differences in cosmology and in conceptions of the self and the body, recurrent thinking about a potential or actual partner was central to understandings of "love" in all three cases. Effortful management of such thinking was also considered to be an important duty of those who would love. It was not enough to be caught in a self-sustaining spiral of thought; those who fell into such a state undertook certain obligations—at once moral and aesthetic—including an obligation to manage their longing according

33. As quoted in Royall Tyler, "Rivalry, Triumph, Folly, Revenge: A Plot Line through 'The Tale of Genji,'" *Journal of Japanese Studies* 29 (2003): 251–87, quoted on p. 272.

34. *Tale of Genji*, 294.

35. *Ibid.*, 352–53.

to a prevailing code of conduct, whether or not the beloved responded in kind.

Most important of all, in each case the beloved was expected to enjoy the freedom to respond in her or his own way in her or his own time. To long for association was to long for a reciprocal bond, even if the two partners were bound up in an institutional structure of great inequality. For this reason, jealousy was subject to strict governance. Radha's resentment of Krishna must not go too far. Bérroul's King Mark is condemned for his possessiveness and constant suspicion. Possessiveness is the one flaw of Genji's wife Murasaki. When the splendid beloved, freely and of her or his own accord, found the lover also to be splendid, then was born the joy that was a hundred times greater than mere *voluptas*, the *shringara rasa* that made *kama* a source of divine ecstasy, the compassion that compensated for life in a world of suffering.

One should not make too much of the fact that longing for association with a sexual partner was common to all three cases. Other types of longing for association also occurred in all three. Longing had its place in religious practice, encouraged by repetitive prayer, as noted above. It was also provided for and encouraged among courtiers. In Europe, Bengal and Orissa, and Heian-kyo, lords and rulers met with their subordinates in great halls. All present, carefully arranged by rank, were expected to display sentiments appropriate to their role. Priests and prelates could be expected to keep a certain reserve; they had other masters. But subordinate lords, officials, aristocrats were expected to display at least outward signs of devotion, concern, care, admiration. In European and South Asian courts, the parallel between such feelings and the feelings of a lover for his or her beloved were sometimes quite striking, sharing a vocabulary and notions of loyalty and service. In Heian texts, such as Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book* or *The Tale of Genji*, showing compassion for an emperor's suffering was an important marker of one's sensitivity and worth. These matters are well known; works by Laurent Macé (on the court of Toulouse), Daud Ali (on South Asian courts), and Helen Craig McCullough (on Heian Japan) provide good starting points for exploring the atmosphere of adulation that surrounded rulers in each region, despite the very different understandings of what constituted rule and the qualities of a good ruler.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, longing is an orientation that deserves further investigation.

36. Ali, *Courtly Culture*; Laurent Macé, *Les comtes de Toulouse et leur entourage, XIIe–XIIIe siècles: Rivalités, alliances et jeux de pouvoir* (Toulouse: Privat, 2000); McCullough, "Aristocratic Culture."

## Romantic Love in Contemporary Scholarship

In the 1990 film *Pretty Woman*, prostitute Vivian Ward (played by Julia Roberts) rejects the offer of tycoon Edward Lewis (played by Richard Gere) to provide her with a home and an income in return for her exclusive sexual services. Because she loves him, that is not enough for her any more. "I want the whole fairy tale," she insists. Edward in the end understands, and in the final scene of the film, he comes to rescue her from the shabby apartment she shares with another prostitute. He rides in a white limousine. As he approaches, he stands up through the open sunroof holding aloft an umbrella as if it were a lance. Despite his fear of heights, he climbs the broken fire escape to her window and proposes marriage. In devising this scene, the screenwriter (J. F. Lawton) and director (Garry Marshall) drew on a commonsense image of the "knight in shining armor" who comes on a white horse to rescue his beloved from captivity. Remarkably, this image is substantially the same as the one devised by Chrétien de Troyes in the 1170s. Without any help from medievalists, relying on a still widely familiar scenario, *Pretty Woman* nonetheless replicates accurately an eight-century-old plot. The principal difference, that the beloved is a prostitute rather than a queen, reflects a rethinking of the relationship between love and social rank that began in the eighteenth century (era of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*) and that led to the popularity, in the nineteenth century, of the theme of the fallen women saved by love, as in the play, *La dame aux camélias*, by Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, a sensation in 1852, soon adapted in Verdi's *La Traviata* (1853). The role of the prostitute in *Pretty Woman* also reflects an aspiration of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, only partially realized, to destigmatize sexual desire in all its forms. The story of the 1990 film, in effect, assures us that there is nothing inherently wrong with prostitution, except that it involves selling oneself too cheaply. "You and I are such similar creatures," remarks Edward; "we both screw people for money." Parallel to Vivian's abandonment of prostitution, Edward abandons hostile corporate takeovers in favor of shipbuilding—a useful endeavor requiring persistence and loyalty. Their mutual devotion saves both of them from a world of mere appetites.

The success of this 1990 film reflected a remarkable contemporary trend, the surprising resurgence of romantic love in a number of countries following the sexual revolution. This is a trend that deserves close attention for what it says about the lasting structural importance, in

many Western and Western-influenced places, of that peculiar kind of romantic love that was fashioned in twelfth-century Europe. There is place here for only a brief evocation of the problem.

From the mid-1980s, a new model of love and intimacy, derived from therapeutic sources, helped to advance the revival of interest in romantic love. Many psychotherapists considered that the desire for intimacy represented a healthy adult expression of the sex drive. Intimate relationships that are personal, affectionate, and lasting provide the most favorable social context, many thought, for sexual touching and for child rearing. Thus, falling in love might represent a very positive step for individual development, in comparison with, say, pursuing fleeting relationships with many sexual partners. But those who accepted this new model tended to have high expectations. Total openness and honesty, flexibility with regard to gender roles, the continued independent development of each individual in the couple—these became aspects of a new romantic ideal, whether it led to traditional marriage or long-term cohabitation.<sup>37</sup> For a couple inspired by this ideal, a wedding was often seen as the consecration or public acknowledgment of a commitment that was already realized.

Marriage rates, after a long decline, leveled out in the mid-1990s and held relatively steady in many countries until very recently. The trend caught sociologists by surprise, generating an ongoing debate and a spate of studies.<sup>38</sup> About the same time, infidelity toward an established partner—treated as acceptable or good by many in the 1960s and 1970s—became subject to renewed condemnation.<sup>39</sup>

Although stable romantic love is now both a norm and an aspiration for millions, its status remains peculiar.<sup>40</sup> It is a norm, but it is not

37. Francesca M. Cancian, *Love in America: Gender and Self-Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 39–45; Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Das ganz normale Chaos der Liebe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990), translated as *The Normal Chaos of Love*, trans. Mark Ritter and Jane Wiebel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

38. On the initial surprise, see Irène Théry, *Couple, filiation et parenté aujourd'hui: Le droit face aux mutations de la famille et de la vie privée* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1998), 14.

39. See, e.g., Jean Duncombe and Dennis Marsden, "From Here to Epiphany . . .: Power and Identity in the Narrative of an Affair," in *The State of Affairs: Explorations in Infidelity and Commitment*, ed. Jean Duncombe, Kaeren Harrison, Graham Allan, Dennis Marsden (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2004), 141–65; Birgitta Hohenester, "Dyadische Einheit: Institutionalisierte Gemeinsamkeit als Grundlage der Ehe im modernen Lebensverlauf," *Sociologia Internationalis* 36 (1998): 87–111.

40. Romantic love's status as a highly ranked aspiration is commented on by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Normal Chaos of Love*; Bernadette Bawin-Legros, *Le nouvel ordre sentimental* (Paris: Payot, 2003); Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Catholicisme, la fin d'un monde* (Paris: Bayard, 2003), 185–92; Gunter Schmidt et al., *Spätmoderne Beziehungswelten: Report über Partnerschaft und Sexualität in drei Generationen* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 33, 85, 107–9; Eva Illouz, *Consuming the*



officially imposed; experts consider it preferable, but they do not recommend it without qualification. Practitioners in the field of couples therapy and family therapy, authors of self-help literature, and presenters of certain talk shows have all experienced a boom in demand for their services since the 1970s.<sup>41</sup> Although these experts generally regard romantic love more favorably than brief sexual encounters, most now work to lower the high expectations of romantic couples. A good example is the very successful U.S. couples therapist and author Harville Hendrix, whose *Getting the Love You Want* has gone through multiple editions since the 1980s. Romantic love, Hendrix warns, is “a creation of the unconscious mind.”<sup>42</sup> Hendrix’s title is significant: he offers no guidance about what kind of love one ought to want. He only seeks to help those in the grip of an unconscious delusion to get more of what they long for. Hendrix accepts that the sex drive is the real source of the beloved’s seeming splendor.

Sociologists and clinicians in fact routinely lament the high expectations that partners now bring into their romantic relationships. In 1995, American marriage counselor Michael Vincent Miller put it this way: “What *heroic performances* the partners in a couple must feel they have to turn in! They have to be sexual athletes, parents to the child in each other, perfect friends, therapists to one another’s symptoms. Carried to this extreme, the romance of marriage becomes a mode of salvation, almost a substitute for traditional religion. No relationship can carry so profound a burden. Couples who need so much from each other are bound to go under, uttering bitter cries of accusation at one another as things fall apart” (emphasis added).<sup>43</sup>

French sociologist Bernadette Bawin-Legros echoed Miller’s dismay in 2003: “The modern couple must offer to each other at once love, passion, tenderness, friendship, well-matched habits of mind, the sharing of work, the education of children. . . . [The] partner must fulfill all roles and provide all responses. Yet . . . a spouse this perfect becomes stifling.”<sup>44</sup> “Today,” said another French sociologist, Laurence Charton,

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*Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

41. The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy grew from 237 members in 1960 to 11,941 in 1985. By 1996, this association’s membership had reached twenty-three thousand, including therapists in the United States, Canada, and other countries; for the 1960 and 1996 figures, see the association’s Web site, URL: [www.aamft.org/faqs/index\\_nm.asp](http://www.aamft.org/faqs/index_nm.asp), consulted on November 30, 2009. For the 1985 figure, see Cancian, *Love in America*, 46.

42. Harville Hendrix, *Getting the Love You Want*, rev. ed. (New York: Owl Books, 2001), 47.

43. Michael Vincent Miller, *Intimate Terrorism: The Deterioration of Erotic Life* (New York: Norton, 1995), 83.

44. Bawin-Legros, *Le nouvel ordre sentimental*, 80–81.

in 2006, “in the name of love, we demand everything of our partner. He or she must be lover, friend, spouse, father or mother of our children, educator, worker, collaborator, without forgetting the equal sharing of household tasks.”<sup>45</sup> Journalist Amy Bloom, writing in the Valentine’s Day edition of *O, The Oprah Magazine* in February 2004, expressed the same concern: “To be a real partner requires the best of friendship, parenting, and lover, in such a combination and quantity that we can hardly bear to expect it of Him or Her for fear of being disappointed, and we certainly hope that no one will expect it of us.”<sup>46</sup>

Jean-Claude Kaufmann, in his study of women living alone, found that “it is in fact just because [their] hopes have become so wild that the couple has become difficult to construct.”<sup>47</sup> Gunter Schmidt and his associates, reporting in 2006 on a large survey study carried out in Hamburg and Leipzig, found that 95 percent of men and women in all age groups saw life in a loving couple as the ideal. They also found that 38 percent of persons in their sample had separated from a spouse or partner while children were present in the household, the most common cause for these separations being the decline of emotional intimacy (44 percent for men, 49 percent for women).<sup>48</sup>

The resurgence of romantic love since 1980 has relied primarily not on the advice of experts or the encouragement of reformers but on example, word of mouth, and popular fiction and film. Its remarkable success has created in its wake a new subfield of psychotherapy and an industry of self-help literature and radio and television programming whose experts, rather than promote romantic love, have sought to diagnose it, to warn against its excesses, and to defuse it. It is as if the twelfth century were being replayed, with therapists and sociologists in the role of Peter Damian and Bernard of Clairvaux, and popular singers, novelists, and filmmakers standing in for Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France.

A recent film, *Hitch* (directed by Andy Tennant, 2005), is interesting for depicting the kind of expert that most assuredly does *not* exist today. The principal character, Hitch (played by Will Smith), makes his living by instructing single men how to prove their love to women.

45. “Aujourd’hui, au nom de l’amour, nous demandons tout à notre partenaire. Il, elle, doit être amant(e)-ami(e)-époux(se)- père-mère de nos enfants, éducateur(trice)- travailleur(se)-collaborateur(trice), sans oublier le partage des tâches domestiques.” See Laurence Charton, *Familles contemporaines et temporalités* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006), 91.

46. *O, The Oprah Magazine*, February 2004, p. 162.

47. Jean-Claude Kaufmann, *La femme seule et le prince charmant: Enquête sur la vie en solo* (Paris: Nathan, 1999).

48. Schmidt et al., *Spätmoderne Beziehungswelten*, 31, 108.

The problem, as Hitch sees it, is that women must be constantly vigilant against Don Juan–like characters who pretend to love only in order to get a woman into bed. Crucial to his strategy is staging incidents in which the man can display bravery for the woman’s sake. One client appears to save the beloved’s dog from being crushed by a taxi. Another dramatically resigns his job in order to display his loyalty to a beloved woman’s interests. Later, this client and Hitch both find themselves jumping on moving cars in order to speak to their beloveds. The film grossed \$368 million worldwide, a very high figure for romantic comedies from major studios, earning more outside the United States than inside.<sup>49</sup>

Part of the explanation for the surprising resurgence of romantic love since the mid-1980s surely resides in the enduring structural relationship between love and lust. Given the general presumption that the sex drive is strong and that its influence is far-reaching, love must be put to the test in order to distinguish it from mere appetite. Experts reject all such tests as inconclusive. Modernized, secularized, supposedly disenchanted social-scientific or philosophical conceptions of sexual “desire” have replaced an older theological doctrine. The old polluting, sinful appetite has been rehabilitated as an instinctual drive, a fundamental force underlying individuation and selfhood, the wellspring of intentional action.

Even rehabilitated, however, the concept of desire lends itself readily to use in theories that are reductionistic or have a reductionistic slant. In some instances, “desire” is treated as highly abstract, as in Lacan’s writings, where desire informs the whole world of imagination. But this abstraction comes at the cost of a dissociation from reality that renders action ineffectual. Other contemporary conceptions of desire continue to resemble those “discourses of sexuality” that, in Ann Laura Stoler’s words, “glossed, colonized, appropriated, and erased a more complicated range of longings and sentiments that, boiled down to sex, were made palatable as they were served up for immediate consumption.”<sup>50</sup> The intensity of the longing for association, one learns—from both Harville Hendrix and Jacques Lacan—is just a symptom, never what it seems on the surface.

49. The Web site Boxoffice Mojo ranked the film as third-highest earner among romantic comedies; see <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=romanticcomedy.htm>, consulted on May 16, 2011. See also Kimberly R. Johnson and Bjarne M. Holmes, “Contradictory Messages: A Content Analysis of Hollywood-Produced Romantic Comedy Feature Films,” *Communication Quarterly* 57 (2009): 352–73.

50. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 170.

But among the populations these experts serve many cannot reconcile themselves to this oversimplification. As Jean-Claude Kaufmann points out, the sovereignty of the modern individual is best preserved by remaining single.<sup>51</sup> Why should one dispose of her or his property, energies, and hopes for the future to someone who merely desires appetitive gratification? A proof of love is needed. For the modern individual, endowed, or so the experts assure us, with a sexual appetite, the necessity of “true love” is structural in this sense. In an increasingly desolate communitarian landscape, the couple has become the focus of a cult.

By the last decade of the twentieth century, marriage itself had become, for many, a heroic, risky act that distinguished true love from mere sexual interests. In a context of unprecedented sexual freedom (even if still limited in numerous respects), there was little need to marry. The upsurge of interest in lavish weddings since 1985 owes a share of its strength to the recognition of these risks.<sup>52</sup> For many, the lavish wedding expresses the impulse to honor a couple who dare to take such a step—old-fashioned, irrational, unnecessary, likely to fail. Recent film treatments of weddings almost always make them into something dangerous and difficult to carry off; in films weddings are just as often canceled as performed.<sup>53</sup>

In the early 1990s, same-sex couples began demanding the right to marry, a demand that surprised some activists of an older generation

51. Kaufmann, *La femme seule*, 161, 173.

52. This comment offers a mild corrective to the main arguments of these extremely useful works: Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*.

53. In the United States, spending on weddings rose, on average, from about \$4,000 in 1984 to \$26,000 in 2005. In Britain the average cost of a wedding was £16,000 by 2004; the average French wedding cost €10,000 by that time; half involved over one hundred guests. For the U.S. figure, see “Weddings Are More Personalized,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 13, 2005; on Britain, see Emma Allen, “Wedding Sells,” *Times of London*, June 2, 2005; the French figure is from Pascale Wattier and Olivier Picard, *Mariage, sexe et tradition* (Paris: Plon, 2002), 224. In many films from major Hollywood studios featuring weddings—for example, *Moonstruck* (1987), *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1993), *Only You* (1994), *Forces of Nature* (1999), *Serendipity* (2001), *The Wedding Planner* (2001)—a wedding is called off because bride or groom is drawn into heroic pursuit of a true love. In *Runaway Bride* (1999), a woman flees four successive weddings because she gets cold feet at the last moment. In *Our Family Wedding* (2010), the wedding is canceled because the bride lacks the courage to tell her parents the truth about her financial dependence on the groom. As the character Charles in the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1993) puts it, “I am, as ever, in bewildered awe of anyone who makes this kind of commitment that Angus and Laura have made today. I know I couldn’t do it, and I think it’s wonderful they can.” The precariousness of film weddings is hardly in accord with the idea that films promote unqualified celebration of weddings, as part of a consumer utopia. On the contrary, it is precisely because marriages often fail, and because weddings are therefore heroic, that the wedding industry flourishes. On the importance of “silly objects” such as films from the major Hollywood studios, see Lauren Berlant, *Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

who had rejected the institution of marriage outright. This trend, too, may be at least partially a reflection of the structural relationship between love and lust. A significant episode in this shift of directions was the campaign of San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom to offer marriage licenses to same-sex couples, in defiance of California law, in early 2004. Just as wedding films often treated lovers' vows as daring acts of courage, so the media conveyed images of the same-sex weddings in San Francisco as courageous gestures. Many of the same-sex couples celebrated in press reports were in precisely the same stage of life as other brides and grooms. They had been living together for a time. They had, however tentatively, begun to believe that they were in it for the long term. And they had decided to solemnize their partnership by an appropriate public ritual.<sup>54</sup>

Studies of immigrant and other laboring communities in the United States have found that the very poor also attach high expectations to marriage today. As Deena, one of Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas's informants, put it: "Why get married? There's too much stuff that happens to all of those relationships. Honestly, my experience . . . I was with somebody for four years, engaged, had a kid, and then I wasn't with him. I'm not gonna do nothing, like make any promises that I'm not gonna be able to keep." Both this woman and her current partner fear a premature marriage could strain the relationship. She says, "I don't want my son and daughter to go through see[ing] us split up. I want them to have a very good childhood."<sup>55</sup> This woman, like many other informants, hesitates to marry precisely because her ideal vision of marriage is so important to her and at the same time appears so difficult to achieve. Part of the difficulty lies in the amassing of the appropriate career benchmarks and commodities: secure job, house, car, furniture, and enough money for a "real" wedding. But the deeper difficulty lies with the very liberty that each partner retains, no matter what pledges or promises they make. Deena says to her partner, "You might fall in love with somebody walking down the street and not even know it. . . . Things happen—there's people that might alter your relationships."<sup>56</sup>

54. A good example is Stephanie Salter, "Love Stories: Sally and Demece, in Grief and Joy, a Wedding," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 14, 2004. For similar coverage of a French example, see Stéphanie Noblet, " 'S'il n'y avait pas eu notre fils, ça n'aurait pas été aussi crucial,'" *Le Monde*, May 2, 2004.

55. Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 107.

56. *Ibid.*, 108. See also Pamela J. Erickson, "The Role of Romantic Love in Sexual Initiation and the Transition to Parenthood among Immigrant and U.S.-born Latino Youth in East Los Angeles,"

## Queer Performativity and Gender

These contemporary developments make it all the more urgent that scholars reconsider current approaches to romantic love. Although a great deal of historical research has been carried out on romantic love in recent decades, most of it has been the work of scholars interested in gender history and the history of sexualities. In many cases, they have regarded love as a secondary phenomenon, as a form of indirect expression permitted to desires and aspirations whose direct expression was prohibited. More recently, under the impact of queer theory, scholars have striven to reconceptualize desire and sexuality as subject to local construction and historical change, opening the possibility of a reconsideration of romantic love. But still, as Sharon Marcus puts it, there remains “little extant work on the queerness of those conventionally considered heterosexual.”<sup>57</sup>

This work shows that courtly love represented a type of queer performativity, in the sense given to that term by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick—that is “a strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma.”<sup>58</sup> Gregorian reformers strove to stigmatize all forms of sexual contact, including that which they regarded as free of sin, but sinful sexual contact even more so. In addition, their insistence on the indissolubility of marriage ensured that acts of adultery, when they were discovered, brought disgrace, where before they had often simply led to new marriages. Not much had changed in the relation between marriage and transgressive love by the seventeenth century, when some women began to demand the right to marry for love. When the marriage of love became, finally, the norm in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this conception of marital love was at first linked to limitations on divorce that made marriages, almost always, indissoluble and therefore, very frequently, the “doll houses” so vehemently denounced by reformers from Ibsen’s time on.<sup>59</sup>

Only in the present has love come to govern, rather than be governed by, marriage (and also to govern sustained cohabitation and the raising

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in *Modern Loves: The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship and Companionate Marriage*, ed. Jennifer S. Hirsch and Holly Wardlow (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 118–34.

57. Marcus, “Queer Theory for Everyone,” 196.

58. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 61–62.

59. Rudolph Binion, “Fiction as Social Fantasy: Europe’s Domestic Crisis of 1879–1914,” *Journal of Social History* 27 (1994): 679–99.

of children). Only in the present has the fading of love become enough, all by itself, to justify marital dissolution. Paradoxically, or perhaps necessarily, it has retained its marginal status even as it rules over the formation of families. The official line is one of reserve; most scholars and experts concur in viewing romantic love as an illusory, secondary, or surface phenomenon. Only fictional experts like Hitch dare really to support it.<sup>60</sup> No longer stigmatized, romantic love remains a quixotic ideal, personal, improbable, a spontaneous emotion that pushes the liberated modern individual to throw aside self-regarding pursuits in favor of the struggle to make her or his own enduring connection to another. This queer performance, this heroic gesture, is what the modern lavish wedding celebrates.

In every period, romantic love has imposed rather rigid expectations on partners. Scholars have been right to decry the oppression and suffering that have accompanied the pursuit of love in many contexts. But most of what present-day scholars have condemned about courtly love and romantic love actually consists of the points which its promoters conceded to the Church.

The authors of courtly love literature accepted the existence of sexual appetite, the “naturalness” of male-female sex, and the condemnation of sexual partnerships motivated only by appetite. The aura of selflessness in which *fin'amors* was wrapped in the twelfth century was intended to contrast sharply only with the Church's view of sexual appetite. Those who were capable of such a forbidden, transgressive love were generally depicted as persons who were in all other respects dutiful. They accepted the social order, the religion, the gender norms. The prevailing honor code was sacred to them, second only to the dictates of love. They accepted the Church's condemnation of *all* sexual pleasure, with the one exception of sexual pleasure within *fin'amors*. Those capable of *fin'amors* were not simply conformist; they were exemplary. Their heroism displayed itself in their ability to embody existing social ideals in a special way, just as much as it did in their devotion to the beloved. They were presented as well-born, high-ranking, extremely well educated and well trained (in accord with prevailing gendered expectations), gracious and well mannered, generous, and good. These characteristics served to heighten the sense that *fin'amors* itself was a

60. Ironically, in the world of the Hollywood film, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service also imposes romantic love as a legal norm for valid marriages. In the films *Green Card* (1990, Peter Weir, director) and *The Proposal* (2009, directed by Anne Fletcher), the story deals with a couple who marry solely to provide secure residence in the United States to one partner, but who, in attempting to stage a convincing romantic relationship for skeptical federal agents, fall in love.

feeling that only the best and the virtuous could feel. In this very conservative, yet queer, manner, the shame of sexual contact was erased.

It is likely that the unqualified acceptance of gender ideals, sexual norms, and familial forms displayed in love literature in various periods has been motivated by a similar endeavor to exonerate lovers from every charge that could be laid against them except for that of love-inspired transgression. Grudging tolerance of adultery by many husbands and of elopements on the part of many fathers in the medieval and early modern periods doubtless reflected the effectiveness of this strategy. Today it is more often the very sovereignty of the individual over her or his own body and sexuality that prompts lovers to conform to strict expectations and prompts persons who hope one day to love, and to be loved in return, to accept a rather strict discipline of their own bodies and forms of self-presentation.

Many scholars have failed to appreciate that, wrapped within the outer garment of conformity, romantic love has constituted a kind of surreptitious dissent, a shadow religion, a queer performance. The relation of romantic love to patriarchy is not a simple story. Far from supporting patriarchal authority, romantic love undermined the authority of fathers, especially in the early modern period, while, due to the perfectionism it imposed on lovers, it has often, over the centuries, tended to support notions of the male lover's right to authority within the couple. Dissent from religious doctrine regarding desire-as-appetite is implicit in almost all European love literature and in the behavior of many, many documented cases of liaisons and elopements. But scholars often give this aspect of the records short shrift.

The availability of this form of dissent, whose ideals have been very effectively propagandized in every century since the twelfth, has had a great impact on gender norms and forms of sexuality. Both with respect to gender and with respect to sexuality, the possibility of courtly love and romantic love has licensed a sharp distinction between pure, innocent, good gender norms and impure, sinful, bad gender norms; between pure, innocent, good sexual contact and impure, sinful, bad sexual contact.

In effect, in prevailing Western conceptions, gender identities in every period since the twelfth century have been, not unitary, but spread along a continuum from innocent and heroic—capable of love—to lascivious—available for pleasure. The question has not been whether to don a dress, but what kind of dress to don—how low-cut, what gathering around the waist, what hemline, what color. Not whether to wear makeup but how thick and how brightly colored it should be. The ques-



tion has been not whether to wear a tunic and tights, but whether to add a codpiece; not whether to wear pants, but how tight. Not whether self-consciously to manage one's walk, gestures, and glances, but whether to walk, gesture, or glance modestly, sincerely, sweetly or to do so impudently, alluringly, suggestively. The polarity between love and lust has provided the organizing principle for a range of options signaling one's position vis-à-vis two very different kinds of sexual collaboration—appetitive or romantic. This polarity has imposed itself on every gender identity and across most forms of sexual comportment.

The rethinking of romantic love has important implications for the understanding of Orientalism. In the colonial period, the love-lust polarity, assumed by Europeans to be a universal structure written in human nature, deformed European judgments, underwriting a powerful association between the “exotic” and the indulgence of sexual appetite. Colonial women have often been deemed to be capable of romantic love—in Surinam, in Polynesia, in Graham Greene's Vietnam.<sup>61</sup> But a more common pattern has been the one briefly referred to in chapter 4, that is, European blanket condemnation of certain practices as forms of “prostitution” or “enslavement” and the systematic stigmatization of certain traditions and classes of persons for their supposed submission to “lust.” Such condemnation and stigmatization sometimes underwrote European male mistreatment of colonial women.

The British response to *devadasi* ritual and the temporary liaisons of *devadasis* with certain high-ranking persons frequently took the form of outrage before this decadent “temple harlotry.” Rather than directly outlaw these practices, British administrators worked through the law courts to deprive *devadasis* of their properties and inheritance rights—on the grounds that the dancers had no “caste” and were not mentioned in Hindu law. The relation between British stigmatization of such practices and the efforts of Hindu reformers to put an end to them is complex and cannot be considered in detail here. Suffice it to say that British condemnation, insofar as it was felt, strongly reinforced certain local theories about the decay of Hinduism.

Although Japan remained independent, Western condemnation of certain of their sexual practices was keenly felt. Sheldon Garon reports that prostitutes in Japan in the early Meiji period received an average of

61. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 90–102; Matt K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (New York: Viking, 1956); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

one client per day, while their French equivalents received eight. Most of the day was spent in tea consumption and conversation; sexual release was not at all the point of the interaction. After 1945, the Japanese government, bowing to U.S. pressure, outlawed their “beautiful custom” of prostitution.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, the Japanese “floating world” of commercial entertainment, in the Tokugawa period and today, continues to defy the sharp line many Westerners would like to draw between love and lust. Customers pay for interactions that look like facets of a love affair. The higher the price they pay, it seems, the less likely the relationship will include sexual touching. Standards of taste born in the Heian era, suitably modernized and simplified, continue to reign in these commercial love relationships just as they do in the traditional arts of flower arranging, tea preparation, conversation, and (female) fashion. The decline of the Geisha houses does not appear to be altering this basic pattern, although, in the end, it may signal such an alteration.<sup>63</sup>

Thus a conventional European conception of queer performativity, enshrined in the love-lust dichotomy, unofficial in status but so deeply entrenched that it was assumed to be an elemental facet of human nature, motivated Europeans in the colonial period to condemn and work against practices the colonizers did not in the least understand.

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There is substantial evidence in favor of taking the age-old conventions of romantic love seriously at face value. Taking inspiration from Sharon Marcus’s method of “just reading” the documents, it is not difficult to see romantic love, from its origin in the twelfth century, as a form of dissent from the sexual teachings of the Christian churches and, more recently, as a form of dissent from the sexual doctrines of social scientists.<sup>64</sup> From this standpoint, the new kind of dissent embodied in the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s—bringing to fruition stirrings that began as early as the 1870s—was incomplete, was, in effect, quite conventional in one respect: sexual liberation was generally understood

62. Sheldon Garon, “The World’s Oldest Debate? Prostitution and the State in Imperial Japan,” *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 710–32.

63. Howard Hibbet, *The Floating World in Japanese Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); Anne Allison, *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Mineko Iwasaki, *Geisha: A Life* (New York: Washington Square, 2002).

64. Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3.

as the liberation of desire. Desire has been understood in a variety of ways, but many variations brought forward since 1960 have taken as their point of departure the notion of a sexual drive, that is, a secularized version of desire-as-appetite, as understood in Christian theology. Most variations have invited the discovery of desire as the underlying force behind all the complex sentiments of sexual partnerships. Much has been done to dismantle the legal prohibitions that afflicted various forms of desire and to challenge the continued stigmatization of desire. But the recognition that “desire” and its variations are only local, historical constructs, are only features of a local, received common sense, and not inscribed in human nature, has been slow in coming. In the meantime, the longing for association, its place in Western practices shaped by the evolving conventions of romantic love, has continued to move very many individuals—perhaps more today than ever before. Hence the recent “comeback” or “triumph” of romantic love left some scholars scrambling for explanations.

This study is intended as a contribution to the effort now under way to understand the history of “heterosexual” practices and to rethink the relationship between sexual practices and such emotions as fear, loneliness, longing, shame, and ecstasy. It is also an attempt to understand how an emotion—in this case the longing for association—can actually shape history, giving rise to covert dissent when its importance is denied, as in twelfth-century Europe, or, by its potential salience in human affairs, finding a place in very different social orders such as those of twelfth-century South Asia and Heian Japan.

# Appendix: Transliterated South Asian Words

List of words transliterated from Sanskrit and Oriya, with alternative spellings showing diacritical marks. (Only words that have alternative spellings are included.) Words from Oriya, the language of Orissa, are in italics.

As used in the text	With diacritical marks
Agama	Āgama
<i>ahankara</i>	<i>ahankāra</i>
alambanavibhava	ālambanavibhāva
Anangabhima	Anaṅgabhīma
Anandavardhana	Ānandavardhana
Angirasakalpa	Āngirasakalpa
anubhava	anubhāva
Arthashastra	Arthaśāstra
Balabhadra	Baḷabhadra
Bana	Bāṇa
Bhagavata	Bhāgavata
Bhaktamala	Bhaktamālā
Bhaskaravarman	Bhāskaravarman
bhava	bhāva
bhave	bhāve
bhu	bhū
Brahma	Brahmā
Brahmanda	Brahmāṇḍa
Brameshvara	Brameśvara
Camunda	Cāmuṇḍā
Codaganga	Coḍagaṅga
<i>cora priti</i>	<i>corā priti</i>

<i>daitas</i>	<i>daitās</i>
daksinya	dākṣiṇya
darshana	darśana
devadasi	devadāsī
Dhvanyaloka	Dhvanyāloka
Durga	Durgā
durga	durgā
Dvaraka	Dvārakā
gīta	gītā
gopi	gopī
Gandharvas	Gāndharvas
goshthi	goṣṭhī
Gundica	Guṇḍicā
Hamsavega	Haṃsavega
Harsha	Harṣa
Jagadisha	Jagadīśa
Jagannatha	Jagannātha
Jyeshtha	Jyeṣṭha
Kali	Kālī
Kali-Tara	Kālī-Tārā
Kalikula	Kālīkula
kama	kāma
Kamadeva	Kāmadeva
kamashastra	kāmaśāstra
Kamasutra	Kāmasūtra
Kana	Kāñā
Kenduli	Kenduḷi
Keshava Bhatta	Keśava Bhaṭṭa
Khanjana	Khañjanā
kirti	kīrtī
Kolavati	Kolāvati
Kramdipika	Kramdīpikā
Krishna	Kṛṣṇa
Kshatryia	Kṣatryia
Kulottunga	Kulottuṅga
Lakshmi	Lakṣmī
lakshmi	lakṣmī
Lakshmana Deshika	Lakṣmana Deśika
lila	līlā
maca	māca
Madhukeshvara	Madhukeśvara
Mahabharata	Mahābhārata
mahadevi	mahādevī
maharaja	mahārāja

<i>mahari</i>	<i>māhārī</i>
Mahisa	Mahiṣa
mamsa	māmsa
Malavikagnimitra	Mālavikāgnimitra
manasanga	manasaṅga
Mathura	Mathurā
mudra	mudrā
Mukhalingam	Mukhaliṅgam
Mukteshvara	Mukteśvara
Narada	Nārada
Naraka	Nāraka
nagaraka	nāgaraka
Narasimha	Nṛsimha
Narendreshvara	Narendreśvara
Natyashastra	Nātyaśāstra
nayika	nāyikā
Nimbarka	Nimbārka
nritya	nṛtya
Padmavati	Padmāvati
Paippaladins	Paippalādins
pancama-ragam	pañcama-rāgam
pancama-svara	pañcama-svara
<i>papa</i>	<i>pāpa</i>
parakiya	parakīyā
<i>parakiya bhaba</i>	<i>parakīyā bhāba</i>
Parvati	Pārvati
prakriti	prakṛti
Prataparudra	Pratāparudra
puja	pūjā
Purana	Purāṇa
Purusa	Puruṣa
Purushottama	Puruṣottama
Radha	Rādhā
raganugabhakti	rāgānugābhakti
rajaguru	rājaguru
Rajaraja	Rājarāja
Rajarajeshvara	Rājarāgeśvara
Ramanuja	Rāmānuja
Ranipur-Jhariāl	<i>Rāṇipur-Jhariāl</i>
Ratiramana	Ratiramāna
Ratishastra	Ratiśāstra
ravut	rāvut
Risyashringa	Riṣyaśringa
sadhaka	sādhaka

APPENDIX

sadhana	sādhana
Sahajya	Sahajiyā
Saiddhantika	Saiddhāntika
Shakha	Śākhā
samadhi	samādhi
samsara	samśāra
saprashraya	sapraśraya
sarasvati	sarasvatī
Shailodbhava	Śailodbhāva
Shaiva	Śaiva
Shakti	Śakti
Sharadatilaka	Śāradātilaka
Shastra	Śāstra
Shava-Vahana	Śava-Vāhana
Shiva	Śiva
Shri	Śri
shri	śrī
shringara	śṛṅgāra
shrinkalam	śṛṅkalām
shudra	śūdra
Smarta	Smārta
Somavamshi	Somavamśi
sthayibhava	sthāyibhāva
Subhadra	Subhadrā
Surya	Sūrya
Suryavamsha	Sūryavamśa
uddipana	uddīpana
Udyotakeshari	Udyotakeśarī
vadya	vādyā
Vaishnava	Vaiṣṇava
Vaishnavism	Vaiṣṇavism
vasana	vāsanā
Vasudeva	Vāsudeva
vibhava	vibhāva
Vira	Vīra
viraha-vyadhih	viraha-vyādhiḥ
Vishnu	Viṣṇu
Yashoda	Yaśodā
Yogini	Yoginī

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