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The Untellable Story: Language and Writing in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*

by Laurence de Looze

RESEARCH ON *LA CHASTELAINE DE VERGI* has done much in recent years to define the poem's position in the context of Old French literature.[1] In particular, the *Chastelaine de Vergi* has been studied in relation to its analogues, integrated into the tradition of the courtly narrative and the "roman tragique" in France, and cited as part of the realist current in Old French literature.[2] Furthermore, the *Chastelaine de Vergi* can be associated with other romances that intercalate lyric poetry, although the *Chastelaine de Vergi* does so only once: a stanza by the thirteenth-century *trouvère* known as the Châtelain de Couci (discussed below).[3]

[1] There are two modern editions of *La Chastelaine de Vergi* available to the scholar: *La Chastelaine de Vergi: poème du XIIIe siècle*, edited by Gaston Raynaud and revised by Lucien Foulet (Paris: Champion, 1921), and *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, 2nd ed., edited by Frederick Whitehead (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1951). All textual references in this essay are to Foulet's edition. Whitehead's edition, however, has a useful introduction to which I will have occasion to make reference. For a review of other editions of the poem, see the "Bibliographical Note" in Whitehead, pp. 41–42. I wish to thank the Fulbright-Hays Commission for their generous grant which aided in the preparation of this article.

[2] The most detailed consideration of the relationship between *La Chastelaine de Vergi* and its analogues is Pál Lakits, *La Châtelaine de Vergi et l'évolution de la nouvelle courtoise* (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1966). Also important are: Jean Frappier, "*La Chastelaine de Vergi*, Marguerite de Navarre, et Bandello," in *Mélanges II* (1945) (Paris: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 1946), pp. 89–150; André Maraud, "Le Lai de *Lanval* et la *Chastelaine de Vergi*: la structure narrative," *Romania*, 93 (1972), 433–59; Jean Rychner, "La Présence et le point de vue du narrateur dans deux récits courts: le *Lai de Lanval* et la *Châtelaine de Vergi*," *Vox Romanica*, 39 (1980), 86–103; and Paul Zumthor, "De la chanson au récit: la chastelaine de Vergi," *Vox Romanica*, 27 (1968), 77–95, and *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 380–404 and *passim*. The recent article by Martha C. Perrigaud, "Oisille's Tale of the Duchess of Bourgogne: The Power of the Word," *Degré Second*, 6 (1982), 25–40, while making only scant reference to the *Chastelaine de Vergi*, broaches the subject of speech and language in Marguerite de Navarre and complements some of the points made in this article. Subsequent references to the above works will cite them simply by author's name. References to Zumthor will be either to "Chanson" or to "*Essai.*"

For discussion of *La Chastelaine de Vergi* in relation to the courtly tradition, see Frappier, p. 96, Whitehead, pp. xix–xxx, and Zumthor, "Chanson," pp. 80 ff. For the "roman tragique" see Frappier, p. 96, and Whitehead, pp. xix–xxx. For the realist current see A. Fourrier, *Le Courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Age* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1960), p. 9, and Whitehead, p. xvii.

[3] The stanza intercalated into the *Chastelaine de Vergi* is the third stanza of "A vous, amant, plus k'a nulle autre gent" which also appears in the *Roman de la Violette*, ed. Douglas Labaree Buffum (Paris: SATF, 1928), verses 4624-31, and in *Le Roman du Castelain de Couci et de la Dame de Fayel*, ed. John E. Matzke and Maurice Delbouille (Paris: SATF, 1936), verses 7363-70. For a recent edition

On fewer occasions the *Chastelaine de Vergi* has also been considered on its own.[4]

In comparative studies the *Chastelaine de Vergi* has been viewed most often in relation to *Lanval* by Marie de France. Indeed these two poems provide an excellent example of medieval "mouvance," illustrating how much the same basic story can "differ from itself." A checklist of differences would include the magic that pervades *Lanval* (the fairy maiden, the fantasy geography, the Arthurian setting) versus the greater realism of the *Chastelaine de Vergi* (dukes and duchesses, the Burgundian court, court intrigues); the isolation of Lanval vis-à-vis his peers as opposed to the *Chastelaine de Vergi* protagonist's high social standing and close relationship with his lord; the contrast between a story of "aventure" (*Lanval*) and one of psychological intrigue (*La Chastelaine de Vergi*); and of course the fact that *Lanval* ends happily for the lovers whereas the *Chastelaine de Vergi*'s ending is tragic. Moreover, the betrayal of a secret pact takes place three times in the *Chastelaine de Vergi* instead of just once as in *Lanval*. To mention another salient difference, the *Chastelaine de Vergi* speaks to us from anonymity to tell of an anonymous knight. *Lanval*, by contrast, takes its title from the name of its protagonist and was written by Marie de France, whom we know as a literary artist if not as a historical personality.[5]

For our purposes here let us consider one further point of contrast. *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, unlike *Lanval*, reveals a profound lack of confidence in the spoken word and oral discourse in general. Jean Rychner has already shown

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of the lyric poem see Alain Lerond, *Chansons attribuées au Chastelain de Couci* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), pp. 57–60. First introduced by Jean Renart in the *Guillaume de Dole*, the intercalation of lyric verse enjoyed a considerable vogue in Old French narrative and characterizes major works such as *Cleomadés*, the *Castelain de Couci*, the *Roman de la Violette*, and the principal narratives of Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart. For a more complete list of works that intercalate poems see Buffum's edition of the *Violette*, p. lxxxiii, note 1, and p. 363. For a theoretical study of such intercalation, see Jacqueline Cerquiglini, "Pour une typologie de l'insertion," *Perspectives Médiévales*, No. 3 (October, 1977), 9–14.

Exactly who the historical Châtelain de Couci actually was has proved a thorny—and hence much debated—question, with at least three possible candidates from the thirteenth century having been put forward. For discussions of the issues involved and for the pertinent bibliography, see Matzke and Delbouille's edition of the *Castelain de Couci*, pp. lii–liv; Whitehead's edition of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*, p. vii, note 1; and Lerond's section, "Ce qu'on peut savoir sur la vie du Chastelain de Couci," pp. 16–20 of his edition of Couci's poems.

[4] See in particular Emilie P. Kostoroski, "Quest and Query in the *Chastelaine de Vergi*," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 3 (1972), 179–98; David J. Shirt, "*La Chastelaine de Vergi*: The Technique of Stylistic Cohesion," *Reading Medieval Studies*, 6 (1980), 81–99; and Jean-Charles Payen, "Structure et sens dans '*La Châtelaine de Vergi*,'" *Le Moyen Age*, 79 (1973), 209–30.

[5] I follow Paul Zumthor in employing the term "mouvance." For a discussion of "mouvance" in medieval French literature, see the section "Anonymat et 'mouvance'" in his *Essai*; for a definition, see p. 507. For a consideration of the magic element in *Lanval*, see Maraud, pp. 438–40, 446–47, 457, and Whitehead, p. xvi; for realism in the *Chastelaine de Vergi*, see Whitehead, pp. xvi–xvii, and Frappier, pp. 97, 99; for the isolation of Lanval versus the *Chastelaine de Vergi* knight's court position, see Maraud, pp. 436–37; for "aventure" versus psychological intrigue, see Frappier, pp. 97–99, Lakits, pp. 68–78, Maraud, pp. 456–57, and Rychner, pp. 86–89. Maraud has also noted the lack of closure in *Lanval*'s ending, p. 457.

that "le point de vue de Marie de France dans *Lanval* se rattache à celui des conteurs oraux de l'ancienne époque" (Rychner, p. 102). By contrast the *Chastelaine de Vergi* narrator's interventions are fewer and much more discreet, and the narrator displays none of the exuberant orality of the *Lanval* narrator;[6] *La Chastelaine de Vergi* is more testimonial—a *written* testimonial which reveals considerable mistrust of oral narration. Far from extricating the protagonist from his dilemma, as in *Lanval*, telling of his secret love only embroils the *Chastelaine de Vergi* protagonist further in his predicament and ultimately engenders the triple tragedy with which the romance ends.

Let us briefly review the story. The châtelaine de Vergi has accorded her love to a handsome Burgundian knight, one of the most illustrious retainers of her uncle, the duke, on the condition that the knight not reveal their love. To expedite their rendezvous and maintain secrecy they use a little dog as their all-clear signal.[7] The duchess, also enamored of the knight, seeks his love, only to be refused. Out of anger she accuses the knight of treason, in private to her husband, telling the duke that the knight has betrayed him by seeking her love. The duke confronts the knight and promises to exonerate him only on the condition that the knight prove he loves someone other than the duchess. Swearing the duke to secrecy, the knight tells of his affair with the châtelaine de Vergi and proves the veracity of his story by allowing the duke to shadow him when he is "summoned" by the dog that night. The duchess, determined to find out why her accusation is no longer believed, makes up to the duke the following night in bed. Swearing secrecy on pain of death, the duchess succeeds in drawing the knight's secret out of her husband. At the feast of Pentecost the duchess makes a point of referring to the strategem of the dog in the presence of the châtelaine de Vergi and the other ladies of the court. The châtelaine, recognizing that she has been betrayed, rushes into a *garderobe* where she

[6] Though Zumthor is correct that the "*ChV* ne présente aucune intervention d'auteur" ("Chanson," p. 88)—by which I assume he means the implied-author or representation of the *énonciateur* in the text and to which the narrator is, in fact, assimilated—Rychner is right to observe that both the *Lanval* and the *Chastelaine de Vergi* "sont marqués par une forte présence du narrateur, mais ils diffèrent par le type de cette présence. Elle est explicite dans *Lanval*" but "implicite dans la *Châtelaine de Vergi*" (Rychner, p. 101).

[7] The reason, as the knight seems to indicate to the duke (352–58), the secrecy of the affair between the knight and the châtelaine has been successfully maintained hitherto is because the go-between—the dog—cannot speak. I cannot accept Miss Kostoroski's discussion of the dog ("Quest and Query," p. 187): "It might be said that, in a sense, *le petit chienet* creates a third party for the Châtelaine-Chevalier couple which is harmless because he is not human and cannot talk. *This is not so*; for although he cannot speak, he is nevertheless *eloquent*. His appearance on the night of the Duke's visit to the tower *announces* and *ratifies* the liaison" (italics mine). By Kostoroski's own admission the dog cannot talk. That it seems to speak in this passage from her article is due simply to the fact that Kostoroski applies prosopopoeic terms to it, then equivocates on the degree to which she intends them metaphorically. For equally sloppy criticism see her assertion a few sentences later that "his [the dog's] appearance in the Duchess' conversation with the Châtelaine is immediately harmful." Here Kostoroski fails to distinguish between the word "chienet" and the actual dog of the story. It is the mention of the dog, not the *chienet* itself, that does such damage. See my discussion of this scene, above.

promptly swoons and dies. The knight, missing her at the ball, searches for her. A maiden who happens to have been in the sleeping chamber and to have witnessed the châtelaine's death, explains the situation to the knight who thereupon kills himself with a sword. When the maiden subsequently repeats her tale to the duke, the duke strikes the duchess dead with the same sword used by the knight, then explains to the shocked court the events which have led up to and brought about her death.

Even such a brief resumé reveals the important position accorded to story telling in the *Chastelaine de Vergi*. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that the *Chastelaine de Vergi* is, like a number of other Old French romances, a drama of language.[8] It takes as its subject the telling and retelling of a censured tale, verbal communication and miscommunication, the state of flux and the deceptions engendered by purely oral discourse. The narrative is the story of the dissemination of a story. The paradox that the knight can only keep his love intact if he betrays its convenant, which results from the clash of two conflicting social codes (*fin'amors* versus feudalism, loyalty to one's lady versus loyalty to one's lord),[9] corresponds to another, more particularly diegetic paradox: that of the "untellable" tale. In truth, stories exist only to be told, and one of the most powerful inducements is precisely to put a taboo on narration, as, for example, Ovid's tale of Midas illustrates.

The "untellable story" is a self-contradiction. This is stressed in the *Chastelaine de Vergi* by the fact that the tale which is never to be told is, in fact, told not once but three times. Each retelling is both a betrayal of the previous telling (and the terms of its secret pact) and the institution of a new pact, both a betrayal of previous communication and a new, secret communication. Each initiates a new character into a secret, private discourse, while destroying at the same time the circle of knowledge and the privacy of the former discourse. As much as each retelling is a form of communication, the verbal act also becomes associated with hiding a discourse from others; language becomes at one and the same time dissemination and dissimulation, revelation and concealment, presence and absence. As a result, each of the three tragic characters—the knight, the châtelaine, the duchess—as well as the duke at the story's end, thinks he occupies the position of a "sait tout" at a particular moment of the narrative (Maraud, p. 451).

One way to tell "an untellable tale" is to do so nonverbally through the language of gesture. Indeed *semblance*, whose prominence lexically in the *Chastelaine de Vergi* is indexical of its importance semantically, is inseparable from the problems of deceit and dissimulation, and Pál Lakits is entirely correct to observe that "l'auteur semble formellement obsédé par la *semblance*: la dissimulation, les sentiments affectés, les apparences trompeuses" (Lakits, p.

[8] See, for example, Norris Lacy, "'Amer par oïr dire': *Guillaume de Dole* and the Drama of Language," *French Review*, 54 (1981), 779–87; and William Calin, "Poetry and Eros: Language, Communication, and Intertextuality in "*Le Roman du Castelain de Couci*," *French Forum*, 6 (1981), 197–211.

[9] See Payen, p. 213; Kostoroski, pp. 183, 190.

41). Though any social code can be exploited as much to conceal or counterfeit a feeling as to express one, that of *semblance* appears to be especially equivocal.[10] Some of the permutations which can be wrought on semblance, both lexically and semantically, are manifest in the duchess' attempts to reveal to the knight that she loves him:

> et tant i ala que la duchoise l'enama et li fist tel *samblant* d'amors que, s'il n'eüst le cuers aillors, bien se peüst apercevoir par *samblant* que l'amast por voir. Mes quel *samblant* qu'el en feïst, li chevaliers *samblant* n'en fist que poi ne grant s'aperceüst qu'ele vers lui amor eüst . . . . (vv. 47–56, italics mine)

Semblance can be exploited for revelation (the duchess above) or obfuscation (the knight). Yet of the other eleven instances of *semblance* in the text only two imply the deliberate signification of one's true feelings (511, 537), whereas seven suggest the intentional dissimulation of one's sentiments (2, 515, 568, 572, 579, 621, 663). Harder to classify is the duke's promise *not* to give any sign/*samblant* that the knight has told him of his secret love affair (339).[11] By contrast, an extreme of "honnest semblance" is that of the châtelaine at the end of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*; her "looks" tell the knight all too clearly that she is dead (869). Most often, however, *semblance* is associated with duplicity and is usually used with reference to the duchess. Even the "samblant d'amors" she "fist" in verse 49 above is as resonant of artifice as of heartfelt emotion. Certainly there is no ambiguity the four other times the duchess decides to "faire semblant" (515, 568, 572, 663); on each occasion her semblance is a pure lie.

An association of duplicitous semblance and loose speech is made explicit in the opening lines of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*. Some people, the narrator says, who "loial samblant font" run around telling the story of a love affair as soon

[10] This duplicity of *semblance*, word and concept, in Old French literature is persuasively argued by Helen Solterer in a recent article, "Le Bel Semblant, Faus Semblant, Semblants Romanesques," *Médiévales*, 6 (Spring, 1984), 26–36. She also discusses the evolution of the word, as well as the appearance of both the masculine (*semblant*) and feminine (*semblance*) forms.

[11] The duke recalls here the knight of verse 56 who also gave no *samblant*. The question arises whether to give no semblance is, in fact, to give false semblance. To what degree can a failure to signify be regarded as signifying? In the case of the knight this nil-semblance is further complicated by the fact that the text does not clarify whether his failure to notice that the duchess is enamored of him is by design. It may be, as I have suggested, that the knight considers it more expedient *not* to show that he has noticed that she loves him. But it may also be that he actually does not notice. After all, the text tells us that he could easily perceive that she loved him "s'il n'eüst le cuers aillors." Since the knight has so clearly placed his heart elsewhere, he is perhaps exonerated here from noticing the obvious (cf. Lakits, p. 36). In any event the ambiguity in this passage is due to the equivocal nature of the word *samblant*. It is worth noting as well the exact terms of the promise the duke makes to the knight. In vowing not to reveal the knight's secret he says that rather than (or "before" which lends a note of irony to the whole vow) telling it he would have all his teeth pulled out ("Je me leroie avant sanz faute / trere les denz l'un avant l'autre"; 321–22). Presumably the punishment is fitting because it would render the duke speechless, like the dog. What is interesting is that the duke never follows through on this promise, whereas he does carry out the promise he makes to the duchess to kill her if she speaks what *he* tells *her*. Clearly this differential standard is linked to the presentation of the duke as a weak figure (see also Kostoroski, pp. 193–94).

as they know it. Is it surprising then that the evolution of speech and duplicity is depicted as an alliance between *dire* and *semblance*? If the story illustrates what happens when "li fin amant . . .ait dit ce que celer doit" (12–14), as is announced in both the prologue and epilogue, it also reveals that speaking is itself a means of *hiding* the truth as much as of revealing it.

Though speech might seem at first to offer a solution to deceptive *semblance*—the duchess, after all, left no room for doubt when finally she "parla un jor" to the knight and "mist a reson par moz" concerning her love—subsequent events vitiate any initial hopes. Indeed, after the duchess has been spurned, the relations between speech and communication become far more problematic. In her complaint to her husband, the knight becomes the traitor, the duplicitous one, the misuser of speech—everything, in fact, that the duchess is: clearly, this is a projection of her own deceit. The "chose vraie" the duchess recounts is actually a *conte*—the false tale that the knight sought her love. Truth does not necessarily come into being as a function of verbal utterance, as the duke realizes. His wife's story, while disturbing, is no more than that: a story. Twice the duke uses the verb *conter* to characterize what she has told him,[12] and indeed his main reason for believing her tale is the simple fact that he has never heard any "novele" that the knight loves another woman. He offers to let the knight counter oral tale with oral tale. Yet the distrust of oral discourse is manifest in his refusal to accept the knight's story without physical proof. Language is too duplicitous; speech is a prison from which one cannot liberate the truth.[13] The conflict within the story becomes expressed as a conflict between two mutually-irreconcilable versions of the interview between the duchess and the knight. Unable to trust the knight's verbal disclaimer any more than the duchess' verbal accusation, the duke insists on being eyewitness to the lovers' rendezvous. Only afterwards does he conclude that the knight has not "de mot mentit" and that his wife is a "menteresse."

Yet the revelation through speech implicates a simultaneous concealment. Indeed in the telling and retelling of the secret pact, the one cannot exist without constituting its opposite at the same time: inclusion entails exclusion, communication dissimulation, explanation obfuscation, in short, presence and absence dance their eternal shadow dance of *différance*. This endless deferral is wittily revealed by the text itself when the duchess "reveals"—falsely—the traitor at court. That the accusation is her attempt to make present another's culpability while making her own absent is obvious. More interesting is that precisely when the duchess gives the name of the "guilty" knight, our text both names him and highlights the deferral of his name by elliptically stating only that "sel

[12] Vv. 198, 246.

[13] As Maraud has noticed (p. 450), the trap in which the knight finds himself is specifically linguistic, first because he has agreed to answer a question without knowing what the question is, and second because any subsequent response has disastrous results: to speak makes the knight guilty of betraying his lady, but to be silent gives the *appearance* of having betrayed his lord (by seeking the duchess' love). It is interesting that the knight chooses to be *guilty* of betrayal, hoping of course that it will never become known, rather than to show instead a *semblance* of betrayal.

nomma." The naming of the knight becomes the naming of the act of naming him, the naming of anonymity (our anonymous protagonist): the knight can have no name because there is no traitorous knight at court. The only traitor is the duchess who most rightly should be named here. The text—the written text, that is—names the "traitorous" knight most accurately by not naming him, by faithfully recording the false naming but deferring the name out of the text.

The rest of the story tightens the association of verbal acts and deception, of oral discourse and *semblance* in its negative form. The duchess, angered by the "biau samblant" the duke again shows the knight, first "fet samblant" that she is sick. In bed that evening she then "samblant fet que point ne li haite . . . par fere samblant de courouz" (568, 572). Translating her own duplicity into verbal accusation once again, she labels the duke precisely what *she* is—"faus/ et trichierres et desloiaus" (577–78)—and attacks *his* semblance: "qui moi moustrez samblant d'amor, / n'onques ne m'amastes nul jor" (579–80). The knight's story becomes, in her discourse, a tale (*ce que cil vous a conté*), a lie (*mençonge*) and illusion (*arvoire*).

Speech thus enables the speaker to transform one thing into its opposite at will, the only check being personal integrity. According to the duchess the knight becomes the traitor, the truth becomes a lie. The intrigue of the *Chastelaine de Vergi* is that of language successively betrayed and perverted, of the truth twisted and reversed in the deforming mirror of oral narration. One verbal act of betrayal engenders another verbal pact which will be broken by a new betrayal of speech, and so on.

Thus it continues until the feast of Pentecost. The miracle of Pentecost is, of course, a peculiarly linguistic one in Christian theology: a miracle of language, the reversal of Babel, speech as immanent communication. At Pentecost the Ineffable is expressed as oral speech by the Holy Ghost. Against this background of divine linguistic revelation the triple linguistic betrayal becomes revealed at the Burgundian court. The first revelation—the duchess' allusion to the "petit chienet"—is the very antithesis of the Holy Ghost's miracle before the apostles. As a medieval audience would be well aware, the wonder of Pentecost is the simultaneous communication of truth in terms intelligible to each and every listener. The duchess' revelation, on the contrary, depends precisely on only the châtelaine de Vergi linking the dog to what it means. The duchess' strategem is one of obfuscation: the other ladies hear but do not understand: "Les dames ont oï le conte, / mes ne sevent a qoi ce monte" (719–20).

When the truth is finally revealed, three of the principals are already dead. Each of the three characters successively excluded in the series of secret pacts/ betrayals, ends up dead. Pentecost, whose message is salvation and speech as the revelation of divine teaching, here finds its human counterpart: the end of speech, muteness, eternal silence. Even the three oral accounts at the end of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*, balancing as they do the three betrayal narratives, do not suggest any restoration of human speech. They are eyewitness testimonials—first by the maiden who witnesses the death of the châtelaine and the

knight, finally by the duke who reveals all he knows of the affair. But, as we have already seen, the insistence on the *eyewitness* account reveals a distrust of, not a faith in, oral discourse. The faith, in other words, is more in the eyewitness than in oral narration. Is there then no account in which to lodge one's trust?

In a very tentative manner the *Chastelaine de Vergi,* like not a few other medieval literary texts, puts much greater store in the written account. The written narrative is more authoritative for the simple fact of having been written down. Coexistent with the distrust of orality is a (limited) faith in literacy.[14]

We have already remarked that the strategem of the dog and the repeated insistence on the figure of the eyewitness reveal a lack of faith in purely oral discourse. We have further seen that the written text of the *Chastelaine de Vergi* highlights the duchess' deferral of guilt by an analogous deferral of the guilty party's name; it manages to preserve the act of naming without repeating the lie of the name. The written text thus proves more authoritative than the spoken word. Furthermore, where no eyewitness can assure the veracity of events, recourse is made to a *written* text. Consider, for example, the scene in which the knight is pressed to reveal his love affair. The anguish he feels when bound to tell of the love which should remain secret is attested to by introducing into the *Chastelaine de Vergi* narrative another written text—the intercalated stanza by the Châtelain de Couci. Our text authenticates its claims by means of not an eyewitness figure but an analogous literary text and through the identity of experience between the protagonists of two different literary texts.[15]

Finally our anonymous written text proves more authoritative than any of the eyewitness accounts contained within it. If the duke is unpunished for his betrayal he is also left uninformed. Despite the fact that "li dus trestout ausi tost, / oiant toz, qui oïr le vost, / dist tout l'afere en mi la cort" (927–29), the story he tells is necessarily incomplete because he still does not know of the

[14] In his recent study, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), Brian Stock has traced the evolution from an oral to a written culture. In particular he notes that in an oral culture the "forger" of a text "was a traitor. He betrayed the relationship not between words and things but between men" (p. 60). Textual conditioning however was already well under way in the eleventh century as "Men began to think of facts not as recorded by texts but as embodied in texts" (p. 62). For a case history that illustrates the insistence on eyewitness testimony to corroborate oral accounts, see Stock's discussion of Bernard of Anger's *Miracula* of St. Foy (pp. 64–73). Stock sees Bernard's attitude as "at once critical of oral tradition yet seeking to verify it" before "adding the weight of literary authority to the miracles" (p. 67). In the *Chastelaine de Vergi* the author displays even more scepticism toward the oral text and implicitly valorizes the written text by making it more accurate than any oral account. For discussion of the similar attitude in that great mirror and compendium of thirteenth-century mentality, *La Queste del saint graal,* see my article "A Story of Interpretations: The *Queste del saint graal* as Metaliterature," forthcoming in *Romanic Review*. Are we confronted in these texts with a social nuance, the courtly versus legalist and canonist milieus? Or are we faced with a shift in mentality from the eleventh to the thirteenth century?

[15] Zumthor sees the intercalation of this stanza as "une sorte de citation d'autorité" in which "la strophe citée est destinée à expliciter et, dans une certaine mesure, à justifier les sentiments ressentis par le chevalier" ("Chanson," p. 79).

queen's attempted infidelity. He knows the knight never sought his wife's love, but not that she sought the knight's. The secret lovers' pact which the duchess attempted and failed to establish with the knight is in effect suspended for the duration of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*, left unrevealed because of the knight's evident decision not to disclose the duchess' betrayal. Having neither an eyewitness nor a written attestation of his version of the interview, the knight remains silent; he opts not to oppose one oral narrative with another. As a result, the only principal left alive at the story's end is blind to his own culpable role, ingnorant of the full extent of his wife's culpability, and forever excluded from knowing the whole story. In fact, the only *complete* version of the events is the written one we read. The spoken versions are all fragments: flawed, incomplete, trapped in the narrow, partial truth of human speech. The miracle of the pure and true verbal act—the miracle of Pentecost—surpasses humans, for whom the closest approximation to a discourse of immanent truth is the written word.

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