MARIE DE FRANCE’S OVID:
CLASSICAL RECEPTION
IN 12TH CENTURY COURTLY LITERATURE

by

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Thesis directed by Assistant Professor, Margaret Woodhull

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines and analyzes the *Lais* of Marie de France and the writings of Ovid (*Amores, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, and Metamorphoses*) to argue that Ovid’s literary influences on Marie’s *lais* overturn her firm contention that her *lais* originate from the Bretons. Relying on Ovidian themes, Marie’s *lais*, furthermore, demonstrate a level of classical reception by expanding, reinterpreting, and moralizing Ovid’s narratives and notions of *eros*.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Margaret Woodhull
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The twelfth-century renaissance stands as a pivotal period when Western European societies advanced politically, intellectually, and culturally. These developments encompassed a sea of subjects, disciplines, and perspectives when localized regions forged vernacular identities and distinctive cultures into the ornate tapestry of Western Europe. Elements from the near east, including intellectual contributions from Muhammedan sources and ancient Greek resources increased knowledge-based resources for the West. Latin texts, however, held greater influence because they held more scholastic authority as a constant companion for the educated strata of medieval society. Latin compositions created a measure of impetus for the many twelfth-century advancements. A multitude of Latin authors, including Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, held agency during this period of development. This thesis examines the influence of Ovid’s works on medieval society and the reception of his writings throughout the era. The Augustan-age poet, Ovid, gained prominence in the twelfth century through his amatory works and his Metamorphoses. The influx of intellectual texts gave rise to universities throughout Europe; it broadened education and hastened regional and cultural advancements during the era.

This thesis focuses on the geographical region of France where a number of social and intellectual developments emerged in the twelfth century.¹ The twelfth-century political

¹ The medieval idea of ‘France’ is quite different what the modern view of France is. In the 12th Century many borders shifted; the Angevin Empire of Henry II ruled most of the western regions of France. The French king,
makeup of France bifurcated the land between the Angevin Empire and the French King. The advancements, however, fostered an environment in which cultural transformations were manifest in the literary works throughout Western Europe. *Courtly literature*, an element of vernacular literature, emerged in the region of France and many other Western lands during this era. Within the genre of courtly literature, a multitude of authors composed poetic works, but one poet stands out and stands as the central subject of this thesis. Most scholars believe she wrote in the court of Henry II of England (r.1154-1189): Marie de France. She created a strain of courtly literature truly her own, specifically, she composed her famous *lais*. Marie demonstrates how she embraced the influences of classical literature, reinterpreted Ovid’s works against a twelfth-century landscape, and moralized Ovidian themes and narratives to create her own literary identity. Like many composers of courtly writings, she embraced *fin’amour* or courtly love as part of her poetic content. Her *lais*, arguably, define who Marie was through her compositions and little else when she rose to prominence as a noted and well-remembered poet of the Middle Ages.

What level of classical reception existed during the twelfth-century renaissance? What level of the influence did Ovid’s works bear on those of Marie de France, and what connection resides between their works? Marie contends that many of her *lais* stem from Breton tales; in the prologue of *Guigemar*, she asserts: “I shall relate briefly to you stories which I know to be true and from which the Bretons have composed their lays.” *(Ceo est lur dreit de mesparler!)*

Louis VII, and later Philip II, ruled the *ille-de-France*, the area around Paris and were overlords of most of the eastern French lands.
Les contes ke jo sai verrais,/ Dunt li Breton unt fait les lais.) How significantly did Ovid’s works guide Marie’s lais? Do they just echo the themes and narratives in Ovid’s writings or does Marie’s poetry expand Ovid’s themes of Love against the Christian-centered, twelfth-century ideals to reveal the distinctive and moralized layers of eros?

Answering these questions requires a detailed examination and analysis of Marie’s Lais, the Amores, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, and Metamorphoses of Ovid to expose their literary relationship. If we recognize the influence of Ovid’s texts on Marie’s works, it furthers our knowledge related to the level of classical reception during the era. This thesis examines the reception history of Ovid’s compositions from the classical era up to the twelfth-century renaissance and the literary heritage of courtly literature in medieval Europe. The thesis, moreover, does so in the context of a historical overview of the cultural influences.

This research expands our perception about the relationship between the compositions of Ovid and Marie de France and the significance of their writings forged during the culture of the twelfth century.

**Methodology**

This thesis relies on a variety of disciplines, including medieval history and literature, classics, linguistics, and to a degree, gender studies. An interdisciplinary approach lessens the possibility of myopic interpretations when analyzing the relationship between the writings of Ovid and Marie de France, the influence of Ovid’s compositions on Marie’s texts, and how it expands societal perspectives given the limited source material from the period.

The methodology of the thesis adopts a critical and qualitative approach which employs Hans Robert Jauss’s reception theory, specifically, the reception of Ovidian
classical texts in the twelfth century. The adoption of a hermeneutics furthers awareness of the connection between Ovid and Marie’s works and affords a discernment of how Marie’s poetry expands Ovid’s notions of love. An examination through a gendered lens, moreover, creates, in part, an alternate, twelfth-century perspective present in Marie de France’s courtly literature.

Marie de France, arguably, defines the medieval perception and interpretation of love in her verse. Marie composed more than just her lais which survive and demonstrate her literary breadth of composition, but the focus of this thesis is her lais. Her lais encompass a set of twelve poems ranging in length from 118 lines to nearly 1200 lines written in Old French and composed, most likely, in the latter half of the twelfth century. Her writings meld dramatic poetic narratives with the complex layers of love to create intense emotional details, dripping with sentiment. This thesis examines Marie de France’s notion of courtly literature, how she creates it, and the level of literary and cultural influence it possessed during the twelfth-century renaissance and beyond.

The historical record of Marie de France, unfortunately, reveals little more than an empty chasm. The data posterity holds exists only in her poetry. We do, however, possess her

2 James Tatum examines ‘reception theory’ in his, A Real Short Introduction to Classical Reception Theory in which he relies on the reception theory proposed by Robert Jauss as well as analyzing the theory itself.

3 The Ysopet or Fables, the Esprurgatoire de Saint Patriz (Legend of the Purgatory of Saint Patrick), and La Vie seinte Audree (The Life of Saint Audrey) all discussed in chapter 2.

compositions within various medieval manuscripts including, *Harley 978*. Sagacious people of the past, thankfully, recorded, copied, and transmitted her tales. Marie’s poetry holds just one twelfth-century facet of the regional transitions. Her achievements as a *female* author within the societal limitations of a patriarchal culture exhibit the period’s literary developments and advancements.\(^5\) This thesis also analyzes some aspects of her ability to succeed in the cultural environment while examining the twelfth-century agency of women. The thesis examines, also, the misperceived lack of influence women held during the medieval period where they held little or no sway or societal importance. Granted, most women who broke the chains of social suppression occupied a position within the cultural upper-tier or the aristocracy. People of a high-born status, furthermore, often received a higher level of education including exposure to the classical textual canon which afforded the intellectual skills and social advantages to succeed in medieval society.

This thesis contains four central chapters: the first gives a brief historical overview of Ovid, his relevant writings and scholarship related to his compositions, and the examination of his literary influence, from the classical era, through the Late Antique era, and into the twelfth-century renaissance. The second affords a partial historical catalogue, some notable figures who influenced the cultural developments of the High Middle Ages, and a section on *courtliness* during the period. The third chapter briefly explores the agency of women in the

\(^5\) Most scholars believe other female poets existed, but we do not possess any textual or historical evidence of them.
twelfth century and in Marie de France’s *lais*. The fourth chapter examines Ovidian influence on Marie de France’s *compositions* and the connection between their writings.

Deconstructing Marie’s works reveals a legion of components she presents in her *lais*. Her writings, not only reveal the highly interpretive layers of *eros*, but also elucidate her concept of courtly love within the moral landscape of the twelfth century which broaden the medieval understanding of *eros* by reinterpreting Ovidian elements. Her assertion that her tales derive from Breton *lais* also incorporate a linguistic layer when a clear classical influence emerges to meld with a regional vernacular element when she decides to compose her poetry in *Norman French* instead of Latin. These components reveal how her writings go further than a mirrored version of Ovid’s tales but evolve it to produce a literary example of the transformations during the twelfth-century renaissance.
Venus and Amor (François Boucher, 1742)

Publius Ovidius Naso

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CHAPTER II

THE ENAMORED ELEGIST:

OVIDIAN AGENCY IN THE TWELFTH-ENTURY RENAISSANCE

Cum bene pertaesum est, animoque relanguit ardor,
nescio qio miserae turbine mentis argor.

When I have grown weary of love and the ardor of my heart has cooled,
my soul is somehow seized upon by a whirlwind of wretchedness.8

Ovid’s Amores relates the emotional turmoil he extols about love throughout his
amatory works. Numerous medieval writers, including Marie de France, seized upon the
themes and narratives of Ovid’s compositions to form the courtly literature of the High
Middle Ages. The importance of Ovid’s writings reveal one example of its literary influence
on Marie de France’s works and their literary relationship of the period. An analysis exposes
how Ovid’s compositions shaped the literary cultures of the classical era, the Carolingian
epoch, and the vernacular courtly literature of the High Middle Ages.

Ovid, or Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BCE – 17 CE), remains both one of Rome’s most
renowned and controversial poets during the Augustan Age. During his reign, the Roman
Emperor exiled Ovid to the remote town of Tomis, now known as Constanta in Romania, on
the Black Sea in 8 CE.9 The emperor banished Ovid because of his poems, Carmen and Ars

Amatoria, but the third reason lies in a mysterious error. In, Ovid, The Love Poems, A.D. Melville states that some scholars speculate the error may have entwined the Emperor in some manner of immoral scandal. Ovid’s literary creations, however, far overshadow the controversy of his exile.

Ovid’s compositions contributed to the significant literary landscape of his age and guided Western literature, in part, for centuries to come. Publius Ovidius Naso emerged onto the Roman classical literary world circa 25 BCE when he penned his famous Amores (Loves) at the age of twenty-five. Ovid’s famous trinity of poems originally comprised five books, but the Roman poet reissued the collection in the three-book form which posterity now possesses. He completed the cycle of amatory works with the Ars Amatoria (The Art of Love) and the Remedia Amoris (Cures of Love) by 2 CE. The poet also wrote a host of other works including Heroides (Letters to Heroines), Metamorphoses (Transformations), and Fasti (Calendar) published in 8 CE. Examining his Amores, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, and his Metamorphoses explores and highlights the classical reception levels and its influence on the twelfth-century literary culture.

Applying Hans Robert Jauss’s classical reception theory affords a reception theory framework to adopt when examining the classical reception within Marie de France’s lais

11 Melville. viii.
12 Melville. ix.
13 ibid.
and other medieval authors. In, *A Real Short Introduction to Classical Reception Theory*, James Tatum states: “Reception theory originated from the work of Hans Robert Jauss in the late 1960s and was most influential during the 1970s and early 1980s in Germany and [the] USA.”

Jauss’s theory centers on the multi-disciplined interpretation of literary texts to create an “interface between themselves… and academic fields.” Twelfth-century classical reception, moreover, focuses on the ‘taking in’ and ‘receiving’ of classical writings including those of Ovid which contributed to the development of a regional literary identity when Marie de France penned her works along with many other writers.

The popularity of Ovid’s literature during his time in Rome, after his exile, and well beyond his death speaks to his literary significance. Ovid, for instance, held the position of leading poet after the deaths of Virgil and Horace. His exile, however, did little to diminish his literary popularity. Ovid continued to write in exile even when Augustus attempted to expunge his works from Roman libraries. Ovid’s writings, instead, grew in popularity, and the reception of his texts increased from the classical era until the conclusion of the Antique period.

In *Texts and Transmission*, L.D. Reynolds writes, “Ovid was among the most

14 James Tatum. “*A Real Short Introduction to Classical Reception Theory.*” A Journal of Humanities and the Classics, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 2014) 80. Hereafter Tatum. Jauss’s term, ‘reception’ or *rezeption*, as anthropologist Claude Lévis-Strauss points out, is a ‘floating signifier,’ a word which can mean “different things to different people.” The word reception comes from the Latin verb *recipere* (to receive), ‘to take in’ and ‘to receive.’ The word, however, as Charles Martindale states, “implies passivity” but “[it] retains as much force as if it were itself an active verb.”

15 Tatum. 91.

widely read and imitated of Latin poets.”

Reynolds regards the reception of Ovid’s works from the close of the classical era into the early Middle Ages. He suggests that Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* enjoyed the highest degree of repute and popularity because of Ovid’s “elegance of his style and his command of rhetorical technique.”

L. D. Reynolds establishes Ovidian reception and his literary authority supported by an intense amount of data detailing Ovidian source material from the classical era through its journey into the High Middle Ages.

Although Horace, Virgil, Terrence, Juvenal, and Lucan overshadowed Ovid during intermittent periods during the early Middle Ages, the importance for Ovid’s compositions expanded in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This period represented an increase in Ovidian literary influence to such a degree that Ludwig Traube issued it the eponym, *Aetas Ovidiana*, because the imprint of Ovid’s works developed remarkably in the twelfth-century. The reception of Ovid’s writings, moreover, increased in the High Middle Ages when the *canon of standard authors* decided to include Ovid’s texts. Reynolds states that Ovid held this distinction in the Middle Ages, the Italian renaissance, and beyond. Ovid’s works gained further favor during this era when leading academic centers relied on Ovid’s

17 Reynolds. 257.
18 ibid.
20 Reynolds. 258.
compositions increasingly including those in the valley of the Loire and the composers of the Florilegium Gallicum.\textsuperscript{21} Notable scholars of the day, namely Arnoulf of Orléans, adopted Ovid’s Metamorphoses and Fasti, among others, as a teaching tool.\textsuperscript{22} The Liber Catonianus, a collection of compositions applied to teach elementary grammar even incorporates Ovid’s Remedia Amoris.\textsuperscript{23} The twelfth-century intellectual culture of Western Europe embraced Ovid’s works at nearly all levels of the academic ladder, but interestingly, his amatory writings gained more popular interest than his academically regarded works.

One reason Ludwig Traube awards twelfth-century poetic literature the eponym, Aetas Ovidiana, a term which continues in academic circles today, relates to his poetic style and meter. In, Before the Aetas Ovidian, Mapping the Early Reception of Ovidian Elegy, Stephen Wheeler states that Traube makes his Ovidian argument in his Einleitung in die lateinische Philologie des Mittelalters lectures.\textsuperscript{24} His expression attempts, “to make a literary-historical point about medieval Latin versification.”\textsuperscript{25} Traube asserts that Ovid exceeded Vergil’s literary significance in the twelfth century because, in part, the medieval-Latin poetic style popular during the centuries before faded in medieval Latin poetry. The Leonini, however, an internally-rhymed dactylic verse, emerged and coincided with the aetas

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{itemize}
\item[21] Reynolds. 258.
\item[22] ibid.
\item[23] Reynolds. 258-259.
\item[24] ibid.
\item[25] ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotes}
Wheeler writes, “Ovid gave the elegiac distich its definitive form.” The twelfth-century literary transitions illustrate the salience of Ovid’s texts, furthermore, when cathedral schools incorporated his elegiac couplet into their curriculum. Ovid’s writings influenced many medieval writers including Marie de France when she utilizes the distich (rhyming couplet), an octosyllabic rhyming couplet to be precise, a derivative of Ovid’s distich. The elegiac couplet, in structure, is a hexameter followed by a pentameter. in Ovid’s Amores, the poet explains how Cupid, “transformed his hexameters into elegiacs by docking every second verse a foot.” Ovid’s compositions separate themselves from the dactylic hexameter of Vergil’s works when Ovid’s love poetry employs the elegiac couplet. In E. J. Kenney’s, Ovid’s Language and Style, Bednara states: “this [elegiac couplet] was originally so foreign to the natural character of Latin, and we almost dare to say that the Romans have excelled their Greek models of technique.” Ovid redefines the elegiac couplet

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26 Wheeler. 9-10.
27 Wheeler. 15.
28 Anthology. 180.
30 ibid.
31 ibid.
when he includes the *syllepsis*, a rhetorical element which combines the syntactical elements of the figurative and literal components of speech.\(^{33}\) In Ovid’s *Amores*, for example:

\[
\text{talis periuri promissaque uelaque Thesei} \\
\text{flueit praecipites Cressa tulisse Notos.}
\]

This was how Ariadne looked when she wept that the headlong south wind had carried off the sails and the promise of the perjured Theseus.\(^{34}\)

According the Keeney: “This particular vein of rhetorical ore was unique to him and his way of doing so reflects his way of viewing the physical world.”\(^{35}\) He lauds Ovid’s rhetorical talent and states that the poet utilizes the *syllepsis* often and are not, “tacked-on embellishments.”\(^{36}\) Ovid adapted, evolved, and defined his own elegiac couplet. The deconstruction of Ovid’s poetic structure reveals just one facet of influence contained in Ovid’s writings which determined the literary path of poetry, in part, into the High Middle Ages.

The adaptation of poetic styles and meter created a common thread in the classical age; Roman literature, for instance, adapted the dactylic hexameter from the Greeks.\(^{37}\) Marie de France was certainly not the first to adopt Ovid’s poetic meter. Alcuin and Theodulf of

\(^{33}\) Kenney. 45.
\(^{34}\) Kenney. 46.
\(^{35}\) ibid.
\(^{36}\) ibid.
\(^{37}\) Syllable.
Charlemagne’s court, for example, incorporated Ovid’s elegiac couplets in their verse. Ovid’s meter and adoption of the distich in the medieval era presents an additional element of classical reception and how his texts shaped the versification of the period. Ludwig Traube awarded Ovid the eponym because he contends that each period of literary history often linked its literary culture to the Latin author who possessed the highest currency. Wheeler contends that Vergil’s heroic hexameter flourished in the eighth and ninth century. The venality of the Church, he states, led to the satires of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal. The emergent enlightenment of the twelfth-century renaissance led to Ovid as the “poet-hero” of the time. Each era possessed a contemporary writer who not only mimicked the classical author’s meter but also his style. This imitation factor, moreover, defined the transition from the age of Vergil to the age of Horace to, ultimately, the age of Ovid when in the twelfth-century renaissance his writings held greater authority than other classical writers.

During the Antique Era and Carolingian Era, the Ovid’s writings struggled to gain favor because of Vergil’s codified literary dominance, a supremacy which L.D. Reynolds bases on quantitative data. In, Fortuna di Ovidio, A. Ronconi contends that Ovid’s reception throughout the Antique Era trailed Vergil because the educational canon excluded Ovid, and critics such as Quintilian and Seneca lessened his importance in the literary scheme.

39 Wheeler. 9-10.
40 ibid.
conclusions, moreover, rely on a “citation-index” data and is solely based on manuscript-based quantitative evidence.

Stephen Wheeler asserts that Ovid’s compositions substantially shaped Carolingian-era poetry and equaled, if not surpassed, Vergilian literary importance. Wheeler argues the qualitative evidence contained in Ovidian imitation overtakes Vergil’s literary dominance from the Antique Era into and beyond the medieval era. Wheeler disputes L.D. Reynolds’s argument that Vergil, Horace, and Terrance overshadowed Ovidian salience and disputes Vergilian supremacy because notable poets including: Alcuin, Theodulf, Modoin, Ermoldus Nigellus, and Walahfrid Strabo favored Ovidian poetry over Vergil’s.\textsuperscript{41} Ovid’s works, moreover, molded the era’s literary culture to such an extent that Modoin adopted Ovid’s name, \textit{Naso}, and he even received an elegiac letter from Theodulf, the exiled former bishop of Orléans, in 820 CE, where he proclaims him [Modoin] as “Ovid’s successor.”\textsuperscript{42} L.D. Reynolds and Ronconi base their Vergilian literary supremacy on quantitative evidence. Wheeler, conversely, argues from a qualitative perspective and assert Ovid’s literary authority existed on a level with that of Vergil.\textsuperscript{43} Wheeler, moreover, suggests Ovid’s compositions exceeded the ingrained regard scholars held for Ovid’s texts before they

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Wheeler. 15.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Wheeler. 14-15.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Wheeler. 15.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
blossomed in the literary culture of the twelfth-century renaissance and into the centuries beyond.

Throughout Ovid’s amatory works, he proclaims his desire for fame. in *Remedia Amoris*, he even proclaims his equal worth to Vergil’s elegy.\(^{44}\) A fifth-century text *Codex Vergilianus Vaticanus Lat. 386*, also known as *Romanus*, however, recounts Ovid’s prominent view of Vergil’s works when he proclaims:

\[
\text{Verglius magno quantum concessit Homero} \\
\text{Tantum ego Vergilio, Naso poeta, meo} \\
\text{Nec me praelatum cupio tibi ferre, poeta;} \\
\text{Ingenio sit e subsequor, hoc satis est.}
\]

However much Vergil gave way to the great Homer so much have I, the poet, Ovid, given way to my Vergil, nor do I desire to claim that I am preferred to you; if I am second to you in talent, this is enough.\(^{45}\)

The contradiction in these sources highlights the challenge to establish Ovidian literary influence. Ovid’s words in *Remedia Amoris* attempt to heal the offense against Augustus and maintain his literary equality to Augustus’s *personal poet*, Vergil, whom Augustus commissioned to produce his *greatest work*, *The Aeneid*. The fifth-century text, however, tells how Ovid places Vergil’s works above his own. During the fifth-century, however, Vergil’s works possessed greater acclaim than Ovid’s, but Stephen Wheeler states that “Vergiliocentrists” have perpetuated this view, including L.D. Reynolds and A. Ronconi. It

\(^{44}\) Wheeler. 16.

\(^{45}\) ibid.
motivates the dogmatic Vergilian loyalty scholars have held over the centuries although Wheeler and other scholars contend Ovid’s works held substantial if not equal influence to those of Vergil.

No matter who reigned the literary hill of classical literature, the central and relevant issue lies in the reception of Ovid’s writings. Before the twelfth century, ample evidence exists to support Ovidian-elegiac influence. Stephen Wheeler contends: “During this epoch [Late Antiquity], the efflorescence of Ovidian form of elegy appears richer.” The effects of Ovidian writings exist in the elegiac compositions from a host of writers including Avianus, Rutilius Namatianus who wrote De reditu suo, Orientus who composed Commonitorium, Dracontius who penned the Satisfactio, and Maximianus and Venantius Fortunatus who wrote Ovidian elegies as well. Wheeler supports Ovidian reception and clout through both quantitative, or number of manuscripts, and qualitative-based data in the analysis of extant texts of Ovid. Since a profuse amount of textual evidence has been lost to time and events, the daunting challenge to codify such issues remains an elusive one as scholars continue to ascertain reliable and conclusive data.

Ovid’s compositions over the centuries have received a degree of dubious notoriety because of his exile and the mystery which surrounds it. His expulsion fed the fame and

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46 Wheeler. 23.
47 ibid.
48 ibid.
popularity of his writings to the dismay of Augustus. Ovid’s exile, nonetheless, always held a cloud of doubt over his writings. As Jeremy Dimmick details in his article, *Ovid in The Middle Ages: Authority and Poetry*, Ovid is, “never fully restored from his Augustan exile and remains an archpriest of transgression, whether sexual, political, or theological.”

His controversial nature continued to gain popularity for his poetry. Augustus’s desire to purge Ovid and all his writing, in part, allowed his compositions to flourish because of their ‘banned’ status and produced a desire for the illicit.

Ovid’s outcast status carried a double edged-blade; one of fame, the other of disrepute. It created a forbidden interest in his work, and a genuine regard for his art. Jeremy Dimmick states that Ovid was not only an exilic poet but a *rebel* or, “an *auctor*, perpetually falling foul of authority.”

Ovid produced writings of dispute in his, *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amatoria*. Marie de France’s poem, *Guigemar* highlights Ovid’s opposition to authority and his literary presence when Venus casts his book teaching how to ‘control love’ into the fire. When Venus burns his book, it reveals, furthermore, the husband’s authority over his wife and promotes the notion to avoid Ovid’s books. It suggests that reading his book, aligns yourself with the “excommunicated” and one could be *exiled* as well because of, “its presupposition of sexual infidelity.”


51. ibid.

52. ibid.
A further aspect of Ovid’s relationship with Marie de France’s, *Guigemar*, deals with the burning of his book of love. Dimmick emphasizes how Ovid’s book survives the effect of conflagration. Both *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* thankfully remain in the classical literary canon, despite attempts of imperial and religious authorities. Marie’s *lai, Guigemar*, arguably, echoes the notion of futility regarding the burning of books and the forbidden nature of love’s desire. In *Guigemar*, Marie creates a narrative in which the lord’s wife leaves her husband and seeks out the knight, Guigemar, even after the lord *exiles* the knight and imprisons his wife for two years. Although the lord attempts to forbid their love, his wife and Guigemar, ultimately, reunite even after all the challenges they endured.

Jeremy Dimmick asserts that Ovid writings represent the twelfth-century contrarian literary movement and advances the social and static norms of the day. He contends that a host of scholars regarded Ovid as an “indispensable author” of the period. He adds, “he [Ovid] remained an acutely combustible one,” and, “Ovid in the Middle Ages stands as the single most important window into the imaginative world of secular contingency, power, passion, and the scope and limits of human art.” The struggle between the spiritual teachings of the Church and the secular compositions emerged and grew in number during this period. In *The Art of Love Amatory Fiction from Ovid to the Romance of the Rose*, Peter Allen states: “the conflict between the secular, classical tradition and the spiritual and


54 Dimmick. 26-27.
exclusive Judeo-Christian tradition marked the whole of the Middle Ages’ intellectual
development.”

The effect and reception of Ovid’s compositions existed far deeper within the
medieval narrative elements and thematic motifs; it manifested itself in the development
of medieval literary philosophy within the societal struggles between the secular and the
sacred strongholds of a deeply religious culture.

The divide between the two medieval literary camps related to the moral meaning and
relevance contained in classical texts. According to Allen, the orthodox school: “valued
secular texts only for their moral truths.” Conversely, the secular school read texts with an
open lens: “[secular school] validated the play of fiction as a literary fantasy within a poetic
frame which, by its nature, excluded the moral concerns of everyday Christian life.”

Allen states: “Ovid’s works became increasingly popular in the Middle Ages reaching their peak
in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.” Allen suggests that Ovid’s love poetry provided
medieval writers with a new dynamic style to create fiction where playful and flirtatious
interludes stimulated a separated fantasy world apart from the ‘reality’ of Christian life.

Ovid’s texts enjoyed an increasing and intricate role in the development of medieval fiction

55 Allen. 40.
56 Allen. 39.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
when it sought to create its own path of literary culture even when societal standard fought to suppress its development and cultural relevance.

The more liberal camp of reading texts benefitted from Peter Abelard (1079-1142) as a supporter. Allen states: “[Abelard] believed that fables could embody truth, and that the human craftsman could be analogous to the creator.” An Italian writer, who mimicked Ovid’s style of writing, Baudri of Boiurgueil (1046-1130), also, “valued fiction [and] saw it as a kind of play.” Allen explains that “a regional textual community” emerged and pre-dated the literary cultures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when Ovid became, “so popular and so influential.” Allen argues that Baudri most closely resembles Ovid in style and subject matter. According to Leo Pollman, Baudri is: “The first poet of the Christian West who took the positive step of setting profane love in the path of Christian literature.”

Peter Allen explains that Baudri connects fiction with a special kind of love which creates ‘chaste fulfillment’ (spetialis amour) about which Ovid conveys in his Amores and Ars amatoria. Peter Allen demonstrates how Ovid’s writings guides vernacular literature’s development when writers model their compositions after Ovidian literature with its multiple levels and a host of themes and narratives.

60 Allen. 42.
61 Allen. 43.
62 Allen. 41-42.
63 Allen. 49.
64 ibid.
Although the struggle between interpretative philosophies about classical texts continued, fiction as a genre broke free and developed into the vernacular writings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when tales of “troubadours and trouvère lyrics” surfaced onto the literary landscape. An increasing number of people viewed these fictional texts as empty, as entertaining works of literature, or “as literary play.” Allen cites Johan Huizinga, where in his book, *Homo ludens*, explains how literature creates a separation and poiesis, like love itself, is a play-function.” Huizinga furthers his argument, and states that medieval secular love was: “not immoral but rather amoral, they were designated as a special activity by their poetic nature, and set apart from religious life by their subject matter. These texts were thus ideal recreation.” The increase in fictional texts emanated, in part, from Ovid’s writings. In his work, *Three Roman Poets: Plautus Catullus, and Ovid*, Fredrick Adam writes: “Virgil and Horace were regarded with admiration, [but] Ovid alone was really read.” In France, “[Ovid’s] poems were [the] most widely imitated. French libraries contained numerous copies of these texts and the most important poets of the day used Ovidian themes, meter, and genres.” Even in the eleventh century, Ovid’s texts stimulated

65 Allen. 49.
66 Allen. 45.
67 ibid.
68 ibid.
69 Allen. 47.
70 Allen. 48.
literary inroads of influence when German libraries housed an expanding collection of his works.\textsuperscript{71} The joint-growth of Ovid’s effect on vernacular courtly literature in the midst of religious oversight, moreover, created, “an important basis for much medieval writing about erotic love, particularly by clerical writers such as Baudri of Bourgueil, [and] Andreas Capellanus.”\textsuperscript{72} The medieval amatory composition by the latter, Andreas Capellanus, \textit{De amore}, emerged as an Ovidian inspired composition; it’s popularity made it an important and regarded text of medieval courtly literature.

Andreas Capellanus’s \textit{De Amore} (Treatise of Love) or, \textit{De Arte Honeste Amandi}, (Art of Courtly Love) stands as an significant example of a medieval secular writing, most likely written in the latter half of the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{73} Like Ovid’s amatory works, Andreas’s \textit{De Amore} mimics Ovid’s three-book format and utilizes a dialogue convention to create and convey the flirtatious interludes of courtly love through a medieval cultural lens. Andreas under the watchful eyes of the Church created his writing with care to appease the concerns of the Church, but his anti-love and pro-love principles, as Peter Allen relates are, “in fact essentially and fundamentally Ovidian.”\textsuperscript{74} Even under these conditions, Allen continues, Andreas created: “a seductive and exciting game that offers moral and literary lessons in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{71} Allen. 48.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{72} Allen 49.}


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{74} Allen. 60.}
plenty and a valuable demonstration on how fiction about love could find a place.” He even addresses the classes and their interactions; the three societal classes, as described by Capellanus are: commoners, simple nobility, and the higher nobility. Capellanus, however, adds a fourth class, the clergy. Capellanus elevates the clergy above the aristocracy because of his personal history as a cleric, their spiritual duty to God, and: “He was attempting to appease his ecclesiastical superiors, who may well have been offended by the tone of the first two books.” In book two, for instance, chapter three, Andreas writes: “Other things which weaken love are blasphemy against God or his Saints, mockery of the ceremonies of the Church, and a deliberate withholding of charity from the poor.” Andreas’s writing warns lovers about the pains of love but also contains, “Ovidian precepts and medieval allegory, romance, and social comment.” At the end of book two, the King of Love creates the rules of love, and “he made them known to all lovers.” The King of Love establishes thirty-three rules which all must obey when engaging in love. It addresses jealousy, good character, loyalty to love and its power. The King of Love even incorporates Ciceronian works in rule twenty-seven, “A new love puts to flight an old one.” He states that all lovers must

75 Allen. 60.
76 Parry 141.
77 Parry. 141-142, 19.
78 Parry. 155.
79 Allen. 60-61.
80 Parry. 184.
81 Parry. 185.
faithfully adhere to his edicts or risk punishment from the King of Love. Although Andreas’s composition clearly contains Ovidian elements, in succeeds in developing a distinctive medieval cultural character by melding the concepts of Ovidian love and incorporating societal norms and standards of the era.

In, The Art of Courtly Love, John Jay Parry states that Capellanus’s work intended to, “portray conditions at Queen Eleanor’s court at Poitiers between 1170 and 1174.” Parry explains Ovid’s poetic effect on Capellanus’s courtly love in De Amore. Ovid’s poetry, Parry suggests that Ovidian works especially the Ars Amatoria formed the Western strain of medieval courtly love and, “for all practical purposes, we may say that the origin of courtly love is to be found in the writings of the poet, Ovid.” Parry states that “[The Ars Amatoria] circulated in Latin and in the vernacular, and it was rewritten to adapt it to the changed conditions of medieval society.” Capellanus’s writings, like Marie de France’s, developed the multiple facets of eros from Ovid’s works. He applied them and incorporated them into the Western medieval cultural to produce a new brand of literature as it evolved its elements of eros within diverse elements present in the medieval culture.

82 Parry. 186.
83 Parry. 21.
84 Parry. 4.
85 parry. 6.
Andreas Capellanus developed a controversial but popular composition in *De amore*. His composition inspired a broader interest in courtly literature among other cultures throughout Western Europe derived from Ovid’s amatory works. The number of manuscripts and the translations into vernacular languages throughout Western Europe establishes the contribution of Ovid and Capellanus’s writings. The widespread presence of their influence maintained an imprint on literary eyes for centuries. For example, in Spain: “Andreas served as a textbook for those courts of love that were established in Barcelona by King Juan of Aragon (1350-1396).” The popularity of his work, furthermore, highlights the influence of Ovid’s writings on Capellanus’s courtly literature. *De amore* also presents a powerful and popular example of fictional writing that aligned itself with the more liberal reading school of secular texts and opposed strict interpretations of them.

Supporters of the orthodox school of reading classical texts included many religious leaders and noted theologians including Jerome (ca. 340-420) and Augustine of Hippo (354-430) who often cited classical texts. Jerome, however, “deemed love poetry acceptable reading matter for school children but declared it sinful for their elders.” Fiction sat socially separated from the classical moralistic writers. Two writings central to the orthodox school of reading, surprisingly, point to Cicero who composed: *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad

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86 Parry. 22.
87 Parry. 23.
88 Allen. 40, 43.
89 ibid.
Herennium. Both standard texts provided the core to rhetorical studies. They established the notion, “fabulae were false, historia were true.” Christians placed the Bible in the historia category and viewed fiction as a challenge to the divine. The difficulty for the medieval learned people lay between the valued rich classical texts adopted in Church teachings. The desire of to create a method to honor classical texts while maintaining Christian devotional ideals and teachings of the Church resulted in the two-school issue classical literary interpretation. The more conservative school held a strict line in the use of classical, secular texts; they denied their literal meanings. Instead, this school utilized exegesis to produce inventive moralized versions and meanings of classical texts.

The fourteenth-century text Ovide moralisé stands as a crucial example of moralizing a text. The unknown author seizes Ovid’s Metamorphoses and many other classical and medieval writings to produce a Christian-based composition rich in moralized truths while the necessary Ovidian narrative remains for these truths to emerge. The anonymous author, furthermore, contends his assessment on the worthiness of fictional writings:

[et] qui la fable ensi creroit
Ester voire, il me messerreroit,
Et seroit bogrerie aperte.
Mes sous la fable gist couverte
La sentence plus profitable. 92

90 Allen. 40–41.
91 Allen. 41.
92 Allen. 43.
And whoever would believe the fable to be true would go astray; it would be blatant heresy [or perversion]. But underneath the fable, the most useful meaning lies covered.\textsuperscript{93}

This fourteenth-century writing,\textsuperscript{94} however, strays from strict adherence to the \textit{sentenia} (sense, fact, sense) of classical texts. When the writer reshapes Ovid’s works, the author reveals far more than just moral truths; the medieval writing seeks to meld the two schools of reading by giving both value. The moralizing of classical reshapes the original work as Marie de France did to create, reinterpret, and mold them into a form relevantly suited for the deeply religious twelfth century.

In her article, \textit{The Time of The Translator in The Ovide Moralisé}, Miranda Griffin demonstrates how the \textit{Ovide Moralisé} molded and morphed classical texts to reflect the culture of the era. The unknown author adapts Ovid’s writings, “[by] allotting to each tale one or more Christian allegorical or historicizing readings.”\textsuperscript{95} Griffin suggests the challenge for the translator of classical texts lies in transposing the, “historical difference of languages.” Griffin explains how the author alters the original text: “The \textit{Ovide moralisé} author often meticulously fills in the details which Ovid’s poem elides. The author amplifies

\\textsuperscript{93} Allen. 43.

\textsuperscript{94} Allen. 43. Paul Allen states the author of \textit{Ovide moralisé} as, “the thirteenth-century author” but other scholars cite its period as a writing from the fourteenth century including, Joel N. Feimer and Miranda Griffin whom is cited.


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a passing reference to Scylla in Book Eight in the *Metamorphoses*, for example, to graphically detail the story of Pasiphae which Ovid barely mentions in his text.\textsuperscript{96}

The anonymous author takes the river-god, Acheloüs, tales in Book Eight of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* to create a moralized narrative. Ovid’s original text where Acheloüs provides shelter for Theseus and his followers occupies approximately 120 lines. The *Ovide moralisé*, however, expands the work into nearly seven-hundred lines and alters the narrative’s focus to center on a seemingly insignificant motif to Christianize it.\textsuperscript{97} She notes, “The time of Theseus’s residence in Acheloüs’s house is understood as the forty days which Christ spent in the world after his resurrection.”\textsuperscript{98} The book’s author also adds cork as a building material for Theseus’s shelter to equal four which matches the number of cardinal virtues. The transformation of Ovid’s tale, as Griffin outlines, is: “to avoid being swept away by the flood of worldly doubt, one should shelter in the divine house built from the cardinal virtues: Acheloüs’s shelter is now understood as a set of instructions on how to interpret the world.”\textsuperscript{99}

The anonymous author, in part, focuses on *prudence*, the first of the cardinal virtues but also includes Ciceronian virtues of memory, intelligence, and foresight.\textsuperscript{100} As Griffin

\textsuperscript{96} Griffin. 34.
\textsuperscript{97} Griffin. 39.
\textsuperscript{98} Griffin. 39.
\textsuperscript{99} ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Griffin. 40.
relates, the unknown author of *Ovide moralisé* reforms Ovid’s epic work into a somewhat Christian narrative despite the grisly details of rape, incest, and numerous acts of violence. The author, moreover, emphasizes the classical author’s virtues although Cicero held no Christian beliefs. Griffin contends: “The *Ovide moralisé’s* interpretation of the *Metamorphoses* creates a thoroughly anachronistic, and deliberately attributes meanings to Ovid’s writings which he, as a pre-Christian author, cannot have intended.” The unknown author’s moralizing of the text conveys his Christian message and alters the original narrative to further theological goals in the writing itself while holding the classical writings of Ovid with regard.

In his article, *Medea in Ovid’s Metamorphoses and The Ovide Moralisé: Translation and Transmission*, Joel N. Feimer examines the narrative of Medea and Jason of the *Ovide moralisé’s*, taken from Book Seven in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Feimer deconstructs the narrative and suggests the author transmits, “his [author’s] orthodox mediaeval vision to his audience” and “contains the most complete portrait of Medea among the mediaeval narrations of her story.” The *Ovide moralisé*, as Feimer claims, produces a: “perfect example of the mediaeval mode of allegory which enabled the scholar-poet of the Middle Ages to reconcile two such disparate contexts as pagan narrative and Christian theology

分别为

101 Griffin. 41.
102 Griffin. 38.
103 Feimer. 40.
without any qualm of intellect or conscience.”

For instance, the anonymous writer attacks the character of Jason with a host of narrative motifs and incorporates multiple classical and medieval textual sources including the *Roman de Troie* and *Heroides*. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, conversely, makes no such attacks on Jason’s character. Feimer explains that *Ovide moralisé* melds Ovid’s tale into the medieval mythology of Jason’s condemned character which the author often revisits and emphasizes in the composition.

Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski examines the complex love in the *Ovide moralisé* in, *The Scandal of Pasiphae: Narration and Interpretation in the *Ovide moralisé***. She highlights the tale of Pasiphae and the bull where the unrequited love in the *Metamorphoses* arises where Scylla loves her father’s enemy, Minos, Iphis desires another girl, and Pasiphae is enamored with a bull.  

The unknown author, however, creates a Christian moralization of the original tale with a few caveats. The writer takes Pasiphae, who exists in both Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and his *Ars Amatoria*, and transforms her into the personification of *lust*, “for the sin of bestiality.”

According to Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, the author furthers Ovidian influence when the Pasiphae displays jealousy for the cows, fusses over herself in the mirror, and constructs a wooden cow to “deceive the bull into impregnating her.”

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104 Feimer. 41.


106 Renate. 309.

107 ibid.
scene with a love-struck woman gazing upon a man from a window mirrors that of Lavine gawking at Aeneas from a tower found in the *Roman d'Eneas* inspired by Ovid's account of Scylla:

\[\begin{align*}
Lavine fu an la tor sus, d'\textit{une fenestre gardajus}, \\
vit Eneam qui fu desoz, \\
forment l'a esgarde sor toz. \\
Molt li sanbla et bel et gent (Lines 8047-51). \\
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
Ele comance a tressiier, \\
a refroidir et a tranblar, \\
sovant se pasme et tressalt, \\
sanglot, fremist, li cuers li falt, \\
degiete soi, sofle, baaille (Lines 8073-77). \\
\end{align*}\]

(Lavine was up in the tower. She looked down from a window and saw Eneas, who was below. She gazed intently at him above all... She began to perspire, then to shiver and tremble. Often, she swooned and quaked. She sobbed and quivered; her heart failed; she heaved and gasped and gaped).\(^{108}\)

Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski explains how the author incorporates material from romance literature, specifically the *Roman d'Eneas*, to augment the Pasiphae narrative along with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and elements of his amatory works.\(^{109}\) According to F. J. E. Raby, writers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, like Hildebert of Lavardin (1056-1123), Godefroy of Reims (d. ca. 1095), Guy (Bishop of Amiens from 1058-1076), Raoul de la Tourte (b. ca 1063), and Marbod of Rennes (1035-1123), “[knew] their Ovid as well as their Bible by heart.”\(^{110}\) Marbod of Rennes, moreover, highlights how Ovid’s writings shaped the

\(^{108}\) Renate. 312.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.

\(^{110}\) Allen. 49.
literature of the High Middle Ages; Allen states that Marbod was the first in Europe to employ: “the fictive first person so important to Ovid’s amatory works.” Medieval writers like the anonymous author of the *Ovide moralisé* demonstrate how Ovid’s writings informed the medieval literature through the moralized compositions taken from Ovid’s narratives and themes to reveal the moralized truths in them.

The ironic element of Ovid’s writings exists in how Emperor Augustus sought to expunge Ovid’s writings after he exiled the poet to Tomis. His compositions, instead, gained intellectual recognition and influence in the Carolingian epoch, the twelfth-century renaissance, and into subsequent centuries. The reception of Ovid’s texts and the significance he gained, moreover, exist in both the secular and sacred writings found within the literary fabric of the twelfth century, including those of Marie de France when vernacular courtly literature blossomed and writers moralized classical texts to convey their *moral truths* as a pedagogical tool.

111 Allen. 49.
CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES DURING THE 12TH CENTURY RENAISSANCE

Exploring the historical factors of the twelfth-century renaissance of the High Middle Ages augments our understanding of the formative elements which affected the many layers of its cultural landscape. The developments of this epoch shaped a new paradigm within Western Europe societies. Unwrapping the related elements present in this historical landscape furthers our recognition and discernment of the period’s influential entities and mechanisms.

A number of guiding elements during the twelfth-century renaissance existed in many levels of medieval society. This central driving force and transformation of the era became known as the “medieval renaissance,”¹¹² noted formerly; it existed in the intellectual advancements of this period.¹¹³ multiple components emerged in concert to create a bourgeoning age of medieval knowledge in France and throughout Western Europe. In *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, Charles Haskins notes: “A library of c.1100 would have little beyond the and the Latin fathers with the Carolingian commentators.”¹¹⁴

The intellectual advancements of the century, moreover, emerge in the contents of many libraries:


¹¹³ ibid.

¹¹⁴ Haskins. 7.
“By c.1200 or a few years later, we should expect to find, not only more and better copies of these older works, but also the *Corpus Juris Civilis* and classics partially rescued from neglect; the canonical collection of Gratian and the recent Popes.”¹¹⁵ Haskins notes, furthermore, these libraries would contain poetry, letters of correspondence, French feudal epics, Provençal lyrics, and texts on mathematics.¹¹⁶ Haskins declares: “the century begins with the flourishing cathedral schools, and closes with the earliest universities already well established at Salerno, Bologna, Paris, Montpelier, and Oxford.”¹¹⁷ The scholarly advancements and their significance lies in the rippling effect which emerged across many countries in Western Europe. The influx of foreign texts shaped a level of intellectual interest and transformed societies into book-driven cultures where the codex replaced the scroll and the desire for a literary culture emerged and flourished.

Understanding the overall textual nature and the importance of Latin texts when an influx of foreign writings created a significant feature of this developmental period. Medieval society, for instance, relied on a relatively small number of classical Latin texts prior to the twelfth century. According to L. D. Reynolds: “an enormous amount of Latin literature was lost in ancient times.”¹¹⁸ A multitude of complex, detailed reasons explain the loss of ancient

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¹¹⁵ Haskins. 7.
¹¹⁶ ibid.
¹¹⁷ Haskins. 6.
¹¹⁸ Reynolds. xiv.
texts; the consequence of time and human events, however, created most of these losses.\textsuperscript{119} From the \textit{Codices Latini Antiquiores}, Reynolds determines the content of surviving classical texts prior to the year 800 CE.\textsuperscript{120} Classical Latin manuscripts, however, grew extensively from this period up to the twelfth century and beyond. The vast majority of works in the \textit{Codices Latini Antiquiores} held an ecclesiastical focus, only a limited amount of secular works existed and an even smaller amount of classical literature.\textsuperscript{121} The reception of classical texts during this era highlights a vital element of the change during the period. Knowing which texts time destroyed through related texts and which writings survived determine how we understand the level of twelfth-century classical reception. For instance, as noted earlier, one reason Vergil’s writings held a higher degree of acclaim was rooted in the surviving number of Vergil’s compositions which surpassed those of Ovid.

The intellectual advancements and growth of classical Latin manuscripts in the medieval period represent, arguably, a paradigm shift. Reynolds supports this assertion when he states: “With the beginning of the twelfth-century renaissance, there is a very substantial increase in the volume of books in circulation.”\textsuperscript{122} He also affirms that most new books emerged in France.\textsuperscript{123} In, \textit{From Memory to Written Record}, M. T Clanchy, furthermore,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{119} Reynolds. xiv.
\item\textsuperscript{120} Reynolds. xv.
\item\textsuperscript{121} Reynolds. xv-xvi.
\item\textsuperscript{122} Reynolds. xxxv.
\item\textsuperscript{123} ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
gives evidence to support medieval society’s shift towards a literate and literary culture in England.\textsuperscript{124} When Clanchy details the transformations in Henry II’s England, between the years 1066-1307 CE, he states: “these years constitute a distinctive period in the development of literate\textsuperscript{125} ways of \textit{thinking} and doing business.”\textsuperscript{126} By the end of the thirteen century, furthermore, the literary culture and a literate method of ruling replaced the predominant oral culture of the tenth and eleventh centuries.\textsuperscript{127} The production of new books, including classical texts, established the elemental importance of Latin literature in twelfth-century culture. The significance of Reynolds textual analysis and Clanchy’s assessments of the literary elements in England demonstrate, not only the rise in Latin texts prior to the twelfth-century renaissance, but also the rise in book production. The increase in the availability of knowledge-based texts to Western societies created a paradigm shift where the \textit{book} and a literate culture emerge as an intrinsic and common component present in many levels of Western societies.

\textit{In Europe in The High Middle Ages}, William Chester Jordan describes the transformations of twelfth-century renaissance when he suggests: “the roots of these [twelfth-}


\textsuperscript{125} Clanchy’s term ‘literate’ differs from our modern definition of the word. In the context of his book, a literate culture means the culture began to employ writings, writs, manuscripts and charters as a mean to learn, do business, and govern instead memorizing transactions, texts, and procedures. It certainly did not mean most of the culture could read and write.

\textsuperscript{126} ibid.

\textsuperscript{127} ibid.
century renaissance] developments were classical.” He argues: “familiarity and critical engagement with classical Rome and, to a far lesser extent, ancient Greek learning in Latin translation was characteristic of the entire middle ages.”

Jordan notes the pedagogical influence of classical Latin continued during the medieval period in the poetic styles and in metered teaching techniques manifest in many twelfth-century works. Conversely, he states: “New ways of poetical writing or new emphases on conceits less favored in antiquity often displaced classical practices [by the twelfth century].”

The importance of Jordan’s analysis of poetic teaching practices illustrate how the intellectual culture of the medieval era did not just echo classical methods, it evolved its poetic techniques and inspired innovation to create a distinct literary identity.

The proliferation of knowledge through the monastic orders also developed an intellectual expansion when monasteries emerged as not only religious centers but also centers of learning. New and existing monasteries and monastic orders in the twelfth century increased their educational influence to become research and intellectual centers of education. France, for example, possessed many education-driven institutions including Chartres and Cluny; the latter held nearly one-thousand books and encompassed a host of

128 Reynolds. xxxv.
130 ibid.
131 Jordan. 116.
disciplines including law, literature, philosophy, and of course theology.\textsuperscript{132} With the rise in book production and the demand for books, many scriptoria emerged in these same monasteries. The significance of monastic learning centers regarding classical Latin texts resides in how the extensive net of institutions seeking knowledge reached. The twelfth-century culture thirst for intellectual and cultural knowledge grew to include educational institutions, literary resources, universities, and in many sacred monasteries.

Henry II of England (r. 1154-1189), a central character in the High Middle Ages, shifted the literate and literary character of his kingdom. He forged a new path to transform his realm into a literary-centered society; Henry’s desires, however, held few scholastic goals, his motives sought to increase his royal authority and create an effective administrative system which he accomplished. His goal to produce a more literate and practical system of ruling, nonetheless, also created a developing literary culture throughout the Angevin empire a movement which flourished and spread well past his borders into Western Europe.

Throughout the medieval era, the often volatile and violent political shifts of Western Europe played an pivotal role in twelfth-century renaissance developments. The political landscape of bellicose borders and periods of relative peace often entwined a multitude of medieval societal layers and shaped the trajectory of its cultural identity. The relative stability of Henry II of England’s rule, for instance, helped to establish the societal character of his kingdom indirectly. The \textit{peace} of Henry’s Angevin empire encompassed England and

\textsuperscript{132} Jordan. 115-116.
nearly half of France; it brought a welcome relief to many after the unrest of Stephen of Blois (r. 1035-1154) who succeeded Henry II’s grandfather, Henry I (r. 1100-1135).

France in 1180 CE.

The seminal and active participants who shaped the cultural makeup of France, however, leaned far more toward Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204) than her two

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husbands, Henry II of England and Louis VII of France\textsuperscript{136} (1137-1180).\textsuperscript{137} Eleanor guided the literary and cultural trajectory of the region in both Henry’s Angevin lands and Louis’s French territories.\textsuperscript{138} After Henry claimed the English throne in 1154 and married Eleanor, he gained territories throughout France which increased his wealth and influence. King Louis’s pursuits and pious proclivity, and Henry’s propensity to seek out more lands and power permitted Eleanor to focus on her interests and those of her daughter, Marie de Champagne (not to be confused with Marie de France). The Queen of England and Marie, the Countess of Champagne, whom we examine further in a later chapter, highlight how cultural standards of the period limited the role of women, and also how they evolved the role of women. Eleanor possessed a personal history with courtly literature. She enjoyed the multicultural elements which, in part, formed the vernacular writings of the era. It underlines, moreover, just one example of how developments occurred within the various and myriad of societal levels.

A sea of historical forces manifests themselves during this period to create the evolving societies of the High Middle Ages. From the influx of foreign texts, to the rise of universities; from the increase of book production, to the troubadour culture of courtly love; from the growth of Henry’s royal authority, to the shift in becoming a literate and book-centered society, the span of formative facets fills the historical accounts of the period. No


\textsuperscript{138} Seward. 73.
one event formed the path of its advancing societies. This era produced a tapestry of seemingly separate, yet related, occurrences and effects. It created a nexus and a paradigm shift to cultivate what became known as the twelfth-century renaissance. The origins and facets which encompass it represent its numerous cultures but its cultural transformations, arguably, drove it and guide this thesis, specifically the period’s courtly literature and the poetry of Marie de France. To examine courtly writings, however, a more detailed understanding of its definition, origins, and medieval perceptions warrant its examination.

**COURTLINESS IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES**

The concept of courtliness during the medieval era held influence on the political, social, spiritual, literary levels of society, and on its culture’s social hierarchy. It emerged in various lands throughout Europe. Defining its medieval perceptions is vital in discerning its prevalent presence during this era. Although courtliness and what defines it possesses a multitude of related elements, resource materials, and origins, this thesis examines sources and common pieces which create a picture of it instead of examining the corpus of worthwhile and multiple components. The various perspectives explain how courtliness spread to incorporate itself in the stratum of societies.

The term, courtliness, emerged only in the nineteenth century when Gaston Paris created the appellation of *fin’ amour or courtly love* in 1883; it defines the behavior of the participants in the court itself. The Latin term which refers to *courtliness* in some texts is

139 Parry. 3.
curialitas. The Latin language during this era modified its definition over the centuries; by the mid-twelfth century, curialitas attempted to meld the secular and sacred connotations of courtliness.\textsuperscript{140} In, \textit{The Origins of Courtliness – Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals; 939-1210}, C. Stephen Jaeger examines how the medieval era period defined the character of courtliness. He states that the social constructs of courtliness contained \textit{ethical} standards which kept clerics sanctified and the \textit{social} guidelines related to, “the most distinguished men at court.”\textsuperscript{141} Jaeger expresses that a “liberal humanist position,” also sought to unify these two views by, “pleasing God and the world.”\textsuperscript{142} Although court attendees and churchmen opposed each other’s perceptions of courtliness, its attributes eventually encompassed both the sacred and secular pursuits, but not entirely. The clerics at court sought to maintain the \textit{mores} within the courts. In the Church’s eyes, courtliness threatened the spiritual well-being of its people. The humanist position to which Jaeger refers created strife between court attendees and the clerics who sought to restrain outside and non-sacred writings and pressures that molded the period’s various cultures. These influences, in time, created different perceptions of courtliness.

C. Stephen Jaeger cites multiple sources which define, in part, court behavior including possessing a virtuous character; in, \textit{The Dialogue on the Life of Bamberg}, written

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\textsuperscript{141} ibid.

\textsuperscript{142} ibid.
\end{flushleft}
by Harbord in the late eleventh century.\footnote{Jaeger. 128.} Siegfried, the narrator, states Otto, Bishop of Bamberg, is, “conspicuous as he was for his goodness, good breeding, and far-sighted wisdom…[his] well-bred considerateness: the elegant and urbane breeding is the outer sign of inner virtue.”\footnote{Jaeger. 129.} Siegfried adds Otto displayed polished, “table manners, speech, gesture, and dress.”\footnote{ibid.} Not only does Otto hold these traits, he exudes an over-extended degree of their attributes. These virtues, interestingly, closely match those of Cicero’s “concept of decorum.”\footnote{ibid.} The writing highlights the level of classical reception and its presence in and on distant cultures when Seigfried references Cicero’s writings. Seigfried, moreover, decides to cite a classical writer, Cicero, instead of a Church father or other sacred author when defining Otto’s virtues. A significant feature absent within the texts lies in how it fails to describe the bishop’s sacred qualities or his humble demeanor. Instead it highlights his well-bred virtue emphasizing his noble birth status.

The courtly element of manners which relate to civil behavior also developed as an important political and social facet of the era. The adoption of manners created a common link between the worldly and clerical aspects of courtly behavior and lessened, to some measure, the Church’s concerns about courtliness. Orderic Vitalis, for instance, describes Matilda, Queen of England (mother of Henry II of England), as, “endowed with beauty,
noble birth, learning, all *beauty of manners* and virtues, and—what is and ever will be more worthy of praise—strong faith and fervent love of Christ.”¹⁴⁷ Jaeger explains: “By the end of the twelfth century, this quality was cultivated by courtiers in general, clerical and lay, as a criterion of acceptance in royal service.” Agnes of Poitou, wife of Henry III, chose her chaplain, Ulrich of Zell, “because of the harmonious suaveness of his *delectable manners*.”¹⁴⁸ The ideal of manners, Jaeger suggests, established itself to tame those who sought brawls and battles, but it developed into a desired quality of those who wished to serve at court. To avoid disorder and to maintain the King’s peace, many adopted courtly features. Rulers did not embrace it for its aesthetics; they implemented it as a political and social measure. Lords, kings, and queens realized preserving the peace sustained and strengthened their rule; it furthered its growth and melded with regional cultural standards to create its own brand of courtliness. The civilizing of the people produced an element the Church endorsed. The more refined facet of manners developed out of the civilizing and inspired courtly elements to emerge.

In 1185, Saxo Grammaticus wrote, *Gesta Danorum*; he relates how Canute the Great (985-1035),¹⁴⁹ not only wanted good manners for the men who supported him, but he needed them to possess good manners. King Canute, “calls on his wise counselor, Odo of Seeland,” to implement his program of civil behavior. Saxo writes: “He [Canute] imbued the most

¹⁴⁷ Jaeger. 135.

¹⁴⁸ Jaeger. 34.

courageous knights with the most lovely manner of conduct… collective virtue [and] beauty of conduct.”

Jaeger contends, Canute creates a “paradigmatic” event where the “process of civilizing” occurred. Canute ruled a sea of marauding men who required civilizing to keep order; his program transforms: “a group of ruffian knights into courtiers.” Manners and the emerging civilizing philosophy in Northern Europe with Canute, Germany with Otto of Bamberg, and in France with Matilda and Agnes of Poitou highlights the social courtly elements and attitudes which bridge, to a degree, the clerical perceptions and those at court. The behavioral shift Canute initiates holds significance; his plan to maintain order and control the warring bands of men secures and expands his realm. His philosophies of courtly behavior which emerge from his civilizing pursuits, furthermore, evolve to create a method of behavior and spread out and beyond his lands.

The eloquence of speech illustrates a further example of how courtly behavior evolved and emerged out of the social perceptions of courtliness. The medieval courtly culture’s poetic community lauded an aspect of courtliness: the craft of speech. The desired social quality of urbane speech became a required element for entry into royal court. Jaeger defines it as, “a sophisticated and well-educated manner of speaking and pronouncing the Latin language, and a witty, ironic manner of joking.”

150 Jaeger. 137.
151 Jaeger. 139.
152 ibid.
153 Jaeger. 145.
of Bourgeuil, who modeled his writings after Ovid, states: “[speech] no matter how lofty its subject matter, becomes contemptible if not recited in an urbane manner.” The flirtatious elements of courtly love, moreover, take hold—a central element of Ovid’s amatory writings. Although the Church criticized this manner of speech and viewed it with suspicion, Jaeger relates how two bishops, Macelinus of Würzburg, in a modern sense, pulls a practical joke on Megingaud of Eichstatt where he gives Megingaud sour wine before awarding him to proper fine wine. The text illustrates how clerics were not immune to the pleasures of laughter, not even two bishops. Although not all clergy supported the wit of eloquent, urbane speech, others viewed it with distrust because of its deceptive influence within literary courtliness. The eloquence of speech, nevertheless, rose as a central facet of medieval courtliness. Baudri and others embrace and further courtly literature with a marked classical influence. Jaeger creates a picture of common components through textual sources of the era and creates understanding of what defined courtliness and explains aspects of its origins.

Jaeger catalogues the qualities which produce a picture and definition of courtliness. He extracts these attributes, in part, from the Italian chronicler, Acerbus Morena. In the text, Morena describes the characteristics of noble lords and ladies, and revered churchmen who belonged to the Court of Emperor Fredrick of Barbarossa. Among many, Morena lists

154 Jaeger. 145.

155 Jaeger. 146.

156 Jaeger. 172-173. The emperor sought to meet Philip II of France and Richard I of England, the son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, on the third crusade but never made it to the Holy Land.
Herman of Saxony, Rainald, Archbishop of Cologne, and Margaret, the wife of the emperor in his text.\footnote{Jaeger. 171-173.} These texts augment the already noted qualities of well-bred, eloquent speech and mannered behavior. Morena’s texts related to courtliness incorporate, being affable, having amiable behavior, having the social qualities appropriate for skilled statesmanship, the essence of decorum, the delicacy of feeling, a chaste sense of propriety, a regard for others, possessing sumptuous clothing, and a refinement of personal grooming.\footnote{ibid.} Providing more insight into where courtliness existed held significance as well. The German cultural elements, for instance, share a commonality with French vernacular literature when Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter, Marie de Champagne, nurtured courtly literature. It demonstrates some mutual elements of courtly behavior and define it, its perception of its nature, and explain how courtly tenets of behavior dispersed their influence into different lands.

the social advancements and courtly features and civilizing agenda transferred its qualities into literary courtliness as well. Jaeger contends: “it [courtliness] helps to maintain the obligatory atmosphere of calm and good fellowship at court. The result is that all conflict submerges and is carried on beneath the surface order and elegance of court life in the form of intrigue.”\footnote{Jaeger. 238.} Jaeger adds, “restraint, moderation and self-control became requisite qualities
for entry into court service.”\textsuperscript{160} Courtliness, moreover, existed well before its expression in vernacular literature; in its social form, it lived in disperse regions of Europe and beyond.\textsuperscript{161} The civilizing efforts of social courtliness sought to mitigate violence, disorder, and conflict. Mediation through conversation and the written word emerged as an alternative to the sword and bloody battles. Its origins, however, emerged beyond the distinctive cultures of Europe. Writings from the classical world and the \textit{Outremer} fed the spring of Western European courtliness.

A host of courtly qualities which the worldly sectors embraced possessed a significant degree of classical influence. Both Cicero and Ovid’s literary works play prevalent parts in the medieval texts cited by Jaeger. In, \textit{The Dialogue on the life of Otto of Bamberg}, Harbord incorporates Cicero’s themes of virtue, decorum, and rhetoric. Ovid relies on the eloquence of speech as a vital tool of his poetic skill and wit ever present in his writings; Ovid’s amatory works employ eloquence, wit, and with \textit{deception} as characteristics. The element of deception, moreover, emerges as an integral, encouraged, and necessary characteristic of a courtier within the narrative structure and counters the moral and noble attributes in literary courtliness. The contribution of Ovid and Cicero’s writings illustrate the substantial level of classical reception during this era even when members of the Church took exception with classical writings because they lacked a Christian origin.

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{160} Jaeger. 238.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{161} Jaeger. 173.}
\end{footnotesize}
The courtly behaviors which emerged as entrance tools to royal service, and in the vernacular literary tradition, controlled the center of the, “social and ethical phenomenon,” known as courtliness.\textsuperscript{162} Courtly literature expanded its presence and popularity during the High Middle Ages. Jaeger argues, however, that the features of literary courtliness falsely slant the perception of some attributes to an admired and idealized stature. C. Stephen Jaeger categorizes the period’s vernacular writings into the \textit{courtier} and \textit{chivalric} narratives in romance and epic writings.\textsuperscript{163} These popular regional compositions, however, were not random writings. Jaeger argues these tales possessed, “an actual narrative structure.”\textsuperscript{164} The literature held multiple influences and attempted to meld the fiction of entertainment and the moralizing lessons of the sacred. With this goal, multiple authors from various lands created a myriad of vernacular texts and tales which hastened the growth of literature as a whole during this period.

Courtly literature created a narrative structure and formed common fictional elements in its works. As Jaeger explains: “a stranger appears at court, dazzles the king and his court with his charm and talents, rises swiftly to favor and power, inspires envy and becomes entangled in romantic complications with a woman close to the ruler, and these lead to his eventual fall.”\textsuperscript{165} Jaeger asserts this structure also depicts the ruler as weak, consumed by

\begin{footnotesize}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[162] Jaeger. 173.
\item[163] Jaeger 237.
\item[164] ibid.
\item[165] Jaeger. 237-238.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
trivial matters, and intrigue. A courtier, Jaeger contends, must adorn a mask of deception but pleasing to the king if he wishes to survive in this atmosphere.\textsuperscript{166} The façade of the outer man, the mask, and the inner man, the true self, stands as a common theme in courtly narratives.\textsuperscript{167} The worldly form of courtliness created a\textit{ fantasy-world} and attempted to both entertain and teach the societal morals and truths of the culture. The irony of literary courtliness, however, lies in what courtliness sought to create: a virtuous society of noble attributes, although some of its features possessed little nobility. Courtliness in the social realms and in its literary iterations, nonetheless, not only continued, but evolved and grew in popularity in the West to become pillars of Western culture.

C. Stephen Jaeger’s text surveys courtliness from a social, political, linguistic, and a literary viewpoint. John Jay Parry, however, examines courtliness almost exclusively from a literary perspective and analyzes Andreas Capellanus’s medieval work, \textit{The Art of Love}. Where Jaeger extracts many Northern European source materials, Parry focuses mostly on French, Spanish and Arabic influences and texts. Parry states that in France, courtly literature emerged from the \textit{troubadours}.\textsuperscript{168} The influx of foreign texts contributed to its formation, but this \textit{new} genre of courtliness, “was infused with a new spirit.”\textsuperscript{169} This strain of

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{Jaeger.238} Jaeger. 238.
\bibitem{Jaeger.238-239} Jaeger. 238-239.
\bibitem{Parry.6} Parry. 6.
\end{thebibliography}
writings melded a host of themes already present in the West from classical writers like Ovid. Its distinctiveness, however, possessed Arabic elements which helped to form its identity.

The characteristics of the medieval courtly literature existed in the dynamics of the relationship between the lovers. In their relationship, a measure of a role-reversal persists. According to Parry: “She [the lady] is now his [the man who desires her] feudal suzerain, and he owes allegiance to her, or to Cupid through her.”\(^{170}\) The man’s interactions with her, moreover, demonstrate humility and these shifting tenets of love originated in the Muslim culture of Spain. As Parry explains, “many of these elements can be found before they appear among the Christians.”\(^{171}\) The role-reversal aspect also exists in the patriarchal Arabic culture. The love theme of one lover pursuing another exists in both Christendom and Arabic cultures. A further significant facet of Arabic influence lies in how the narrative incorporates a some-time motif where women play an active and even dominant role in the tale.

In much of eleventh-century Spain, Moslims\(^ {172}\) and Christians coexisted and enjoyed a culture of wine, luxury, love, and above all poetry. This period in Spain, Parry identifies, occurred before a strict adherence to Islam returned to Spain in 1086.\(^ {173}\) Before then, “petty kings,” ruled over most of the country and within each ruler’s region, the poets themselves, Parry relates, demonstrated the ruler’s authority. The poets were, “trained in the classical

\(^{170}\) Parry. 7.

\(^{171}\) ibid.

\(^{172}\) Alternate spelling used by John Jay Parry.

\(^{173}\) Parry 7.
Arabic tradition.”174 This style of poetry, moreover, focused on form.175 They emerged as ambassadors of shifting alliances. Both Christian and Muslim rulers often employed them to communicate with each other: “a set of wandering poets came into existence who passed from one court to another.”176 This artistic element of Spanish culture created a constructive mode of communication where rulers addressed their differences not through the sword but through their words, poets, and poetry. Its success in mediating potential confrontations grew from the political culture into its literary culture where it expanded across borders to emerge in the southern regions of France and throughout Western Europe.

Twelfth-century courtly love derives its poetic strain substantially from Andalusia and Arabia in both content and form; in Women Troubadours, Meg Bodin explains, “Arab poets have been worshipping their ladies for at least two-hundred years.”177 This strain of poetry present in southern France held both sensual and spiritual traditions.178 Ibn Hazm, an Arab writer, relates some medieval Arab sentiments about love.179 They include Platonic philosophies which seek to rejoin two souls separated at creation, and they pursue beauty and perfection through their reunion.180 This monogamous pursuit views other forms of perceived

174 Parry. 7.
175 ibid.
176 Parry. 7-8.
179 Parry. 9.
180 ibid.
love as only passion not love. True love, Hazm suggests, exists in the spiritual element of love and it far exceeds its physical counterpart. This pure love, Hazm adds, inspires the lover to strive beyond what is attainable. Like Andreas Capellanus, his writings suggest the lover can ennable himself by enriching his character to please his beloved. The lover, furthermore, embraces a submissive visage before his beloved no matter the disparity of social rank.\footnote{Parry. 9-10.}

Hazm states: “how many a stingy one became generous, and a gloomy becomes bright-faced, and a coward became brave…and an ignoramus became clever…and an ill-shaped one became handsome.”\footnote{Parry. 7.} Although Ovid’s works allude to a submissive manner for the lover, his writings convey a more tongue-and-cheek manner of behavior, whereas Hazm explains the Arab poetic culture fully endorsed this manner of behavior. The element of subjugation, a pillar of their philosophies on love, significantly guides the emergent medieval courtly literature in France when elements of it develop in the regional writings.

One difference between Ovidian love and Arab perceptions and interpretations of love appear in, the married woman. Hazm states that married women were forbidden pursuits. John Jay Parry states: “he [Ibn Hazm] is most emphatic—one must not make love to a married woman.”\footnote{Parry. 10.} Hazm also adds: “Molsems have come together on this point unanimously, only heretics not fulfilling it.”\footnote{ibid.} Not all Arab poets adhered to Hazm’s code,
however, where married women defined a forbidden pursuit for courtly lovers. In fact, Parry cites, Henri Pérès, who mentions: “Wallada, daughter of the Caliph Al-Mustakfi, established, after her father’s death, a sort of salon which was a gathering place for literary men and other people of prominence.” The fact that the daughter of a Caliph opened a salon after her father’s death and not before speaks to the criticism it created. The Arab connection and influence on the Spanish eleventh-century culture suggests its force on the literary culture. The moral aspect in which notions of love exclude married women emerge in the fervent exclamations of Arab writings and align with Christian concerns about courtly love. Ibn Hazm’s chronicle of Wallada, however, relates to European aristocratic women who held a desire for courtly poetry as well, some of whom held substantial authority and held significant resources. The classical reception which Parry describes delves into eros and its many facets; from the Ovidian themes on love, the Platonic and metaphysical aspects of love, and the aim of love itself.

A host of happenings aided courtly literary growth when most women possessed little sway in their own lives, even those of aristocratic blood. The High Middle Ages defined an era when some women held more agency than in previous times. The Church’s dictum to keep women subjugated impressed its view on the codified patriarchal society and held multiple limitations on nearly every aspect of women’s lives, but some succeeded in breaking limitations to expand a woman’s capability.

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185 Parry. 12.
186 ibid.
CHAPTER IV

THE AGENCY OF WOMEN IN 12TH CENTURY AND MARIE DE FRANCE

Western European culture during the medieval era demonstrated a repressive society for women and provided little say in their lives, in their desires, and in what they dared to do. Despite restraints, some women succeeded in forging a new path for women. The Church established many hurdles when most lived a cloistered existence. They suffered under a dichotomy where they, women, caused man’s exile from paradise and did not meet the perfection of the Virgin Mary. In, *Medieval Misogyny and The Invention of Western Romantic Love*, Howard R. Bloch contends much of misogyny stems from, “a repetitive monotony in what misogynists had to say about women from the Church fathers, and has hardly varied in almost two-thousand years.” The gaze, for instance, “[is] central to what the Church fathers conceive to be the fatal attraction of women.”¹⁸⁷ The gaze itself created the root of man’s desires and suffering. John Chrysostom writes: “Hence how often do we, from beholding, suffer a thousand evils,” he adds, “For the sake of the brief pleasure of a glance, we sustain a lengthened and continual torment.”¹⁸⁸ Women, the object of man’s gaze, created the ingrained norm and need for the constant containment of women as a societal and cultural tenet. Bloch argues courtly literature contains a struggle of, “the idealizing Neoplatonic

¹⁸⁷ Bloch. 113.

patristic distrust of the body and the courtly ideal of an always already impossible love relation,” and further contends these two elements hold a structural identity with the feminine.\(^{189}\) The discourse of misogyny, Bloch argues, stands where, “women are portrayed as verbal abuse...[and the] male protagonists are the ones who, having been warned, consistently transgress an implicit faith.”\(^{190}\) He highlights the contradiction within courtly literature as an example of the discourse of misogyny. The ingrained misogyny in the time of Marie de France illustrates the challenges which Marie and many others struggled and against the entrenched attitudes of which some broke free. Understanding these hindrances and recognizing them underscores Marie de France’s successes during this era of gendered limitations within social advancements.

Marie de France’s compositions demonstrate how her writing ability guided her to thrive when a host of challenges opposed her because of her sex. Examining her writings through a gendered lens reveals a measure of how she overcame the barriers she faced on the patriarchal plane of the West. Women, and certainly not all women, attempted to disrupt the containment they experienced in medieval society. Certain occupations, activities, and interests maintained, for the most part, the unattainable although some stellar examples stripped the shackled standards and excelled in some male-dominated fields, including Queen

\(^{189}\) Misogyny. 113-114.

\(^{190}\) Misogyny. 139.

Queen Eleanor’s stands as a prime example of female agency in the High Middle Ages. Her interest and history in courtly literature emerged well before her union with either Louis VII of France or Henry II of England; it began with her grandfather, William IX, the so-called first troubadour. Eleanor possessed a personal attachment and heritage to the vernacular literature of France. Her fondness for \textit{fin’ amour} sprouted in her native Aquitaine. In her youth, she embraced the \textit{troubadour} literature. Her grandfather’s verse held little \textit{chivalric} character to that of the twelfth century; his poetry was often lewd and uncourtly.\footnote{Markale. 4.}

In, \textit{Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen of the Troubadours}, Jean Markale notes that at an early age troubadours serenaded the future queen with their romantic compositions.\footnote{Markale. 16.} The court of Poitiers evolved into an intellectual haven where a number of troubadours converged.\footnote{ibid.} In her native land of France: “she [Queen Eleanor] invited troubadours, which allowed fruitful exchange between writers of different tongues and civilizations and consequently paved the way for the creation of an authentically French literature.”\footnote{Markale. 113.} The troubadours transmitted
their tales and rhymes to meld with other cultures and codify its influence and imprint onto Western European societies. The troubadour-centered origins of courtly culture held one element which drove its growth but a vital one. Eleanor’s devotion, adoration, and attachment for its art form drove her to promote it unceasingly from a young age.

The troubadour-themed courtly literature contained progressive societal shifts which, to a degree, advanced the standing of some women. In his book, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, Desmond Seward notes: “The idealization of women, however artificial or exaggerated, brought about a considerable improvement in their status.”196 Eleanor’s daughter played a pivotal role in the literary culture of France as well. In, *The Art of Courtly Love*, Andreas Capellanus, John Jay Parry writes that Marie pursued a rejuvenation of romantic courtly poetry and resulted in a host of successes in the region, especially in Troyes where many medieval poets composed their works including Chretien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus.197 The interests of Marie de Champagne and those of her mother demonstrate where the rich literary culture of the period expanded. The myriad of events cultivated an already extant literary movement into a burgeoning hub of cultures and created a distinct vernacular literary environment which inspired many authors to compose *oeuvres* of prose and verse. Marie de France’s example of a woman of agency convey how some medieval societal shifts occurred. Marie’s *lais* possess courtly attributes, strong female characters, and

196 Markale. 113.
197 Parry. 16.
moralized Ovidian narratives. Marie stands as a noted remarkable writer of the era, but certainly other female poets existed and composed their works during this era of progressive development but no texts survive.

Marie de France’s writings, thankfully, survive because of the manuscripts we possess. Other female poets composed their writings during this era as well. In *Women in Western Intellectual Culture, 600-1500*, Patricia Raft states that a collection of poetesses—twenty-three, Raft relates—thrived in the courtly culture of the Provençal region.\(^\text{198}\) The *troubairitz* emerged as their appellation in the Provençal lands: “[They] were the very ladies at whose skirts the troubadours had knelt, the wives and daughters of the lords of Occitania. There was no one to whom courtly love had spoken more directly.”\(^\text{199}\) They held, “… the unique position of being women in a world where women were officially adored.”\(^\text{200}\) One poetesses, for example, Lombarda, “was a lady of Toulouse, noble and beautiful, gracious of person, and learned. She knew very well how to write poetry, and composed beautiful stanza on amatory subjects.”\(^\text{201}\) They wrote the, “*canso*, or love song; the *tenso*, or debate; and the *sirventes*, or political song.”\(^\text{202}\) Their works thrived, as Raft writes, in the second generation


\(^{199}\) Bogin. 63-64.

\(^{200}\) Bogin. 64.

\(^{201}\) *ibid.*

\(^{202}\) *ibid.*
of troubadours in southern France (ca. 1170-1260).^{203} Although many sectors of medieval society kept women subjugated, others thrived in regions where they held autonomy and certainly significant agency. This, however, stood as the exception and not the rule for most. Many scholars, however, regard Marie de France as the most acclaimed medieval woman poets; her lais shed an illuminating light on the period’s literature and Marie’s strain of it.

The characters within Marie’s lais, in part, represent transformative elements present in the courtly literature where her females characters do not play passive participants but active protagonists. They illustrate progressive examples of strong female characters. In Lanval, a role-reversal occurs when the love of a knight, under the sway of a fairy queen bound by secrecy, almost overpowers all else. The knight explains: “Fair lady, if it were to please you to grant me the joy of wanting to love me, you could ask nothing that I would not do as best I could, be foolish or wise. I shall do as you bid and abandon all others for you.”^{204} When Marie’s writings reveal the multiple layers of love, she includes a level in which Marie overturns the cultural convention of the twelfth century and the classical era when she incorporates not only female agency but female dominion. In the case of Lanval, the lady impresses her will upon the knight and demonstrates her strength over the noble knight’s prowess. In Guigemar, the female protagonist, even when cloistered in a seemingly hopeless situation, seeks and discovers a solution to her plight. Whether through the fate of love or

^{203} Bogen, 64.

^{204} Lays, Lanval. 74.
happenstance, the women in Marie’s *lais* conquer the host of challenges they endure with strength, devotion to their lovers, and resolve.

In *Guigemar*, the lady cloistered and locked away, reunites with her beloved. In *Equitan*, and *Bisclavret*, although their goals hold malicious intent, the women impel their will upon their lovers, one of whom is a king. In *Les Deus Amanz*, the maiden guides the young knight but when he follows his own will, he loses his life. In *Chaitivel*, a lady entertains the love of four different knights. In *Milun*, the maternal bond leads the lady to send her child born out of wedlock to guard her child against social ridicule. The significance of Marie’s characters lies in how Marie explores the possibilities and the potential of women who attain their goals no matter their challenges, situations, or seclusion.

Marie’s texts illustrate their active role during the advancements of the period. For example, as the *Anthology of British Literature* explains, Marie de France’s contemporaries often coupled the tense desires of love with the glories of chivalric pursuits. Conversely, Marie de France: “focuses instead on the personal desires of her characters especially those of her female characters.” They define Marie’s compositions and separate them from the writings of other medieval poets. Joan Kelly-Gadol argues that the courtly literature of the period: “suppressed rather the exaggerated tensions between it [courtly literature] and other social values.” She states, “their existed, to a degree, an alignment of the sexual and

205 *Anthology*. 180-181.

206 *ibid*.

207 *Gadol*. 181.
effective needs and the interests of the aristocratic families,” which maintained the social order.\textsuperscript{208} A false perception also existed in which women held little or no power over property. But, in fact, as Gadol explains: “[medieval society] permitted both inheritance and administration of feudal property. Inheritance by women often suited the needs of the great landholding families of the feudal society of twelfth-century France.”\textsuperscript{209} Although examples of women who broke the social norms of the day occurred, most, if not all examples, existed solely within the aristocracy, or of whom we know. The importance of these examples highlights and overturns the mythology that \textit{all} medieval women held little or no agency, authority, or influence. Bold examples of female influence and authority forged the possible and potential paths for many women to follow.

One aspect of courtly literature which attracted the passions of women emerged in how the passionate pursuits within the poetry itself includes both male and female desires. In fact, as Gadol states: “It [courtly literature] gave women lovers, peers rather than masters; and it gave them a justifying ideology for adultery,” which men did not need.\textsuperscript{210} Women, moreover, held an influential position and helped to shape and define the “ideas and values” of courtly literature.\textsuperscript{211} Gadol argues that it required a female voice to generate a: “poetic

\textsuperscript{208} Gadol. 181.  
\textsuperscript{209} Gadol. 182.  
\textsuperscript{210} Gadol. 183.  
\textsuperscript{211} Gadol. 183.
voice and status for female sexual love, and only medieval Europe accepted that voice as integrated to its cultural expression.” Gadol contends that twenty or more troubairitz from the Provençal region thrived and created many chivalric lyrics which matched those of the male troubadours. The style of chivalric or courtly literature included, as Gadol explains, many female voices to further the variant perspectives through a gendered lens to examine and understand the many layers it possesses. Marie’s compositions, as Godal suggests, held an, “often adulterous and always sexual [element],” and cites Friedrich Heer, a historian, who refers to Marie de France as: “one of the three poets of genius (along with Chrétien de Troyes and Gautier d’Autres) who created the roman Courtois of the twelfth century.” The contributions of women during this epoch occupied significance in both the romance and lyric writings which makes up the “corpus of courtly literature.” The effect of how women contributed to the medieval literary culture bears a relatively unknown one. When we apply a gendered lens to examine the literature of a patriarchal society, it affords an alternate and improved understanding of its elements and influences, including the men and women which formed a diverse regional culture.

Joan Kely-Gadol explains that women, mostly of the aristocratic stratum, created an imprint on their society because of their wealth and standing in society. Eleanor of Aquitaine,

212 Gadol. 183.
213 ibid.
214 ibid.
215 ibid.
and her daughter, Marie of Champagne, stand as prime examples of women of agency. Both sponsored and nurtured the growth of courtly culture. It resonated in Eleanor from an early age and both possessed the prestige to promote their interests. Marie de France contributed to her culture through her talents and authority of her compositions. She stood as a model of female agency in twelfth-century Western culture. Her poetry, guided by the classical literary canon including Ovid’s writings, bolstered the formation of vernacular literature and the literary transformations of the epoch.

**MARIE DE FRANCE**

The mystery that surrounds Marie de France lies in her identity and the literary layers of her poetry. A corpus of scholarly research includes centuries of resources where academics and others have postulated about the unknown essence about Marie and her compositions. To understand the many elements within the rhyming couplets of her verse, we must rely on past scholarship, and examine their analyses of her writings. Any related literary components within her poetry are equally as important as the poetry itself. Her verse possesses a myriad of hidden facets which may reveal the deeper meanings within her writings.

Marie de France’s compositions define a facet of courtly writings within the literary cultural collage of the period. But, what makes Marie’s compositions courtly? In their

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translations, courtliness and courtly love certainly describe her poetry a multitude of times. Her compositions, moreover, detail how the literature of the era conveyed courtliness. According to C. Stephen Jaeger, if we examine the narratives of Marie de France’s *lais*, the ingredients of courtliness emerge within the narrative elements. Jaeger writes, as stated earlier: “a stranger appears at court, dazzles the king and his court with his charm and talents, rises swiftly to favor and power, inspires envy and become entangled in romantic complications with a woman close to the ruler, and these lead to his eventual fall.”

Not all chivalric-themed tales follow this formula but most possess common elements. Marie’s *lais*, however, do not all result in the ruler falling, in fact, many do not affect the ruler’s power; many, instead, center on the relationship between the lovers.

The common ‘stranger’ element presents itself often; it appears in *Guigemar*, *Lanval*, to some degree, *Les Deux Amanz*, *Yonec*, *Laustic*, and *Eliduc*. The protagonists often draw close to a lady who is close to a lord but not necessarily the ruler. Jaeger also depicts the magnate or lord as weak; this motif appears in *Guigemar*, *Equitan*, and *Yonec*. In Meg Bodin’s description of courtly love, it derives its structure from the Arabic tradition. She states: “[The] homage to the lady, true love as endless suffering, [and] chastity as the high expression of true love.”

Marie’s writings contain an element of *homage to the lady* in nearly all of her narratives. A desirous lover pays homage or submits to the lady’s will to some degree. The

217 Jaeger. 237-238.
218 Bodin. 45.
description of these knights or lovers often carry courtly qualities. Some hold the common characteristics that Jaeger describes in his work: well-bred, well-mannered, and eloquent of speech. Marie describes Guigemar as wise, brave, loved by everyone, and noble. Lanval possesses the qualities of generosity, beauty, valor, prowess and of noble birth. In Yonec, the knight transformed from a hawk is, “extremely courtly” and handsome. In Eliduc, the knight is worthy, courtly, brave, fierce, and valiant. Marie’s writings create her own flavor of courtly literature, but they also hold some common ingredients of courtly behavior, typical narratives, and include the virtues which define them as courtly tales. Her works, however, go beyond them; her tales extend the narratives and the Ovidian themes. She combines the Ovidian elements, moralizes the themes and narratives, and teaches while creating and revealing the layers of eros within the twelfth-century landscape. Marie’s literary connection with Ovid’s poetry, moreover, hold the significance to her works and define her literary importance to the era’s cultural developments.

Extant secondary sources which examine Marie de France and her compositions remain copious in number. One source, The Anthology of British Literature, laudably credits Marie with both the first French female poet title and the premier female writer appellation of the

\[219\] Lays, Guigemar. 43-44.
\[220\] Lays, Lanval. 73.
\[221\] Lays, Yonec. 87-88.
\[222\] Lays, Eliduc. 111.
Middle Ages. The surviving writings of Marie comprise three works in three separate genres. The first, her relevant *Lais* (c. 1155-1170), “a collection of short romance narratives, the *Ysopet* or *Fables* (c. 1167-1189),” which consist of a French translation of *Aesop*, and finally the less-studied, *Esprurgatoire de Saint Patries* (*Legend of the Purgatory of Saint Patrick*) (c. 1189), a didactic tale in which Patrick, an Irish knight, undergoes a spiritual journey through purgatory." An additional writing by Marie de France which Logan E. Whalen discusses in his *Companion to Marie De France* is, *La Vie Seinte Audree*. The consensus of most scholars believes Marie wrote her *lais* in the latter half of the twelfth century. Ascertaining her compositions’ time period gives us an idea of her cultural environment and how it may have influenced her works. Many facts about Marie allude us, even her name, Marie de France, a designation contrived hundreds of years after her passing.

The appellation, ‘Marie de France’ emerged when a sixteenth-century Frenchman catalogued French authors who composed their works before the year 1300. In the 1581 text, *Recueil de la langue poesie Françoise*, Claude Fauchet catalogued 127 French authors and wrote: “Marie de France” is “item 84 of Book II.” Whalen details this self-
identification of ‘Marie’ where Fauchet relates the minute personal history we now possess about this French poet:

-Marie de France, ne porte ce surnom pour ce qu’elle fust du sang des Roise:
-Mais pource qu’elle estoit natifve de France, car elle dit,

-Au finement de cet escrit,
-Me nommerai pae remembrance
-Marie ai nom, si sui de France

Marie de France does not carry a surname because she is of royal blood, but because she is a native of France, for she states,

At the end of this work,
I will name myself for posterity,
My name is Marie, I am from France.229

In the epilogue of, Ysopet, Marie explains her motives to why she gives so little personal history: “It may be that many clerks will take my labors on themselves. I don’t want any of them to claim it.”230 Posterity acclaims Marie as a preeminent poet of the period. Whalen contends: “Marie de France embodies one of the most prominent literary voices of the twelfth century and was, to the best of our knowledge, the first woman of letters to write in French.”231 Her lais give us just one example of the breadth of courtly literature popular during the latter half of the twelfth century and its contribution to the cultural developments of the epoch.

229 Anthology. 180.
230 ibid.
231 Whalen. vii.
The writings of Marie de France form a geographical landscape where Marie most likely composed her works. The term ‘France,’ however, holds an amorphous quality to the region’s appellation of the period. In the twelfth century, both English and French kings ruled regions within the kingdom itself. When Marie writes her *lais,* she adopts the *Norman* dialect or Old French which advances the notion she hailed from the region of Normandy.\(^{232}\) Her use of Old French, additionally, grants us an understanding of her related environment where she lived. Her dedication of her *lais* to “King Henry,” who most scholars believe refers to Henry II of England only adds agency to this theory.\(^{233}\) Adding to the mystery of Marie de France, some believe Marie was the illegitimate sister of the English King but since no evidence exists, it, along with a multitude of theories about Marie, resides in the realm of conjecture.\(^{234}\)

One general agreement persists among scholars: Marie was, “attached to the court of Henry II and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and of royal blood.”\(^{235}\) Marie’s works suggest a cultured and highly educated person who knew French, Latin, and the *Breton* language which she writes as the origin of her *lais.*\(^{236}\) The *lais*—“Celtic tales of romance that often involved elements of the fantastic”—were a collection of twelve romances written in *octosyllabic*

\(^{232}\) Anthology. 180.

\(^{233}\) ibid.

\(^{234}\) ibid.

\(^{235}\) ibid.

\(^{236}\) ibid.
rhyming couplets. ”237 The structure of the lais requires a heightened level of literary and linguistic craft. The Anthology of British Literature contends: “The compressed space of the form requires Marie to handle her material with considerable finesse and she recounts her tales with an economy of words and a tight narrative control that lend the romances down-to-earth precision without sacrificing meaning or nuance.”238 Her compositions incorporate multiple intellectual elements of the cultural landscape to form a distinctive strain of verse in the period’s courtly literature. Marie not only creates a decided form of courtly literature but an example of female agency in an age of subordinated women which certainly produced some measure of attention from the medieval patriarchy.

Although we possess only slivers of information and few resources about Marie de France, one account from a contemporary twelfth-century poet alludes to a poetess of note. Whalen cites a chronicle written in 1180 by Denis Piramus, a renowned poet in his own right, who wrote, The life of St. Edmund the King.239 Piramus encounters a talented poetess and states: “And likewise lady Marie, who put into rhyme, constructed and arranged verses of lais.”240 Whalen states that most scholars believe Piramus’s Marie is Marie de France.241 Piramus’s chance meeting with Marie illustrates the influence this [Marie de France]

\begin{footnotes}

237 Anthology. 180.

238 ibid.

239 Lay. 11.

240 ibid.

241 ibid.

\end{footnotes}
composer possessed and enough for Piramus to record it. His reputation within courtly circles gives his account further agency about this Marie within the courtly community. In, The Lais of Marie de France, Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby relate further evidence concerning the same Denis Piramus. They quote Denis: “les vers de lais,/ ke ne sunt pas del tut verais” (“Lays in verse which are not all true,” vv. 37-8).242 He continues: “Marie’s poetry has caused great praise to be heaped on her and it is much appreciated by counts and barons and knights who love to have her writings read out again and again.”243 Piramus finally adds: “the lays are accustomed to please the ladies: they listen to them joyfully and willingly, for they are just what they desire.”244 Piramus’s praise about Marie gives credence to the talent and literary respect for Marie de France’s compositions. Possessing tangible and reliable evidence like Piramus’s writing strengthens the significance of Marie’s poetry through this literary artifact about Marie and only adds to our understanding about Marie and her writings.

Over the centuries, scholars have delved into a host of academic fields to discover and reveal the hidden elements in Marie’s texts. In Marie de France: An Analytical Bibliography, Glyn S. Burgess created a prolific examination of Marie’s compositions over the years and published it in 1977. He catalogues nearly all relevant and tangential data about

242 Lays. 11.
243 ibid.
244 ibid.
Marie de France from the late sixteenth century up to the 1970s. His work, Whalen suggests, created a significant increase in scholarly research related to Marie de France and her compositions. The numerous amount of secondary resources relating to the seemingly unknown French poet enforces her literary significance and agency during the High Middle Ages and on the genre of courtly romance.

A small number of medieval manuscripts, thankfully, contain Marie de France’s writings and provide primary source material to examine. Marie’s *lais*, unfortunately, were only first published in 1819. The British Library holds one manuscript, *Harley 978*. Other manuscripts also contain her tales: MS S, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale nouv. acq. Fr. 1104; M S P, Bibliothèque Nationale, fr. 2168; MS C (British Library, Cott. Vesp. B XIV); and MS Q (Bibliothèque Nationale, fr. 24432. One interesting extract of textual evidence related to Marie’s *lais*; although the *Harley* manuscript contains the twelve well-known *lais* of Marie, only three of her *lais*, *Guigemar*, *Lanval*, and *Yonec* are present in more than two manuscripts and three other *lais*: *Laüstic, Chaitivel*, and *Eliduc* appear in just one manuscript. Burgess and Busby suggest the twelve tales may have more than one author.

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245 Burgess’ influential work contains: “77 editions, translations, anthologies, and adaptations of Marie’s works, as well as 425 books, and articles and dissertations and theses written in whole or in part on the author.” Whalen. ix.

246 *ibid.*

247 Lays. 7-8, 10.

248 Lays. 8.

249 *ibid.*
because multiple orders of her *lais* exist in various manuscripts. *Guigemar*, furthermore, contains the only substantial prologue. Burgess and Busby even suggest that a scribe may have added the appellation, ‘Marie’ along the trail of transmission.

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250 Lays. 8.

251 Lays. 9.
Prologue of the *Lais* of Marie de France in the Harley 978 Manuscript, late 13th century

These medieval manuscripts exist as vital artifacts in understanding Marie’s works, the transmission of her poetry, and discerning the possible ripples along its transmission journey.

Marie de France precedes her collection of *lais* with a fifty-six-line prologue followed by the most common order of *lais* among translators: *Guigemar, Equitan, Fresne, Bisclavret, Lanval, Les Deus Amanz, Yonec, Laüstic, Milun, Chaitivel, Cheverfoil, and Eliduc.*

Marie’s *lais* possess no static length; her shortest *lai, Chevrefoil,* occupies only 118 lines, and the longest, *Eliduc,* comprises 1,184 lines. Marie both asserts her authorship of the collection of *lais,* and she states that the sire of her tales spring from Breton-based narratives. For example, in Bisclavret, Marie writes: “In my effort to compose lays.” *(Quant de lais fair*


253 Lays, Introduction. 7.

254 Lays, Bisclavret. 68.
In the *lai*, Yonec, she affirms, “Now that I have begun to compose the lays.” The regional cultures of France melded the Breton, Norman, and classical cultures, along with other effectual cultures of the region. Marie, however, attempts to codify Breton heritage as a significant element of her *lais*, although further analysis of her compositions reveals a clear classical component present in her *lais*.

One important fact about understanding the time period of Marie’s writings was that before the nineteenth century, her limited regard existed as, “the author of *Fables*.” Before this time, Marie occupied thirteen-century poetry, in part, because her reference to the ‘noble king’ was believed to be Henry III of France. The *Fables*, moreover, also appear in at least thirty-three manuscripts as opposed to only five of Marie’s *lais*. Her placement in the latter half of the twelfth century, furthermore, lies principally in Karl Warnke’s work when he edited her *Lais* (1885) and her *Fables* (1898). Burgess and Busby explain how

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256 ibid.

257 *Ouevres*, *Guigemar*. 3260 out of 4582.

258 *Lays*. 16.

259 ibid.


261 *Lays*. 17.
Warnke’s scholarship discovered a curious linguistic element within her *lais*. Warnke’s work and the examination of Marie’s writings by Ernest Hoepffner redefined when Marie most likely composed her works. Warnke suggested that her poetry resembled Wace’s language and Hoepffner believed that the medieval poem *Roman de Brut* guided Marie de France’s poetry as well.\(^\text{262}\) Warnke and Hoepffner’s work revealed a remarkable artifact in the study of Marie de France. Their discovery brought improved understanding about when Marie composed her *lais*; it realigned her poetry into the literary advancements of the twelfth-century renaissance. When Warnke and Hoepffner reinterpreted her linguistic elements— influenced by Wace and *Roman de Brut*—it placed her in the twelfth century which fits the evidence when she dedicates her *lais* to King Henry [Henry II of England], decides to adopt the Norman dialect, and the literary influence of Ovid in the twelfth century sat at its apex.

Marie’s compositions derive from the resonant poems of *troubadours* many of which appear in the vernacular. According to Desmond Seward: “The troubadours developed a cult of platonic love (*amor de lonh*, love from afar) and sang of an impossible passion for some unattainable noblewoman, invariably married and a great lady.”\(^\text{263}\) Marie decides to compose her *lais* in the Old French vernacular not in the Latin. According to Burgess and Busby, the subject-matter and form of the *lais* relate best with the “love genres and chivalry, and the lyric.”\(^\text{264}\) They contend the creation of more vernacular texts during this era demonstrates:

\[^{262}\] Lays. 17.
\[^{263}\] ibid.
\[^{264}\] Lays. 21.
“the desire to bring literature and leaning within reach of those with no knowledge of Latin.”\textsuperscript{265} To further this suggestion, religious biographies, sermons, scientific works, and other translated works began to appear in vernacular languages.\textsuperscript{266} The translations of many literary genres appearing in the vernacular instead of just Latin illustrate the important element related to the many transitions of the period. A multitude of vernacular texts emerge giving more people better access to knowledge-based texts. This shift’s significance illustrates how the culture drew away from classical culture to further its own regional identity through vernacular writings.

Burgess and Busby argue that Marie penned her writings during the pinnacle of the love-lyric when the romance developed its form. They suggest the romances of antiquity: \textit{Roman d’Eneas}, \textit{Roman de Thebes}, and \textit{Roman de Troie} influenced her compositions as well.\textsuperscript{267} They contend these classical-inspired texts, “graft a layer of courtly veneer onto the originals particularly visible in the love interest.”\textsuperscript{268} Further influential texts of this period contributed to twelfth-century courtly literature and include, in part, the \textit{Tristan} texts, the works of \textit{Chrétien de Troyes}, and the writings of \textit{Hue de Rotelande}.\textsuperscript{269} These courtly

\textsuperscript{265} Lays, Introduction. 21-22.

\textsuperscript{266} ibid.

\textsuperscript{267} ibid.

\textsuperscript{268} Lays, Introduction. 21-22.

\textsuperscript{269} ibid.
compositions, Burgess and Busby suggest, are “the vernacular context to the Lais of Marie de France.” They also propose that the composition of Roman d’Eneas shaped the lais of Marie in how she, “describes the growth of love” and “the feelings of the characters.” They freely admit they cannot cite specific examples but argue, “few scholars would not doubt the influence on Marie [de France].” Her poetry includes both the classical-text-based romances reviewed and the culturally germane texts such as the Historiae Regum Britanniae by Geoffrey of Monmouth (c.1135) and Wace’s Brut (c. 1155). She references these works when some geographical elements present themselves in her tales. Marie experiences and educational influences during the era’s intellectual advancements formed the literature of Marie de France’s lais. Her inclusion of classical literary works as well as regional influences augments the breadth of her brand of courtly literature and the literary elements within her lais.

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270 Lays, Introduction. 22.
271 ibid.
272 ibid.
273 Lays. 23.
274 Lays, Introduction. 21-22.
Ovid\textsuperscript{275}

Marie de France\textsuperscript{276}

\textsuperscript{275} “Ovid,” Google Images, accessed March 9, 2017, https://www.google.com/search?q=ovid&source=lnms&tbnm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi12pLui8rSAhWa2YMKHZ9SDuwQ_AUICSgC&biw=1517&bih=654#imgrc=m5_EioE78S8uAM:

\textsuperscript{276} “Marie de France,” Google Images, accessed March 9, 2017, https://www.google.com/search?q=marie+de+france&source=lnms&tbnm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi12pLui8rSAhWa2YMKHZ9SDuwQ_AUICSgC&biw=1517&bih=654#imgrc=yP44lkVFLx2bMM:
CHAPTER V

OVID AND MARIE DE FRANCE: AN AMATORY ALLIANCE

One literary ornament of the twelfth-century renaissance exists in the lais of Marie de France when she created a literary relationship with the classical Roman poet, Ovid. Marie’s writings, however, also reveal an important contradiction: Although Marie de France asserts her lais derive from Breton tales, they also contain a rich classical influence and Ovidian elements. Marie de France’s poetry, nonetheless, advances the period’s vernacular literature when she incorporates and demonstrates the classical reception of Ovid’s works. A host of classical authors enjoyed a revered reputation in medieval society which guided Marie’s poetry a degree of currency and acclaim when few women possessed any positive reputation for literary excellence. Marie’s compositions, moreover, embrace Ovid’s notions of love contained in his compositions, Amores (Loves), Ars Amatoria (Art of Love), Remedia Amoris (The Cures for Love), and his Metamorphoses. She moralizes her narratives to contain the Ovidian tales and themes while she informs the audience with lessons while revealing the multiple layers of eros. Marie modifies Ovidian tales to adapt them to a new period when the Church held a high degree of power and forced its ample spiritual authority on medieval society. Marie was not the first to modify a narrative to suit cultural standards, and she certainly was not the last writer to do so.

Some connections between Marie de France and Publius Ovidius Naso resonate more than others. Both lived under powerful rulers: Emperor Augustus, and King Henry II of England. During the Aetas Ovidiana, Marie, perhaps inspired by Ovid’s works, created her verse and expands and adapts the concepts of love to her time. These two poets also shared the desire to be remembered and admired. Although Marie’s identity alludes us, she held no
fear to place accolades upon herself with almost an air of *hubris*. In the prologue to her *lais*, she writes:

> Anyone who has received from God the gift of knowledge and true eloquence has a duty not to remain silent: rather one should be happy to reveal such talents. When a truly beneficial thing is heard, by many people, it then enjoys its first blossom, but if it is widely praised its flowers are in full bloom.279

When Marie composed her *lais* to be remembered, she drafts divine authority to empower her writings’ worth. She proclaims boldly that God’s grace endowed her with the poetic talents and brazenly claims her religious duty compels her to compose them. Her sacred reasoning to create her works create powerful rhetorical tools. Her approach, moreover, reveals an added tactic when Marie contrasts the often-adopted convention of self-deprecation which many medieval writers employed.

Gregory of Tours, for instance, a French missionary in the sixth century, felt a duty-driven burden to write because few kept written records of the local events. His reasons hold similar qualities to Marie’s duty in that she feels her God-given gift impels her to display her talents. Gregory, however, did so with an air of self-deprecating humility, “My style is not very polished.” Later, he begs for forgiveness: when he writes: “I apologize to my readers lest my syllable or even letter I offend against grammatical usage, a matter in which I am far from being an expert.”280 Sarah Kay examines a further example of self-deprecation adopted

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279 *Lays, Prologue*. 41.

in courtly literature in her book, *Who was Chrétien de Troyes.* She surveys the period’s courtly poetry and how the poetry of *fin’amour* helps to lessen the tension within aristocratic courts by employing the convention of *self-deprecation:* “The sobriquets chosen by the troubadours were self-deprecating and disarming.”

Conversely, Marie not only begins her poetry with self-promoting accolades but pierces her opposition with rhetorical rancor as she rebukes her critics: “But just because spiteful tittle-tattlers attempt to find fault with me I do not intend to give up. They have the right to make slanderous remarks.”

Even though she lived in a patriarchal society, she pridefully presents her abilities and thrashes those who wish to silence her. She does not adopt the stereotypical visage of the passive and reticent lady. Her bold tone, moreover, suggests and supports the theory Marie de France belonged to the aristocratic stratum because a noble-born lady held more freedom to write forcefully than one who belonged to the lower tier of society. Ovid, like Marie, charges his verse with prideful pronouncements of his poetic excellence and the *immortal* character of his compositions. In *Amores* he writes:

> This, too, is the work of my pen—mine, Naso’s, born among the humid Paeligni, the well-known singer of my worthless way. This, too, have I wrought at the bidding of Love—away from me, far away from austere fair! Ye are no fit audience for my tender strains. For my readers, I want the maid not cold at the sight of her promised lover’s face and the untaught boy touched by passion til now unknown.

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Ovid not only proclaims the worthiness of his pen but selects which audience is fit to hear his verse. Later in *Amores*, Ovid explains the eternal nature of his verse: “Tis song alone escapes the greedy pyre. The poems of the bard—the renown of the toils of Troy, and the tardy web unwoven with nightly wile—endure for aye.” In his *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid rhetorically asks:

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What is sought by the sacred bards by fame alone?
Toil we ne’er so hard, this is all we ask.
Poets once were the care of chieftains and of kings,
and the choirs of old won great rewards.

Quid petitur sacris, nisi tantum fama, poetis?
Hoc votum nostri summa laboris habet.
Cura deum fuerant olim regumque poetae:
Praemiaque antiqui magna tulere chori
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In his poetry, Ovid gives agency to himself by elevating the worth of all poets to posterity. Within their works, both Marie and Ovid possess a matched desire for future generations to remember them and praise their works. Their verse contains a deluge of self-praise to elevate the *prís* (worth) of their poetry and the perceived value of their compositions. A vital link

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284 Defugiunt avidos carmina sola rogos;/ durant, vatis opus, Troiani fama laboris/ tardaque nocturno tela retexta

between the works of Ovid and Marie, moreover, relies on the level of classical reception of
Ovid’s works and its effect on the literary culture of the High Middle Ages.

Marie incorporates aspects of the classical world when she incorporates mythological
motifs into her poetic works. In Guigemar, for instance, Marie incorporates powerful
Ovidian visual elements to create a connection with Ovid’s works when a mural of Venus,
the goddess of love, reigns over the object of Guigemar’s desire:

The walls of the chamber were covered in paintings of Venus, the goddess of love, was
skillfully depicted together with the nature and obligations of love; how it should be
observed with loyalty and good service. In the painting, Venus was shown as casting
into a blazing fire the book in which Ovid teaches the art of controlling love and as
excommunicating all those who read this book or adopted its teachings.286

La chamber ert piente tut entur;
Venus, la deuse d’amur,
Fu tresbien [mise] en la pienture,
Les traiz mustrez a la nature
Cument hom deit amor tenir
E léalment e bien server;
Le livre ovide, ou il enseine
Coment chascun s’amur estrine,
En un fu ardant le gettout
E tuz iceus escumengout
Ki ja mais cel livre lirreient
Ne sun enseignement fereient
La fu la dame enclose e mise.287

The visual description attaches, “loyalty and good service” to the elements of Love which
guides and oversees the lai itself. The word, “obligations,” additionally, suggests a duty-

286 Lays, Guigemar. lines 233-236. 46.
287 Oeuvres, Guigemar. 1842 of 4582.
bound characteristic of love. The ironic element of this motif lies in when Venus incinerates Ovid’s book on *how to control love* because Venus’s son, *cupid*, pierces Ovid’s side stinging him with love’s desire and inspiring him to write his amatory works. Although Marie fails to explicitly name to which book of Ovid she alludes, *Amores* (Loves), *Ars Amatoria* (Art of Love), or, *Remedia Amoris* (The Cures for Love), the *Ars Amatoria* lays out a crafty and cunning blueprint on how to control love and is most likely the book in question. Marie, nonetheless, employs this mural to rhetorically define love’s *cultural duties* and social standards. The image itself textually looms over the wife of the lord, cloistered and isolated, to remind her of *her* matrimonial duties. The tale also reveals the lady’s repressed desire for love, passion, and affection because she possesses none of love’s rewards.

Marie establishes a link with Ovidian love and introduces its esoteric qualities which Ovid states in *Amores*: “Then whoso hath called love spiritless, let him cease. Love is for the soul ready for any proof. Aflame is great Achilles for Briseis taken away—men of Troy, crush ye may, the Argive strength!”288 Ovid adopts hyperbolic rhetoric to demonstrate the passion-driven elements of love’s desire, longing, loss, and its suffering to illustrate the pains of love. Marie de France employs many, if not all, core elements found in Ovid’s verse. In *Guigemar*, Marie examines one facet of Ovid’s notions of *eros*: the suffering of love: “But love had now pierced him [Guigemar] to the quick and his heart was greatly disturbed. For

the lady had wounded him so deeply that he had completely forgotten his homeland.”

Marie links her work with Ovid’s works two-fold. She links the physical sign of suffering in *Guigemar* with Ovid’s poetry in *Amores* when cupid pierces Ovid with love’s desire just as love pierces Guigemar: “Against his knee he stoutly bent moonshape the sinuous bow, and “Singer,” he said, “here, take that will be matter for thy song!” Ah wretched me! Sure, were the arrows that yon boy had. I am on fire, and in my but now vacant heart. Love sits his throne.”

The two excerpts demonstrate how Marie’s poetry adopts the ‘pierced arrow of love’ motif present in Ovid’s *Amores* and Marie melds it into her *lai, Guigemar*. The significance of *Guigemar* lies in how Marie’s verse textually demonstrates the thematic connection with Ovid’s texts when Guigemar suffers the same wound as Ovid’s character *Amores* and forges the literary relationship between the two poets through their narrative elements and themes.

Marie’s *Guigemar* also examines the obligations and duties of marriage within the medieval cultural background. When Marie employs Venus casting Ovid’s book into the flames in *Guigemarh*, she creates a struggle between duty and desire: “The nature and obligations of love, how it should be observed with loyalty and good service,” yet her poetry also incorporates the lady’s yearning for love’s passion. Marie de France’s text, moreover, examines the cost of desire in *Guigemar, Yonec, Laüstic, Equitan, Bisclavret, Milun, Eliduc, Lays, Guigemar*, lines 386-88. 48.

and *Chevrefoil*. Marie surveys the consequences, good and bad, of choosing a passion-driven love over the dutiful bonds of matrimony, of keeping secret relationships and illegitimate children over the obligations of a societal duty. In *Eliduc*, Marie illustrates the consequences of how honor and duty confront passion and love. Marie depicts the repressive existence of a wife with a jealous husband in *Guigemar, Yonec, and Laüstic*, and she demonstrates how the unbearable burden of desire can overwhelm a person to commit malicious deeds of deception and death.292 The struggle between duty and passion, furthermore, maintains its presence as a common element and theme within courtly literature as a whole. As Sarah Kay states: “The discourse of courtly love arose in an atmosphere of repressed conflict between the clerical and lay members of aristocratic courts, and that the pervasive irony and euphemism of “courtly love” poetry were a means of negotiating and palliating tensions.”293 The conflict between obligation and desire in the courtly tales describe the aristocratic struggles between their responsibilities and their passions; courtly literature helped to relieve these tensions. Along with the many layers of *eros*, Marie also reveals the complexities of love and duty within the human condition found in the institution of marriage. Marie explores how the sanctity of marriage in the medieval era created little choice for the woman, and in some cases, dreadful results for both the husbands and wives. One of these examples emerges in Marie’s *Guigemar*.

292 Lays. 43-111.

293 Kay. 33.
When the lord imprisons his wife in *Guigemar* because of her affair with the knight, Guigemar, the lady violates her matrimonial duties and surrenders to her passions and ultimately attains the love she desires with her knight. Although the lady is duty-bound to her lord and husband, she escapes his bonds, submits to love, and forms a powerful union with Guigemar. Even when her husband exiles Guigemar from the land, *Love* finds a way to reunite them. Marie’s examines how a wife trapped in a loveless marriage and duty-bound to her husband and lord struggles and succumbs to the passions of *fin’amour*. Marie’s tale melds the elements of Ovidian love in which desire, passion, duty, marriage, surrender to love, and separation create not a simple story but demonstrates the complexity within love itself.

One connection which also forms a relationship between the works of Ovid and Marie appears when they both emphasize the pain of love. Instead of spotlighting the *joys* of love, Ovid’s poetry often centers his pen on the loss of love, the despair, and the suffering of love. In his *Amores*, Ovid admits his defeat to Cupid, the son of Venus:

> Shall I yield? or by resisting kindle still more the inward-stealing flame that has me? Let me yield! Light grows the burden that is well borne. I have seen flames flare up, when fanned by movements of the torch and die down again, when no one waved it more. Oxen, who are not yet broken in, refusing the first yoke endure more blows than those that pleasure in their toil.  

> *Cedimus, an subitum luctando accendimus ingnum? cedamus! leve fit, quod bene fertur, onus,*  
> *Vidi ego iactatas mota face crescere flammas et rursus nullo concutiente mori.*  
> *Detractant prensi dum iuga boves.*

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294 *Amores*, Book I, ii. lines 9-14. 322.
Ovid’s poetry describes his burning desire, how he suffers from it, and how its elusive nature and the constant pursuit of his desires rewards him with a level of satisfaction he needs, even when he fails to ‘get the girl.’ In his writings, Ovid imparts how love inflicts him with an enduring pain: “More bitterly far and fiercely are the unwilling assailed by Love than those who own their servitude. Look, I confess! I am new prey of thine, O, Cupid; I stretch forth my hands to be bound, submissive to thy laws.”

In Guigemar, a courtly tale unfolds and contains the Ovidian elements of love’s pain, loss, and longing linking the writings of Ovid and Marie. The protagonist, Guigemar, encounters a white hind and his martial prowess mortally wounds the white hind but at a cost. Guigemar is wounded by the bow he fired and the eternal wound of love’s suffering which he must endure until he finds love. The hind’s dying words to the knight:

May you never find a cure, nor may any herb, root, doctor, or potion ever heal the wound you have in your thigh until you are cured by a woman who will suffer for your love more pain and anguish than any other woman has ever known, and too will suffer likewise for her, so much so that all those who are in love, who have known love or are yet to experience it, will marvel at it.


296 Lays, Guigemar. 44.
Jamais n’aies tu med[e]eine!
Ne par herbe ne par racine
Ne par mire ne par pocium
N’avras tu jamēs garisun
De la plaie ke as en la quisse,
De s[i] ke cele te guarisee
Ki suffera pur tue amur
Issi grant piene e tel dolur
Ke unkes femme taunt ne suffri;
E tu reffe[r]as taunt pur li,
Dunt tut eil s’esmerveillerunt
Ki aiment e amé avrunt
U ki pois amerunt aprēs
Va t’en de cit! Lais m’aver pes!²⁹⁷

The theme of suffering present in Guigemar runs throughout Marie’s lais and in Ovid’s poetry which further demonstrates their literary connection. The pain of love, however, manifests itself differently for each poet. Ovid’s compositions convey his pain of love in an almost playful and tongue-and-cheek manner. Conversely, Marie de France’s lais transmits her notions of love with emotional and dramatic effect as it expands and reinterprets Ovid’s ideas of Love.

Classical mythology leads Ovid’s love poetry as a constant companion; it advances his amorous content while highlighting the costs of love and how to avoid the pain of love.

²⁹⁷ Oeuvres, Guigemar. 1735 of 4582.
Marie, for the most part, neglects Ovid’s motif on avoiding love. Marie’s works, in fact, illustrates how love, when avoided, returns as if fate brought love to the lovers’ lives. Ovid’s writings attempt to warn the reader of its pains which create agonies too severe to endure, according to poet’s compositions. Ovid’s verse catalogues how even the mighty pantheon of classical mythology suffers because of love. He explains how Phyllis, Medea, and her children, Tereus, Philomela, Pasiphae, Phaedra, and Scylla fell under the spell of love.298 He tells of two famous classical mythological characters who fell under the spell of love and fell into ruin: the first from the Aeneid: “Nor would dying Dido have seen from her citadel’s height the Dardan vessels spread their sails to the winds. Nor would anger have armed against her offspring the mother who took vengeance on her husband with the loss of kindred blood.”299 In the second example, Ovid’s recalls the tales of Homer to further his cause: “Entrust Paris to me: Menelaus will keep Helen, nor will vanquished Peragmum fall by Danan hands.”300 In his texts, Ovid expands his argument when he explains: “I recommend in the midst of the practice of love: passion must be repelled on every side.”301 Although Ovid warns about the pains of love throughout his Remidia Amatoria, Marie’s compositions

298 Ars, Remedia Amoris. 183.
299 Nec moriens Dido summa vidisset ab arce/ Dardanias vento vela dedisse rates;/ Nec dolor armasset contra sua viscera matrem,/ Quae socii damno sanguinis ulta virum est. Ars. Remedia Amoris, lines 56-58. 181-183.
evolve his ideas of love by adopting many of his work’s elements and embracing the pains of love. Her writings illustrate the pain of love, but also highlight the reward of enduring love and devotion when, for instance, the two lovers reunite in *Guigemar*. The suffering of her characters and how they endure it reveals an esoteric quality to it within *Guigemar*.

Marie de France’s knowledge of Ovidian poetry and the classical themes present themselves in her poetry, specifically, in the suffering of love which derive from her widely-accepted aristocratic education. Her instruction in the classics most likely included the works of Aristotle. In *Poetics*, in part eleven, the Greek philosopher advocates: “Two parts, then of the plot-Reversal of the situation and Recognition-turn on surprises. A third part is the Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action.”

Although the details of what Aristotle penned creates a complicated perspective since the textual evidence we possess about Aristotle’s *Poetic* refers to *epic* poetry, *comedy*, and *tragedy*. if Marie’s courtly literature, however, expands Ovidian concepts of love, it may also suggest that Marie’s writings broadens the Aristotelian theme of suffering in the context of *eros* in the twelfth century.

The narrative of Marie’s *lai*, *Guigemar* illustrates an additional connection between the writings of Ovid and Marie de France when love’s loss emerges in the tale. The *lai* unfolds as the old lord exiles Guigemar because of his affair with his wife, and he locks his wife away for nearly two years. Guigemar grieves because of the loss of his lady: “He [Guigemar] was

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constantly sad and downcast. They [his friends] wanted him to take a wife, but he would not hear of the idea. Never would he take a wife, for love or money.”\textsuperscript{304} The lady whom Guigemar desires also laments during her seclusion: “She knew no joy or pleasure and frequently mourned for her beloved: “Guigemar, lord, how sad that I met you! I prefer to die a speedy death rather than suffer this misfortune too long. Beloved, If I could escape, I should drown myself just where you put to sea!”\textsuperscript{305} The two lovers in *Guigemar* experience the sorrow, separation, and suffering of love and their longing for each other only increases their pain. *Guigemar* also includes natural-world or Celtic mythological elements in the white hind whom Guigemar kills. The hind sentences Guigemar to a sorrow-ridden journey, but the knight gains his reward with the eventual reunion of his beloved. Although Ovid’s works display the pain and sorrow of love, Marie’s writings evolves the Ovidian themes to include the sorrow and reward of love’s pains when despite major obstacles, their love prevails.

Marie’s *lai, Yonec*, holds more than a few parallel points with *Guigemar* as well. Both tales echo the theme of love’s grief, loss, and separation. Like *Guigemar*, *Yonec* also presents a cuckold jealous lord who imprisons his wife and but keeps her in a tower instead. The maiden in *Yonec*, encounters a knight who can transform himself into a hawk. In *Guigemar*, when the lord discovers his wife’s affair, he exiles the knight. In *Yonec*, however, when the lord discovers the supernatural affair, the lord kills the knight. As death steals the knight’s life, the

\textsuperscript{304} Lays, *Guigemar*. 51.

\textsuperscript{305} ibid.
consequences of their affair emerge; “She was with child by him and would have a worthy and valiant son to comfort her. She was to call him, Yonec, and he would avenge both of them and kill his enemy.” When Yonec, the child of the lovers matures, the mother reveals the secret of his father’s killer to her son; she faints on her lover’s tomb and dies. Yonec avenges his father by decapitating the old lord and complete the promise of Yonec, the elder knight. The tale, conversely, crafts a diametric result to that of Guigemar. Although Yonec avenges his father’s killer, he never knows his father and loses his mother when she reveals his father’s killer to her son. In Guigemar, the lord exiles the knight and imprisons the lady, but they overcome their separation and suffering when love rewards them with a joyful reunion. While Guigemar and Yonec possess different outcomes, they hold common elements which drive the lais and produce the literary correlation of Marie and Ovid. The French poetess, furthermore, incorporates familial love: Yonec and his parents. An further element emerges in Guigemar and Yonec: the theme of a tangible barrier. The barrier theme adds another facet to their commonality and connection in their poetry. In Ovid’s works, for instance, he includes the theme of a physical barrier between lovers in his amatory writings and his Metamorphoses which heighten the dramatic tension and reveals additional themes.

Marie’s lais adopt the theme of a separating structure in the walls of a cloistered stone-room in Guigemar and a secluded tower in Yonec. Both illustrate the theme of a barrier which echo a theme Ovid employs in his poetry. In Metamorphoses, the tale of Piramus and Tisbe. Unfolds when the parents of both lovers forbid them to marry and keep them separated. One

306 Lays, Yonec. 30.
facet of their separation exists in the form of a wall: “O envious wall, they would say, why do you stand between lovers?” The existence of a prevalent obstacle in his love poetry often exists in the form of a door, threshold, or a guard which prevents him from obtaining access to a girl. In *Amores*, Ovid scolds the origin of his pain in the barrier itself: “You, too, cruel post with your rigid thresholds, and you, doors with your unfeeling beams, you fellow-slaves of him who guards you, fare you well!” Ovid’s character believes the obstruction stands as his only limitation to obtain his desire. Later in book three, a door also impedes Ovid’s pursuer of love: “Nor can you guard her body though you shut every door; with all shut out, a traitor will be within.” In *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid relates: “Chambers and a locked door beseech our secret doings, the parts of shame are ‘neath a covering garment.” In *Remedia Amoris*, Ovid furthers the theme of an obstructing door: “How often did she suffer me to lie before her door! She cares for others herself, but scorns my love: a pedlar (curse him!) enjoys the nights she


311 The Loeb translation of *institor* uses ‘pedlar,’ with an alternate spelling, and footnotes it with: “These travelling dealers in luxuries were a special danger.” *Ars Remedia Amoris*. 199.
refuses to me!”312 On occasion, the protagonist in Ovid’s poetry speaks to non-sentient objects: a door, gate, or wall. Marie’s verse, conversely, does not adopt this convention demonstrating how Marie’s lais produce a progression and twelfth-century reinterpretation of Ovid’s works. Marie de France’s compositions incorporate the tangible barrier theme in Guigemar, Laüstic, and Yonec in stone walls and in the sea in Guigemar, and Eliduc. The element of a barrier broadens the important literary motif of separation by augmenting its form within both their compositions. When a tangible obstruction exists, the cost of separation in pain increases as does its reward. When the lovers discover an escape or strategy around the structure, the rewards, potentially, outweigh the separation from their lover.

Marie’s lai, Laüstic, echoes an Ovidian narrative and thematic imagery from his Metamorphoses in the form of a secret affair where two lovers never meet. When a wife of a high-born knight falls in love with her neighbor, a younger knight, an example of fin’ amour ensues. Their surreptitious affair, however, keeps them separated and prevents them from ever meeting. When night falls, however, the lady peers out a window to gaze upon her beloved and to hear the nightingale’s song: “They [the wife and young knight] took delight in seeing each other since they were denied anything more.”313 (Que autreteu vie dement/ E le plus de la nuit veilot).314 The physical denial of each other deepens the strife of separation,

312 Ante suas quotiens passa iacerefores!/ Diliget ipsa alios, a me fastidit Amari;/ institor, heu, noctes, quas mihi non dat, habet!” (Loeb text does not have open quote, only closed quote after habet.) Ars. Remedia Amoris. lines 304-306. 198.

313 Lays, Laüstic. 95.

314 Lays, Laüstic. lines 75-76. 158.
but also deepens their love and passion while the wife maintains her matrimonial obligations. When the wife’s husband enquires about her visits to the window, she states: “Anyone who does not hear the song of the nightingale known none of the joys of the world.”\textsuperscript{315} (\textit{la dame li respunt,/ Il nen ad joie en cest mund}).\textsuperscript{316} The husband, even jealous of a nightingale, entraps the nightingale, kills it in front of her for her to see, destroys one the wife’s few joys, and the opportunity to look upon her lover, furthering the pain of their distant and unattainable love. When the wife secretly sends the killed nightingale to her lover, the knight honors the lady by creating a symbol she would only know: “He had a small vessel prepared, not of iron or steel, but of pure gold with fine stones, very precious and valuable. On it, he carefully placed a lid and put the nightingale in it. Then he had the casket sealed and carried it with him at all times.”\textsuperscript{317}

\textit{Un vasselet ad fet forgeër; Unques n'i ot fer nê acer: Tut fu de or fin od bones pieres, Mut precïuses e mut cheres; Covercle i ot tresbien asis. Le laïstic ad dedenz mis; Puis fist la chasse enseeler, Tuz jurs l'ad fet of lui porter. Cele aventure fu cuntee, Ne pot estre lunges celee}\textsuperscript{318}

\textsuperscript{315} Lays, \textit{Laïstic}. 95.
\textsuperscript{316} Lays, \textit{Laïstic}. lines 83-84. 158.
\textsuperscript{317} Lays, \textit{Laïstic}. 96.
\textsuperscript{318} Oeuvres, \textit{Laïstic}. 4517 of 4582.
Knowing he would catch the lady’s gaze, the knight decides to ‘transmit’ a sign of affection only she could decipher: the nightingale. The signifier reminds the lady of the nightingale’s song and when she fixed her gaze on her knight and beloved. The scene with the killed nightingale in Laüstic, furthermore, holds relevance with Ovid’s Metamorphoses on several levels. In, Marie de France’s Le Laustic and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Robert T. Cargo contends the act of killing and hurling the dead nightingale at the wife in Laüstic is rooted in Ovid’s Metamorphoses:319 “With her mad deed of blood, Philomela, springs forward and hurls the gory head of Itys into his father’s face.”320 Cargo, moreover, cites an additional commonality with Metamorphoses. In Laüstic, the lady sends the dead nightingale to her beloved: “[The lady] wrapped the little bird in a piece of samite, embroidered in gold and covered in designs.”321 In Metamorphoses, when Tereus attacks Philomela, Ovid describes Procne’s reaction to Tereus’s fable of Philomena’s fake death: “Then Procne tore from her shoulder the robe gleaming with a broad golden border.”322 Cargo suggests the lady’s nightingale gift to her knight requires a visual communication device containing an esoteric component, lest her husband discover the nature of their affair.323 Just as Philomela creates


321 Lays, Laüstic. 96.


323 Cargo. 5.
an embroidery to communicate her plight to her sister because Tereus removed her tongue and Procne’s garment gleams of gold, the lady in Laüstic cannot risk a written message and instead creates a visual message which only the knight can decipher. The importance of Laüstic rests in how Marie furthers her literary bond with Ovid’s works when she incorporates multiple narrative aspects from Metamorphoses and develops further the nature of love to include the strength of a sisterly bond exemplified in the determination of Philomena. Conversely, in Ovid’s tale, Philomena, whom Tereus violates, reveals herself proudly tossing Tereus’s son’s severed head, Itys, at Tereus’s feet. Marie underlines the similarities and differences with the two-related tales and highlights her evolution, incorporation, and tale’s moralization. She extols her affinity for Ovid’s Metamorphoses when she incorporates more than just one narrative from Ovid’s mythological work.

The rapport between the works of Marie and Ovid reveal how Marie’s writings practice an array of classical traditions found in Ovid’s Metamorphoses. In Piramo e Tisbe nei Lai Maria de Francia, Cesare Segre contends Ovid’s mythological epic produces a tragic account of Piramus and Tisbe and contains striking similarities to Marie’s Les Deus Amanz. Ovid’s account describes two youths who share a separated but amorous relationship. Their parents, however, deny their desire to meet and marry: “In time love grew, and they would have been joined in marriage, too, but their parents forbade. Still, what no parent could forbid, sore smitten in heart they burned with mutual love.”324 Impinged by family protocol, they escape

324 Tempore crevit amor; taedae quoque iure coissent/ sed vetuere patres; quod non potuere vetare,/ ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo. Metamorphoses. Book IV. lines 60-62. 182.
and plan a rendezvous: “Then decided when all had still that night to try to elude their guardians’ watchful eyes and steal out of doors,”325… “They were to meet at Ninus’ tomb and hide in the shade of a tree.”326 Their plan, however, goes awry when darkness creates misinterpreted clues of death: Tisbe encounters a freshly fed lioness and drops her cloak to escape from the beast: “And as she flees, she leaves her cloak on the ground behind her.”327 The lioness, nonetheless, grasps her cloak: “Returning to the wood she [lioness] comes by chance upon the light garment (but without the girl herself!) and tears it with bloody jaws.”328 When Piramus encounters Tisbe’s veil, he thinks the worst: “But when he saw the cloak too, smeared with blood her cried.”329 Its sight compels a pair of sorrowful suicides. First, Piramus: He thinks the beast has slain his maiden: “He drew the sword he wore girt about him, plunged the blade into his side.”330 Tisbe, then encounters the body of Piramus and joins him in death: “I will follow you in death, and men shall say I was the most wretched cause and comrade of your fate”331 … “She spoke, and fitting the point beneath her breast, she fell forward on the


330 Quoque erat accinctus demisit inilia ferrum/ nec mora, feventi moriens e vulnere traxit. Metamorphoses. Book IV, lines 119-120. 186.

331 Persequar extinctum letique misserima dicar/ causa comesque tui. Book IV, lines 151-152. 186.
sword which was still warm with her lover’s blood.” The forbidden love and double suicide mirrors the events present in the illicit relationship of Marie’s *Les Deus Amanz* continuing her affinity for his *Metamorphoses*.

Although Marie claims that *Les Deus Amanz* is rooted in the Breton culture, the tale echoes Ovid’s tale of Piramus and Tisbe found in his *Metamorphoses* on several points. Marie’s *Les Deus Amanz* tells a tale where a selfish king seeks to keep his daughter from any potential suitor. He creates a Herculean test to win his daughter’s hand; the man must carry her to the peak of a nearby mountain without rest or aid. A noble young man enters the life of the king’s daughter and despite the king’s daunting challenge set before him, the prospective suitor and the maiden, become secret lovers. They, however, can no longer bear their furtive affair. The young knight attempts to convince the damsel to elope: “[The young man] came to his beloved and addressed his complaint to her, begging her in his anguish to elope with him, for he could no longer bear the pain.”

Marie’s *lai* adds an extra dimension to the tale within the maiden’s suffering. She faces a deep

332 Dixit et aptato pectus mucrone sub imum/ incubuit ferro, quod adhuc a caede tepebat. *Metamorphoses*. Book IV. lines 162-163. 190.

334 “The Bretons made a lay about them which was given the title *The Two Lovers*. (Un lai en firent li Bretun. *Les Deus Amanz*).” *Lays, Les Deus Amanz*. 82.

335 Et aptato pectus mucrone sub imum,/ incubuit ferro, quod adhuc a caede tepebat. *Metamorphoses*. Book IV, 162-163. 190.

dilemma. She tells her suitor: “But if I went away with you, my father would be sad and distressed and his life would be an endless torment. Truly, I love him so much and hold him so dear that I would not wish to grieve him,”\textsuperscript{337}

\begin{quote}
Si jo m'en voi ensemble od vus,  
mis pere avreit e doel e ire,  
ne vivreit mie sanz martire, certes,  
tant l'eim e si l'ai chier,  
jeo nel vodreie curucier.\textsuperscript{338}
\end{quote}

The lovers, nonetheless, accept the king’s challenge, but it comes at a dreadful cost: “He reached the top, in such distress that he fell down and never rose again, for his heart left his body.”\textsuperscript{339} The pain and loss of her lover’s death overwhelms the maiden: “Sorrow for him toucher her heart and there the damsel died, who was so worthy, wise and, fair.”\textsuperscript{340} The maiden’s death in \textit{Les Deus Amanz} compared to the fatal outcomes in the \textit{Metamorphoses} holds less emotive elements than the dramatic suicide and depth of devotion Tisbe illustrates for her lover. Instead, the events in \textit{Les Deus Amanz} create a sorrowful outcome where all three characters suffer a tragic loss. The maiden dies of a \textit{broken heart}; her sorrow and loss for her beloved fatally wound her. Marie separates and moralizes her \textit{lai} compared to Ovid’s text. Her narrative develops a twelfth century interpretation his tale. Marie’s narrative, for instance, presents no sword or dagger whereas the importance of a blade in Ovid’s tale

\textsuperscript{337} Lays. \textit{Les Deus Amanz}. 83.

\textsuperscript{338} Ouevres, \textit{Les Deus Amanz}. 3743 of 4582.

\textsuperscript{339} Lays. \textit{Les Deus Amanz}. 84.

\textsuperscript{340} Lays. \textit{Les Deus Amanz}. 85.
creates the sorrowful ending. Marie’s lai mentions no blade to grasp to plunge into her heart.

It suggests that Marie’s tale adopts the period’s cultural convention related to taking one’s life. Suicide, in the classical era, stood as an accepted method to die. The Christian cultural model, conversely, did not. Christian theology viewed suicide as a sin and an unacceptable method to die. The maiden’s death places its burden, in part, on the king’s selfishness and the lovers’ burning desire for each other which ends tragically with their deaths. Marie’s Les Deus Amanz, more so, examines the moral responsibilities of the medieval era as it struggles against the desires and complexities of love from that of a father and daughter and the yearning of an intimate lover.

Marie de France employs an additional emotive component found in the deathly tale of Piramus and Tisbe when the characters manifest their anguish by tearing at their own garments and hair. In book six, as noted earlier, when Tereus lies to Procne about her sister’s death, Procne transmits her sorrow by tearing at her clothing: “Then, Procne tore from her shoulder the robe gleaming with a broad golden border.” Ovid employs this same motif in the demise of Piramus and Tisbe. When Piramus fears the lioness killed Tisbe, he takes his own life out of despair; Tisbe discovers Piramus’s dying body: “She smites her innocent arms with loud blows of grief, and tears her hair.” Marie’s lai, Chaitivel, additionally, connects with Ovid’s works on the same theme when three of the four knights who interest the lady’s heart die in a melee: “In their grief over the knights a full two thousand men unfastened their visors and tore

341 Percutit indignos claro plangore lacertos et laniata comas. Metamorphoses. Metamorphoses. Book IV, lines 138-139. 188.
at their hair and beards, united in their sorrow.” The significance of the grief-stricken actions illustrate a common literary link between the two poets but a cultural link: Marie’s works adopt an emotive and physical representation of grief within the societal behavior in the *Metamorphoses* and Marie’s twelfth-century compositions illustrating a further feather of Ovid’s classical reception during this epoch.

Marie de France’s *Chevrefoil* differs from her other *lais* in that its narrative derives from the legend of Tristram. She stresses the tale’s popularity and the suffering its characters experiences. Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, in *Marie de France, A Critical Companion*, cite this *lai* as an example of: “a third-person protagonist who memorializing his or her first-hand ‘adventure’ in narrative form.” In its brief prologue, Marie professes the theme itself: “Their [Tristram and the queen] love was so pure that it caused them to suffer great distress and later brought about their death on the same day.” (De l’ur amur que tant fu fine/ Dunt il eurent meinte dolur,/ Puis mururent en un jur). Marie’s *lai* adopts a nature-driven metaphor to illustrate their connection and the suffering they endure when separated. The tale equates the secret lovers to a honeysuckle attaching itself to a hazel branch, but if separated, they both wither away and die: “Sweet love, so it is with us: without me you cannot

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Marie, moreover, with the aid of the Tristram narrative, embraces the additional musical element of the lai which Marie notes in some prologues of the lais. The “deceptively simple story,” as Kinoshita and McCracken note, includes Tristram’s musical contribution to her lais because “Tristram was a good harper.” Kinoshita and McCracken suggest Chevrefoil, “is cast as a mnemonic for a commemoration of messages [between Tristram and the queen] originally exchanged is secret.” The lai creates significance because it: “serves as a point of convergence of a multilayered process of transmission, translation, transcription, and (perhaps) versification.” The seemingly modest and short lai of Marie possesses a multilayered underbelly which she produces through the well-known narrative of Tristram which Kinoshita and McCracken unravel and examine. Marie weaves the narrative thread of Tristram and Isolde’s tale into her lai, Chevrefoil, and melds the natural motif of the honeysuckle and hazel branch to signify the embrace and connection between the two lovers. When Marie’s tale adopts Tristram, ‘the good harper,’ it incorporates the musical element which her lais also include.

346 Lays, Chevrefoil. 110.
347 Lays, Chevrefoil. Lines 77-78. 163.
348 At the end of Guigemar, Marie states: “The lay of Guigemar, which is performed on a harp and rote was composed from the tale you have heard.” Lays, Guigemar. 55.
349 McCracken. 30.
350 ibid.
351 ibid.
In *Lanval*, Marie de France extends her narrative content when she reveals an alternate dynamic within a pastoral landscape where a knight, Lanval, falls into a slumber and encounters a fairly queen and enjoys a secret affair with this queen. The key element for the fairy queen is *secrecy*: “I admonish, order, and beg you not to reveal this secret to anyone! I shall tell you the long and short of it: you shall lose me forever if this love were to become known. You would never be able to see me or possess me.”

His separation from her, however, causes him to suffer: “Lanval withdrew to one side, far from the others, for he was impatient to hold his beloved, to kiss, embrace, and touch her. He cares little for other people’s joy when he could not have his own pleasure.”

The mysterious realm of the fairy queen, furthermore, incorporates, once again the element of a barrier but not a tangible barrier as in *Guigemar* or *Yonec*; this barrier implemented by the fairy queen is a barrier of secrecy. Lanval, ultimately, attempts to impress his will upon the queen, to break through this barrier. He violates his promise to the fairy queen when he insults Queen Guinevere and must face King Arthur’s justice. The king exonerates Lanval but at a

cost. Because he revealed the secret affair with the fairy queen, Lanval suffers the consequence of his actions and loses the fairy queen’s love: “He cried to her [fairy queen] to have mercy, to come and speak with her beloved. He cursed his heart and his mouth and it was a wonder he did not kill himself.”

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MES CEO NE LI VALUT NEENT.
II SE PLEIGNET E SUSPIROT,
D’URES EN AUTRES SE PASMOT.
PUIS LI CRIE CENT FEIZ MERCI,
QUE ELE PAROLT A SUN AMI.
SUN QUOR E SA BUCHE MAUDIT;
C’EST MERVEILLE K’IL NE S’OCIT.

Marie’s lai, Lanval, presents the recurrent thread of love’s separation and suffering. It also contains the fairy queen’s alternate realm which may represent the ancient pagan mythology of the region and its cultural heritage. Marie’s Lanval, moreover, includes a role-reversal: the fairy queen obeys no man. She dictates her terms to Lanval about their relationship, neither a classical nor medieval social norm. Marie’s lai exhibits the thematic element of a barrier. Marie’s Lanval increases the further influence of Ovid’s works on Marie’s poetry with the role-reversal theme. In Ars Amatoria, Ovid writes: “Let her impose her laws upon your countenance.”

357 He even strengthens this notion: “The Tirynthian hero obeyed a mistress’s command: Go, shrink from enduring what he endured! Bidden meet her at the

355 Lays, Lanval. 77.


357 Imponat leges vultibus illa tuis. Ars. Ars Amatoria, Book II, line 202. 78.
Forum.” Ovid’s allusion to Hercules may be in jest, but its hyperbolic content attempts to strengthen his amorous advice. The element of loyalty, furthermore, emerges within the tapestry of Marie’s poetry creating both the mythological motif of the fairy queen and a societal-switch in roles where the knight’s broken vow of secrecy results him to suffer the consequences of his disloyalty to his beloved queen.

In *Equitan* and *Bisclavret*, Marie de France highlights the theme of love’s betrayal and how it influences the tales’ characters. In *Equitan*, Marie explores the love triangle of a lady, a king, and a seneschal. The enraged seneschal kills his king and wife horrifically after he discovers their betrayal: “Seizing his [seneschal’s] wife, he tossed her head first into the bath seneschal filled with boiling water.”

*Equitan*, the only *lai* that carries the element of ‘rage,’ stands alone when it illustrates the potential pains of deceit.

In *Bisclavret*, Marie demonstrates how betrayal infects the wife of a knight when she betrays her husband who carries the curse of a werewolf. Her motives stem for desire for another man in an illicit affair. After she learns what her husband needs to convert back into a human form, she devises a plan with her lover to maintain the knight’s inhuman form: “Thus was Bisclavret betrayed and wronged by his wife. Because he was often missing, everyone thought that this time he had gone away for good.”

The king redeems the knight


358 Paruit imperio dominae Tirynthius heros:/ I nunc et dubita ferre, quod ille tuli/ Iussus adesse foro, *Ars. Ars Amatoria*, Book II, lines 221-224. 80.


and punishes the knight’s wife who had betrayed him. The suffering of betrayal resides in both Bisclavret and Equitan; Marie’s lais imparts the malicious nature of betrayal in Bisclavret, and Equitan as spiteful and cruel. The betrayal in Ovid’s compositions possess a far different nature and creates contrasting emotions.

Ovid’s amatory works scarcely refer to betrayal directly. Most of Ovid’s amatory poetry only allude to it. In Amores, for instance, when the protagonist attempts to coax Cypassis into an intimate setting: “Pay me to-day the sweet price of your caress! ... but if you stupidly say no, I shall turn informer and confess all we have done; I shall stand the betrayer of my own guilt.” Ovid’s character threatens to ruin the girl’s reputation. He often places the betrayal upon the girl who is married to another. In Ars Amatoria, for example, Ovid writes: “Let all be revealed: we have flung our gates open to the foe, and in faithless treason let us keep faith, what is easily given ill fosters an enduring love; let an occasional repulse vary your merry love.” If the girl fails to reciprocate his affection, he attempts to place the sin of betrayal on her: “May that dinner, I pray, be your husband’s last! Must I then merely look upon the girl I love, be merely a fellow-guest? Is the delight of feeling your touch to be

362 Concubitus hodie, fusca Cypassi, tuos!/ … quod si stulta negas, index anteacta fatabor,/ et veniam culpae proditor ipse meae. Amores. Amores. Book II, viii, lines 25-26, 406. Although the sense of the elegy is flirtatious and playful, the modern reception of such a writing would be interpreted as threatening to the girl.

363 The word Ovid uses for ‘treason’ is, proditione, according to OLD (Oxford Latin Dictionary), can translate as, both ‘treason,’ as used here, and ‘betrayal.’

364 Omnia tradantur: portas reseeravimus hosti;/ Et sit infidia proditione fides./ Quod datur ex facili, longum male nutrit amorem. Ars. Ars Amatoria, Book III, lines 577-579. 158.
another?“³⁶⁵ Ovid’s writings furthers his imagined scenarios and selfish goals: “Don’t let him kiss you—not once! If you let him kiss you, I’ll declare myself your lover before his eyes, and say, ‘Those kisses are mine!’ and lay hands to my claim.”³⁶⁶ Ovid’s poetry at times holds a harshness when he threatens to ruin a girl’s reputation, but he also possesses a flirtatious nature when he attempts to guilt the girl into his arms instead of her husband’s. The disloyalty he struggles to place on the girl contrasts the hateful betrayal in Marie’s Equitan, and Bisclavret. The contrasting character of betrayal in Marie’s lais displays how Marie’s verse develops the character of betrayal and displays it’s twelfth-century character as the polar opposite of loyalty. The moral conventions of the medieval era contrast those of the classical era when Ovid composed his works. As Kinoshita and McCracken suggest:

Old French literature emerges in the late eleventh or early twelfth century as a literature of transcription and translation. At its origin, the term roman, eventually yielding the French roman and the English word, romance, designated not a genre but a language – the Romance vernacular, set explicitly, and at times polemically, over and against Latin, western Europe’s language of official thought and communication. Most importantly, unlike modern translators, the writers who set out to “romance” Latin texts like Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae or Vergil’s Aeneid were not preoccupied by issues of fidelity. Rather, the “original” served as the basis of a thoroughgoing adaptation, elaboration, and expansion.”³⁶⁷

Ovid’s own poetry supports this claim; his works possess a playful and prideful air where he attempts to cajole girls into acts of infidelity. When the protagonist in Ovid’s poetry fails to


³⁶⁷ Vergil (70 BCE – 19 BCE) lived during the same Roman era as Ovid when Augustus ruled. McCracken. 18.
fulfill his desires, he interprets it as a betrayal against him. The connection related to infidelity in both poets’ works holds less prevalence but develops its theme. Within both compositions, the characters suffer, but Marie’s verse expands and deepens the immoral nature of betrayal which increases their suffering.

Marie’s lai, Milun, and Le Fresne continue to expand and examine love’s complexities while possessing similar narratives. In the tales, both ladies bear an unwanted child. In Milun, the lady has a child out of wedlock; in Le Fresne, the lady has unwanted twins after publicly scouring a lady of repute for bearing twins. Although the mother in Le Fresne cares more about her own reputation than her child’s well-being when she wants to kill one of her twins initially to avoid dishonor: “I would rather make amends with God than shame and dishonor myself,” which sets the ladies apart.\(^{368}\) Both ladies exile a child to save them and themselves from ridicule. In Milun, the mother sends her child, a boy, to her sister, and in Le Fresne, the mother sends her daughter to an abbey. Both gift each child with a ring and both have an origin riddle to solve. The boy must solve a riddle, but the young girl almost fatefully happens upon her family’s origin when the man she loves, a lord, is to marry a woman, she discovers, is her sister. The lais’s importance exists in how Marie reveals an additional complication intimate love weaves its way into the twelfth-century social standards of bearing children, and maternal responsibilities of the era. An additional familial

\(^{368}\) Lays, Le Fresne. 62.
elements present between sisters emerges in *Le Fresne*, when the maiden discovers the wife-to-be of her beloved is her unknown sister.

Marie’s *Milun* elevates the drama of separation, suffering, and secrecy in her narrative when a *courty* knight and a nobleman’s wife also sire a child out of wedlock. After she bears the child, they resolve to send their child to the maiden’s sister to hide him and to discontinue their secret relationship: “She [the lady] had forfeited her honor and good name by allowing such a thing to befall her.”369 In *Milun*, Marie extends the element of suffering when the two lovers must send away their son and end their secret affair. After a time, however, they adopt a swan’s talents to communicate with each other. When their child becomes a man, the damsel’s sister gives him a riddle to discover the identity of his father and reveals his mother’s plight. *Milun*, the child, fortuitously, encounters his father at a tournament and his parents reunite after the husband of Milun’s mother dies. Although *Milun* ends on a joyous note, Marie’s text expresses how the lovers suffer deeply for twenty years before they reap the rewards of their patience and loyalty for each other and the reunion with their son.

Separation, as a theme, immerses the works of Ovid and Marie, but their poetry reveals a different sense of how lovers can experience separation and how they approach it and endure it. Ovid’s poetry holds no tale of separation which lasts twenty years. Ovid’s characters suffer separation in a barrier of a wall or door but also in that of an unattained,
desired lover. In *Amores*, Ovid proclaims the pains of separation: “With heart of iron you listen as I vainly entreat, O janitor, and the door stands rigid with the unyielding oaken brace.”370 Without the girl of his desire, Ovid writes: “When my books have won my lady, where my books could go, I may not go myself; when she has praised me heartily, to him she has praised the door is closed. Disgracefully hither and thither I go, for all my poet’s gifts.”371 Marie’s *lais* examines separation and reveals the complexities of its seemingly simple theme in *Milun* and *Le Fresne*.

In *Le Chaitivel*, Marie de France illustrates a dramatic display of sorrow. The *lais* not only echoes the theme of sorrow in the tale but expands it to include the themes of a deception and regret. The narrative unfolds when a damsel becomes enamored with four knights and suffers the pains of love because she loves all of them equally and is fearful to hurt any of them: “She did not wish to lose three in order to retain just one.”372 After a tournament, a skirmish ensues and three of her four knights lose their life. The melee leaves the remaining knight severely wounded. The lady, overwhelmed by sorrow utters: “Whatever shall I do? I shall never again be happy! I loved these four knights and desired each one for his own sake.”373 *Le Chaitivel* illustrates the devastating degree of the maiden’s sorrow; the


371 Cum pulchrae dominae nostril placuere libelli,/ quo licuit libris, non non licet ire mihi/ cum bene laudavit , laudato ianua clausa est/ turpiter huc illuc ingeniosis eo. Amores. *Amores*. viii. lines 5-8. 480-481.


lady’s secret and unsaid love for each knight overcomes her. Marie enhances the maiden’s grief when regret and, arguably pride, burden her because of the deception she adopts to win their favor. She professes her unspoken love for them: “I do not know which of them to mourn the most, but I can no longer disguise or hide my feelings. One of them I see wounded and three are dead.”\(^{374}\) When the lady decides to relate this tragic tale, the knight who survives urges the lady to alter its name to focus on her suffering and regret, instead of the loss of her lovers: *The Unhappy One*. The knight, who survived, expresses his boundless love for the lady and sorrow: “I cannot experience the joy of a kiss or an embrace or of any pleasure other than conversation.”\(^{375}\) Marie illustrates a sharp level of sorrow in *Le Chaitivel* when a maiden entwines the hearts of four knights without each knowing of the others. Her charade ends tragically and must endure an unending sorrow and regret. Marie develops the cultural moralizing of the tale when the lady’s sins create the consequences manifest in her grief because of the lady’s deceit she used to win the knights’ hearts.

*Le Chaitivel* exhibits a connection with Ovid’s poetry through the theme of deception when the maiden deceives her quartet of lovers. The maiden discovers deception gives her an effective tool to entertain the desires of the four knights. Ovid’s texts describe the features of deceit as a useful gift. In *Ars Amoris*, Ovid declares: “Attend my rites that you may learn to deceive. Though as many keep watch as Argus had eyes (so your purpose be but firm), you

\(^{374}\) Lays, *Chaitivel*. 107.

\(^{375}\) Lays, *Chaitivel*. 108.
will deceive them.” In *Remedia Amoris*, he catalogues a slew of deceptive-driven behaviors to delude one’s lover: “yet make sure yourself seem colder than ice to your mistress; and feign to be heart-whole, lest, if perchance you show your anguish, she notice; and laugh, when you would morn your plight.” Ovid often employs deceit in his compositions with a degree of irony when, in *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid states: “Deceive the deceivers; they are mostly an unrighteous sort.” His poetry continues to urge subterfuge: “Feign what you are not, and counterfeit an assuaged frenzy; so will you do in fact what you have practiced doing.” His compositions even suggest self-deception: “Yet deceive yourself also, nor think to make an end of loving: the steed often resists the reins. Conceal your gain; what you do not proclaim will come about: the bird avoids the nets that show too plainly.” Ovid’s texts display deceit as a lover’s closest ally; he believes the potent partner if it rewards one with the affection of a potential lover. In Ovid’s works, the deception ‘game’ wins the girl. In Marie’s *lais*, the opposite occurs when Marie moralizes the tale and its themes. In the *lai*, for instance, Marie demonstrates its dire consequences. She frames

376 Ut fallas, ad mea sacra veni!/ Tot licet observant (adsit modo certa voluntas)./ Quot fuerant Argo lumina, vderba dabis. *Ars. Ars Amatoria*. lines 616-618. 160-162.


378 Fallite fallentes: ex manga parte profanum/ Sunt genus; *Ars. Ars Amatoria*. Lines 645-646. 56-57.


380 Te quoque falle tamen, nec sit tibi finis amandi/ Propositus: frenis saepe repugnant equus./ Utilitas lateat quod non profitebere, fiet:/ Quae nimirum apparent retia, vitat avis. *Ars. Remedia Amoris*, lines 513-516. 212.
deception in the cultural landscape of the twelfth century and expands its Ovidian theme into a morally-driven theme when she highlights the potential costs of deception in matters of the heart.

The longest of Marie de France’s *lais*, *Eliduc*, spans nearly twelve-hundred lines and a moral quandary emerges where loyalty, guilt, faith, and the pain of desire all play a part. The tale unfolds when a king exiles a knight, Eliduc, from his native land, but before he departs, he pledges his loyalty to his wife, Guildelüec. “He [Eliduc] would keep good faith with her.” Eliduc journeys across the sea and encounters a maiden, Guilladun, who seeks out the knight’s attention: “There was nothing unbecoming about him and forming a great admiration for him. *Love* dispatched its messenger who summoned her to love him.” Marie’s *lai* incorporates and demonstrates classical reception when she personifies *Love* as it acts upon the maiden to love Eliduc, as cupid acted upon Ovid in *Amores*: “I am on fire, and in my but now vacant heart Love sits his throne.” Eliduc, also suffers the pains of love; he remains apart from his wife, and sees the maiden rarely:

He considered himself most unfortunate to have been in the country for so long and to have seen her [Guilladun] so little. Having said this, he repented of it, for he remembered his wife, and how he has assured her that he would be faithful and behave loyally.

382 ibid.
The sorrow these three characters suffer reaches an apex when Eliduc returns to Brittany.

Eliduc struggles with the duty he feels and his worldly desires; the love he bears for Guilladun burns within him, but the loyalty he pledges to his wife also drives him. The struggle, ultimately, sends Guilladun into a death-like illness which Guildelüec cures.

Marie’s tale demonstrates the plight and pain of love’s desires when the conflict among all three character reaches an apex where guilt and loyalty oppose desire. *Eliduc* furthers the depths of how love affects the characters’ moral values and their loyalty for each other. The impasse and devotion they possess for each other inspires Eliduc, Guildelüec, and Guilladun to devote themselves to God, instead of one or the other.

The connection *Eliduc* holds with Ovid’s literary works lies in Ovid’s object of loyalty. The compositions of Marie and Ovid highlight the different cultural landscapes in which each author composed their works. Ovid’s verse proclaims its loyalty to only one mistress: *Love*. In Ovid’s *Amores*, for instance: “Yet Phoebus and his nine companions and the finder of the vine are on my side, and so is love, who makes me his gift to you, and I have faith that I’ll yield to none, and ways without reproach, and unadorned simplicity, and blushing modesty.”

Ovid’s compositions profess his loyalty to *eros*, to *Love* itself, and not to a girl which explains the dismissive attitude he holds towards fidelity in his amatory works. *Eliduc*’s connection with Ovid’s works relates to loyalty; it emerges at the climax of *Eliduc*. Ovid’s compositions place their devotion and faith in the deities of *Love*, the

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personification of Love within the pantheon of Ovid’s cultural background. Although the objects of their loyalty, devotion, and belief-system differ, their notions toward *loyalty* and *devotion* possess a common thread: a higher purpose. For Ovid, this higher purpose exists in *Eros*, for Marie de France, it exists in the Christian *God*. The significance of Marie’s *Eliduc* establishes itself in how Marie examines the struggle between the passions of love and the duty-driven and moral aspects of faith, guilt, and devotion. Marie creates characters who battle with duty-bound obligations, love’s passions, longing, and guilt, but ultimately lead them all to a higher calling to devote themselves to God. The connection between the two poets forge a clear literary relationship and illustrates the classical reception during this era of history.

Emanuel J. Mickel Jr.’s *Marie de France and The Learned Tradition*, relates how Cesare Segre explains Ovidian influence in Marie’s *language* in *Les Deus Amanz* and *Laüstic*.\(^{386}\) The two works, according to Mickel, demonstrate direct knowledge of Ovid’s *Piramus* and *Tisbe* from book three in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.\(^{387}\) Mickel, furthermore, cites Cesare Segre, who contends that in *Laüstic*: “the first fifty lines of the French text were undoubtedly drawn from the Latin.”\(^{388}\) In *The Metamorphoses and Narrative Conjointure in ‘Deus Amanz,’ ‘Yonec,’ and ‘Le Laustic’*, Mickel also examines Kristen Brightback’s writing

\(^{386}\) The connection examined on page 26 focuses on the narrative of her *lais*, whereas Cesare Segre’s analysis relates to the linguistic aspect of Marie’s *lais*.


\(^{388}\) Companion. 41.
and surveys: “The relationship between Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the narrative *conjointure* in three of Marie’s *lais,*” which includes *Les Deus Amanz, Yonec,* and *Laüstic.* Mickel Jr. catalogues a host of secondary sources which examine and analyze the literary relationship between the writings of Ovid and Marie de France. A facet of Mickel’s argument rests on Marie’s assertion that she based her *lais* on Breton-based folkloric tales, yet, as Mickel notes, clear evidence exists that her narratives derive firmly from Ovid’s compositions. Mickel, furthermore, argues the folkloric motifs present in Marie’s *lais* present: “[The] most telling moments in the tales, aspects which give them their drama and set them apart, can be found in Ovid or in the broader classical European tradition.” The evidence of Mickel’s argument lies in the textual proof which brings together the diverse cultures of the region and the period, including the writings of Ovid and Marie de France.

Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken explore the linguistic elements and contend the *lais* themselves reveal the intersecting linguistic influences in France and the culturally diverse nature of Western Europe. They state: “This multilingual complexity demands that we take seriously something we all know but seldom stop to consider: how fundamentally

389 Companion. 41.

390 Marie mentions The Bretons as the origin of her *lais* in, *Guigemar, Equitan, Bisclavret, Lanval,* and *Eliduc.* In two of three *lais* which demonstrate a cohesive connection with Ovid, she also, states how she bases them on Breton lays. In *Les Deus Amanz,* Marie writes, “The Bretons made a lay about them which was given the title, *The Two Lovers.* (line 6) 82. In *Laüstic,* she relates, “Laüstic is its name, I believe, and that is what the Bretons call it in their land. In French, the title is *Rossignol,* and Nightingales is the correct English word.” (lines 3-6) 94.

391 Companion. 41.
medieval literary culture was a culture of translation.” 392 They suggest the emergent compositions of the era produced, “a literature and translation… designated not by a genre but a language.” 393 They illustrate the additional layers contained in the writings of Ovid and Marie de France to reveal their cultural connection: “The ‘Romance’ vernacular, set explicitly, and at times polemically over and against Latin.” 394 They suggest Latin authors applied their original texts, “as a basis of a thoroughgoing adaptation, elaboration, and expansion.” 395 They cite Michell R. Warren who asserts: “understanding the emergent vernacular texts of the twelfth-century renaissance requires to progress past the idea of the original possessing more worth than a translation.” 396 The importance of vernacular texts and their classical sires, according to Kinoshita and McCracken: “Involves placing texts in relation to each other via strategic alliances that depend less on genre and language that on culture.” 397 Kinoshita and McCracken’s argument reveals the added dimensions of Marie’s poetry which illustrates the hidden linguistic layers through translation and transmission, core elements of its vernacular identity.

392 Critical. 17.
393 ibid.
394 Critical. 19.
395 ibid.
396 ibid.
397 ibid.

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The transmission of Marie de France’s *lais* furthers our perception of her desire to compose her *lais* and sheds light onto the reception of her poetry during the twelfth-century renaissance. As Kinoshita and McCracken suggest, Marie de France’s purpose in composing her *lais* existed in her need to fulfill a spiritual duty through her God-given gift. The second reason rested in protecting oneself from vice. According to Marie: “Whoever wants to protect him or herself from vice should study and begin a serious piece of work.” (*Ki de vice se vuelte defendre,/ estudiër deit e entendre/ e grevose oevre comencier.*)\(^{398}\) And her third reason was, “to garner praise and renown for her work,” which in of itself allies Marie’s texts with the writings of Ovid.\(^{399}\) As Marie states: “I don’t want to forget them. I’ve made rhyming tales out of them, spending many late nights at it.” (*Plusurs en ai oïz conter/, nes vueil laissier ne obliër./ Rime en ai e fait ditié/, soventes feiz en ai veillé.*)\(^{400}\) Her impetus to compose the *Lais* existed primarily a desire to be remembered.\(^{401}\) Like Ovid, Marie de France possessed enough vanity-driven desires to compose her works.

Marie states her intended demographic of medieval society in the introduction; as Kinoshita and McCracken’s note: “[Marie is] appealing, “to the “lords” (*seingnur*) who constitute her target audience. Marie explicitly claims her desire not to be forgotten (*ne’s’oblïe*, I. 4) by her contemporaries and implicitly identifies herself as a “woman…of

\(^{398}\) Critical. 22.

\(^{399}\) ibid.

\(^{400}\) ibid.

\(^{401}\) Critical. 23.
great worth” (*femme de grant pris*). Marie targets not only the aristocracy but the king whom most scholars believe is Henry II of England. In the introduction, she *humbles* herself through her words:

In your honour, noble king, you who are so worthy and courtly, you to whom all joy pays homage in whose heart all true virtue has taken root, did I set myself to assemble lays, to compose and to relate them in rhyme. In my heart, lord, I thought and decided that I should present them to you, so if it pleased you to accept them, you would bring me great happiness and I should rejoice evermore. Do not consider me presumptuous if I make so bold as to offer you this gift.

Marie words of excessive praise further her connection with the noble classes of the Angevin empire, and although Marie’s targets the aristocracy, its popularity reached into the lower strata of society and across many borders.

In *Women in Western Intellectual Culture*, Patricia Ranft explains: “All [Marie’s works] are in the vernacular. Her works enjoyed fame and were in turn, translated into other vernacular during the Middle Ages: Italian, German, Old Norse, English—and even Latin.” Ranft notes a further detail related to Marie’s decision to write in Old French which she writes in her later work, *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory*: “I, Marie, have put/ The Book of Purgatory into French, / As a record, so that it might be intelligible/ And suited to lay folk.” Although Marie states her reason her *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory*, it suggests her

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402 Critical. 25.
403 Critical. 41.
404 Ranft. 73.
405 ibid.
vernacular choice, in her *lais*, may also hold this same reason. Ranft argues that although Marie focuses on the aristocracy, “her chief interest lies elsewhere, with the lay people.”

Ranft furthers her argument and submits that Marie de France’s choice of Old French in her *lais* teaches about human nature: “but in a more accessible and entertaining way” and “credit should be given to Marie for creating a new way to communicate these truths to a new and educated audience.”

Although Marie does not state she seeks lay society as an audience, her compositions possess a character which peaked popular interest throughout the societal stratum in Western Europe.

The analysis of Marie’s audience and her motives to write her *lais* reveal religious, sociological, cultural, and political layers. Marie’s first reason, the ‘God-given’ gift motive suggests those who possess a *God-given* gift to embrace it, and use it. The second reason, the avoidance of vice and study to create a great work. Even Ovid’s poetry recognizes the ills of idleness. In *Amores*, he writes: “To myself, my bent was all to dally in ungirt idleness; my couch in the shade had made my temper mild.”

It suggests Marie sought to inspire people to study and learn a skill or craft to create something worthwhile. During the twelfth-century renaissance, learning spread throughout many regions of Western Europe. The strong religious thread of medieval society molds Marie’s motives to compose her works along with

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407 Ranft. 73.
408 ibid. 84.
409 *Ipse ego segnis eram discinctaque in otia natus/ mollierantanimos lectos et umbra meos/ Amores.* *Amores.* ix. 358-359.
her selfish desire for fame and remembrance. On its surface, her reason to be remembered appears as a self-serving justification, but perhaps her desire to inspire others to succeed was equally important to her. For a woman to prosper in nearly anything during the twelfth-century created more than a challenge, even as an aristocrat. The significance, moreover, of Marie’s reasons to write her *lais* exist, in part, in the diverse cultural reception and of her works.

The twelfth-century renaissance enjoyed a multitude of cultures and linguistic heritages in the region of France. Marie decided to craft her compositions not in Latin, the preferred language of the intellectuals, but in Old French because, as Kinoshita and McCracken write:

Her project shows the degree of legitimacy and prestige Old French had acquired over the course of the twelfth century. If the justification for “romancing” high-cultural Latin texts was self-evident, here the narrator emerges as an anthropologist avant la lettre – collecting oral material in a non-hegemonic tongue to be translated into and transcribed in the language that will assure its circulation at the court of the “noble king” (Prologue, l. 43).410

Kinoshita and McCracken highlight an additional stratum of connection between Marie’s *lais* and Ovid’s texts exist in: “The translation into *Romanz* (l. 30) out of the Latin of the “ancients” possesses a moral and pedagogical function: to get readers to exercise their God-given faculties to decode the original text.”411 Her link to the Latin literary realm exists in Ovid’s compositions, as Kinoshita and McCracken state: “Depicting an Arthurian court always

410 Critical. 25.
411 ibid.
already permeated by Latin… All memory and transmission passes through Latin.**412 They continue and state: “French serves here as the anchor of a multilingual insular ‘literary system.’”**413 When Marie de France composes her *lais,* she began with a seemingly *humble* mission to fulfill her duty to God, to inspire the regional inhabitants to participate in the *cultural* developments in motion, and it finishes when she presents her works to the ‘noble king,’ which befits her other desire: to be remembered. The transmission and reception of Marie’s works through the multicultural background of the twelfth-century renaissance of Western Europe form the multiple tiers hidden within her compositions.

Marie de France, no matter who she was, composed a number of memorable compositions which we thankfully possess. Most likely, many more compositions existed, but the ravages of humanity and time have destroyed them. Her *lais* demonstrate her craft as a poet to incorporate countless cultures, languages, themes, and narratives which echo the eternal song of love passed down to her by Ovid’s compositions and other guiding texts. The cogent element of Marie de France’s poetry exists in how she develops Ovid’s notions of love and situates his themes into the vibrant and evolving medieval culture of the twelfth century. The classical reception of Ovid’s texts in the twelfth century, viewed through a modern lens, reveal how these cultures collided, advanced, and existed within an epoch of significant change. Recognizing the cultural, political, literary, and historical components enlightens the multi-
disciplined examination of her texts. Distinguishing the people and foundations who guided Marie’s works adds to our salient understanding of her poetry and of the time period.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The twelfth-century renaissance transformed Western Europe on capacious levels. The paradigm shift emerged when an influx of intellectual materials, diverse cultures, and political shifts advanced the trajectory of the Western world. This thesis attempted to answer several questions about the literary developments during this epoch when the regional vernacular literature of Marie de France emerged and her *lais* created a distinct and different strain of courtly literature.

One of the central questions posed in this thesis lies in, to what extent did Ovid’s poetry guide Marie de France’s *lais*, and how did they affect her verse? Ovid’s poetry, specifically, the *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris*, and his *Metamorphoses* informs Marie’s *lais* to a significant degree. The thesis demonstrates the classical reception and influence of Ovid’s poetry on Marie’s *lais* and the literary connection the two poets shared as evidenced in chapter one. These arguments catalogue numerous thematic and narrative commonalities. Clear narrative elements, for instance, support the suggestions of classical reception, Ovidian presence in Marie’s writings, and a codified connection between her poetry and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Marie incorporates the tale of Tereus, Philomena, and Procne in her *lai*, *Laüstic*, from the presence of the nightingale in both stories, to when Philomena castes the Itys’s severed head at Tereus’s feet, to when the husband flings the dead nightingale onto the chest of his wife in *Laüstic*. Both tales also contain a clandestine method of communication when both adopt a signifier and signified element to communicate. Philomela creates an embroidery to inform her sister, Procne, of her plight after Tereus removes her tongue; in *Laüstic*, both lovers understand the need for secrecy and
communicate through signs and signals, lest the jealous husband discover their affair and face his ire. The lady sends her beloved the dead nightingale without any written note, and the knight adorns it around his neck understanding what the nightingale denotes to each other. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, moreover, Marie includes elements of Pirimus and Tisbe’s tale in her *Les Deus Amanz*. In Ovid’s tale, the lovers’ parents forbid their marriage, in *Les Deus Amanz* the father attempts to keep his daughter, but in the end love overwhelms the lovers and it results in two suicides with Pirimus and Tisbe and two sorrowful deaths in *Les Deus Amanz*; one by enervation and one by grief.

The central themes of Ovid’s classical reception which guide Marie’s *lais* include love’s pain, suffering, and separation, to mention a few. Ovid’s themes found in his amatory works stem from the protagonist’s inability to obtain the girl he desires. In *Amores*, he professes all three themes; in *Ars Amatoria*, he teaches how to obtain a wanted girl to avoid sorrow, and in *Remedia Amoris*, he instructs how to avoid love. His works demonstrate what often causes his pain: *separation from his desired girl*, usually in the form of a husband, tangible barrier of a door, stonewall, or guard. In Marie’s poetry, love’s pain, suffering, and separation present themselves at some level in all her *lais*. Marie’s tales, however, illustrate separation from a different perspective: when lovers are forced or kept apart but also in the tangible barriers of a stone-walled room, a tower, a husband, or the sea. An additional theme exists in the element of deceit. Ovid’s character applies it to goad a girl into an intimate situation in his love poems and explains its effectiveness as a lover’s tool. Marie’s poetry adopts the theme of deceit in all her *lais*, but the deceit in *Bisclavret* and *Equitan* rises to include heinous acts of death and ruination. These samples evidence Ovid’s classical reception, the imprint on Marie’s *lais*, and the literary connection between the two poets. The
classical reception of Ovid’s writings and other Latin authors held a prevalent bearing on the intellectual infrastructure of medieval society. It held an elevated status and guided the development of the emergent twelfth-century literary culture.

Although Marie asserts, on several occasions, her compositions derived from Breton lays, the thesis overturns this contention of Marie. The examination of her lais reveal the prevalent Ovidian salience and connections. Her potential motive for attesting her lais were Breton-based in origin was perhaps “aimed at neutralizing the effects of history.” Marie, moreover, melds the Breton, French, and classical cultures into her lais to augment the accessibility of her poetry and embraces the multicultural elements of courtly literature.

A further question this thesis poses: do Marie’s lais just mirror the themes and narratives of Ovid’s writings, or do they broaden and evolve the elements of Ovid’s writings? Marie’s lais avoid imitation and echoing the textual content of Ovid. Marie, instead, expands and moralizes Ovid’s notions of love found in his texts beyond the intimacies of a mere lover. They reveal the diverse layers of eros when she places them in the twelfth-century landscape where the Church held a dominant role over people’s lives. Marie, furthermore, illustrates the complexities and diverse forms which affect and emerge from eros through the characters, themes, and tales of her lais. From the over-jealous violent and malicious husbands, to the imprisoned and trapped in a loveless marriage, to an unwanted child out of

667 An attempt to ‘neutralize’ refers to the invasions which ‘pushed out’ much of the language and culture of the native Celtic and Breton people. Including this Breton element in her poems includes the regional culture of the Bretons to create a more inclusive culture in her lais.

wedlock, to the regret of never professing a love until they pass, to being torn between the love for a father and a lover, to the love of an unknown sister, to the revenge one seeks for taking a lover, to the overwhelming desire for another lover as it impels you to kill another or destroy their life as they know it, to putting aside the loyalty of love and love’s desire for a higher calling above that of your own, Marie’s *lais* reveal the convolutions of *eros* within the twelfth-century culture and its diverse and broad influences on people no matter their societal stratum. When Marie explores the facets of love, she reinterprets the Ovidian elements of *eros* when she relates her tales against the cultural backdrop of twelfth century and demonstrates how these themes evolved from the classical age up to and including the High Middle Ages. Marie transforms the themes in Ovid’s works from the playful, flirtatious, and tongue-and-cheek elements in his amatory works into the *relevant-medieval-world* context of relationships where husbands, wives, lords, ladies, kings and queens, and children experience and endure the pleasures and pains of love through the many facets of *eros*.

The exploration of Marie de France’s *lais* stands as an important examination to understand a nearly unknown poet of the twelfth century. For centuries, we *misinterpreted* when Marie composed her works, but when Kark Warnke’s and Ernest Hoepffner reexamined her writings, they corrected this substantial error. The importance of any critical examination furthers our understanding. The analysis of her writings creates a gaze upon which we can consider Marie’s strain of courtly literature through a gendered lens. Marie’s regard and acclaim in a patriarchal society stands as a noteworthy accomplishment in of itself. Her writings, moreover, demonstrate how authors, like Marie, developed a strain of regional vernacular literature that emerged in the period’s courtly culture. It furthers the
understanding of this unknown twelfth-century poetess, her poetry, and the literary cultural identity as a whole.

The writing of this thesis has enlightened me and has increased my regard for the events and people of the twelfth century. As a student of history, literature, and the humanities, I appreciate even more how the issues and artifacts which we study, examine, and analyze contain countless elements and require a multi-disciplined approach if we wish to fully understand all its components. What I learned about Marie de France’s lais resonates through the seemingly sentimental and dramatic words of her poetry where the unseen facets of her verse broaden our understanding about the complexities of love in its many iterations. Studying Marie de France’s lais and Ovid’s poetry has made me regard their compositions on a far greater level and inspired me to discover more of the rich layers of literature hidden in their writings and the unmatched skill of their careful craft.
CHAPTER VII

BIBLIOGRAPHY


