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« QUANT SE DEPART LI JOLIS TANS »: BETRAYAL IN THE SONGS OF MEDIEVAL  
FRENCH WOMEN

A Thesis  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Modern Languages  
The University of Mississippi

by

**Hannah Harkey**

**May 2016**

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## ABSTRACT

For decades, the authorship of women *trouvères* has been questioned. Although the debate is more or less over in today's scholarship, research continues to search for evidence of not only their existence but for their contribution to the corpus. Women's voices in the songs call out not only because the speaker is female, but also because I argue that the author was female too. This is evidenced by the speaker's perception of betrayal. This paper highlights three key forms of betrayal that medieval women faced: betrayal by the family, betrayal by the lover, and betrayal by the *lauzengiers* and the *mesdixants*. Family betrayal included being sent to a nunnery against her will as either punishment for having a lover or as a means of marrying the woman to God when an appropriate suitor could not be attained, and forced marriage to an man who is undesirable to the woman. Relationship betrayal is not only when the lover betrays his lady but also but the evil *gelos* betrays his wife by imprisoning her in a tower. The third form of betrayal, societal betrayal most often occurs when gossiping neighbors and townspeople seek to destroy the joy of the lovers by revealing their relationship to others. Because we have so few documents from the thirteenth and fourteenth century it is difficult to have a solid understanding of the medieval quotidian. I argue, however, that these poems, like today's cinema, television, and literature, give modern readers a glimpse into the daily worries and difficulties of medieval women.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Edwin and Miriam Harkey. From reading me bedtime stories, to listening to me stumble through the books on my own, to reading through drafts of papers and theses along the way, their support of literacy and learning is the reason that this manuscript exists today.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am most appreciative to my advisor Dr. Daniel O'Sullivan who intrinsically knew whether to use words of encouragement or stern words of pressure to get things done. Also, I thank my committee members Dr. Sara Wellman and Dr. Marie Skrovec who patiently read my manuscript and were able to see the holes that the medievalists missed.

I could not have financed my studies without the assistantship provided by the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Mississippi.

Lastly, I acknowledge the support of my classmates who encouraged me to keep working hard when I wanted to give up.

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### **Writer's Note to Readers:**

This Thesis was born in a class discussion in FR 577 Spring 2015. Discussing the probability of female authorship another student in the class made the bold statement that he did not believe it mattered whether women wrote *trouvères* songs attributed to them or not. I was so annoyed at this comment that I felt determined to find a way to prove he was wrong. While working on a terminal paper for the class I originally focused just on the *lauzengiers* and their role as a threat to women. From that paper grew the idea that women were not and are not just betrayed by societal pests and gossipmongers but are often more egregiously betrayed by those closest to them: family, friends, and boyfriends.

Unless otherwise stated, all cited songs and translations by Women *Touvères* songs come from *Songs of the Women Trouvères* which is edited, translated, and introduced by Eglal Doss-Quinby, Joan Tasker Grimbart, Wendy Pfeiffer, and Elizabeth Aubrey. This is a landmark text which brings together many of the women *trouvères* songs that are known to exist.

Also, for a general guide to some key terms, please see Appendix 1.

« Quant se depart li jolis tans<sup>1</sup> »: Betrayal in the Songs of Medieval French Women

INTRODUCTION: FROM *FIN'AMOR* TO *AMOUR COURTOIS*,  
TROUBADOURS TO TROUVÈRES

*“Love gets its name (amor) from the word for hook (amus), which means “to capture” or “to be captured, for he who is in love is captured in the chains of desire and wishes to capture someone else with his hook” (Capellanus 31).*

Alfred Musset, *La Vie D'Adèle*<sup>2</sup>, 27 dresses, *Desperate Housewives*, and trouvères poetry contain elements of love and betrayal that tie them together across decades and centuries.

Although medieval poetry may at first appear complicated, these songs are in fact no more difficult to understand than the songs and poems of the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century.

The difference between medieval poetry and that of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century can be hard to distinguish:

Oui, femme, quoi qu'on puisse dire  
Vous avez le fatal pouvoir  
De nous jeter par un sourire  
Dans l'ivresse ou le désespoir

Je change pour me reconforter,  
Car j'ai bien trop oublié la joie.  
Je reste stupéfait de pouvoir survivre  
Alors que sans cesse me veut tourmenter  
La dame la mieux aimée du monde

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<sup>1</sup> “When the joyful season ends” (Tr 207); This quote is the opening line of a motet. Motets were sung and recorded as voices in unison. Tr stands for triplum and Mo stands for motetus. These numbers are based on a system of recording designed by Friedrich Ludwig to identify individual voices. This line in particular was sung as part of the tripulum and is recorded thusly. However, Mo 208 is the other voice of the motet.

<sup>2</sup> The English title is *Blue is the Warmest Color*.

Oui, deux mots, le silence même,  
Un regard distrait ou moqueur,  
Peuvent donner à qui vous aime  
Un coup de poignard dans le cœur.

Amour, vous devriez bien vous remémorer  
S'il est à son aise celui qui prie.  
Plus je crois trouver compassion  
Et plu mon chagrin redouble ;  
Cela me rend tout pensif

The poem on the right is *À Mademoiselle Zoé le Douairin* by Alfred de Musset; the poem on the left is taken from a love song (RS 1006<sup>3</sup>) by Gace Brulé. Both poems treat common themes: love, rejection, and the idea that nobody has ever suffered quite as poignantly as the speaker. This “romantic” idea comes directly from medieval poetry, more specifically from the medieval idea of *amour courtois*.

Courtly love, *fin'amor*, *amour courtois*, is an essential topic of discussion in trouvères poetry. Not only is *fin'amor* a moral code for knights and women of the court, but it is also a code by which the troubadours and trouvères wrote. Medieval authors, especially the trouvères, wrote abundantly about betrayal because it is an inclination that is contrary to the ideals of courtly love and knighthood. Honesty and trustworthiness were highly valued and to break a bond of dependability was to destroy not only friendships but courtly relationships which were important for maintaining peace. Jane Burns describes it as, “Attempts to define courtly love cover the widest spectrum of possibilities, classifying it alternately as an expression of insatiable desire, a form of religious adoration, a sign of sociological discord, an indicator of psychological fixation” (205). Stephen Nichols debates the nuanced differences between *fin'amor* most often associated with Southern France, and *amour courtois* which is a *fin'amor* that evolved into the North:

*Fin'amor*, the psychology and aesthetic love, a more authentic term than ‘courtly love’, has a broader, more nuanced and, finally, more realistic range of

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<sup>3</sup> RS stands for Raynaud Spanke which refers to the number assigned by Hans Spanke’s update to Raynaude’s 1954 edition. I use the RS number as well as the first line of the poem as identifiers.

expressions when we see how diversely the same song can render the same situation according to how one 'arranges' it. Medieval scribes and their audiences clearly enjoyed implementing the full range of lyric permutations (Nichols 79).

Whichever term is used to describe the technique of love is irrelevant because they are essentially the same thing.

Courtly love began with the troubadours. Whether they *invented* the idea or merely brought it into popular rhetoric is a topic of great debate. The troubadour lyric is deconstructed by Nichols:

1. *Reattribution of songs*, "the attribution of a song by one poet to another who seems more 'probably' as its author,"
2. *Variation in the ordering of stanzas*, "Traditionally considered a phenomenon of scribal or MS corruption, stanzaic variation may, in fact, represent different interpretation, a deliberate rearrangement of meaning for specific effects,"
3. *Recomposition of stanzaic elements*, "a phenomenon whereby one or more lines of one stanza may be switched with one or more lines of another,"
4. *Apocryphal stanzas*, "This is a clear case where the manuscript offers a version of the song different from others"
5. *Variable intensity of lyric elements*, such as re-arranging weak and strong lyrics,
6. *Dramatic juxtaposition*, "coupled with the three preceding principles, illustrates the concept of a manuscript 'centre of intelligence' (76-7).

Not praised for its originality in content, troubadour poetry was praised for its form. Much like the modern romantic comedy that always seems to employ the same motif: boy meets girl, girl hates boy, boy wins girl over, girl breaks up with first boyfriend and chooses other boy,

troubadour poetry, as Nichols points out, makes frequent use and reuse of the same techniques and often even the same lines as another troubadour song, reorganized. These types of stories were expected. Pierre Bec explains that :

Les principaux de ces thèmes (/topiques) sont les suivants : 1. L'amour de loin (proprement dit) et la poétique de la distance ; 2. La dame jamais vue et l'énamourant par ouï-dire ; 3. La « croisade ou le pèlerinage d'amour ». Tels sont là les trois piliers qui soutiennent l'anecdote, la légende, la « belle histoire » et finalement, à l'instar de Tristan et Yseut, la création d'un véritable mythe (142).

These rules of courtly love follow through the love poems and the audiences expected them.

The stages of courtly love were essential to the poem. Beginning with love from afar and transitioning to consummation and the aftereffects of this action are the basis of nearly all troubadours and trouvères poems. After consummation some poets lost interest and moved on to restart the process. For the loves that endured past the stage of consummation, privacy from the *lauzengiers* and others was important because the rule that true love must be kept secret was important.

Eventually, the troubadour style of writing poetry began to spread into Northern France where it changed both linguistically and stylistically, “The secular world of the north, too, began to adopt southern innovations, as poet-composers who spoke the *langue d'oïl* began imitating the style and structure of song in the *langue d'oc*” (Aubrey 2). The adaptations from *fin'amor* to *amour courtois* is perhaps a reason for which Nichols prefers one term over the other, as the original he views *fin'amor* as more legitimate. For the most part, however, the poetry of the North, poetry of the trouvères, remained more or less loyal to its original form. “Northern

composers continued to revere the art of the troubadours, not only closely imitating specific songs through translation and contrafacture, but also adapting the southern courtly idiom into their much more diverse traditions, including extended poetico-musical structures and polyphony” (Aubrey 53). Trouvères maintained similar lyrical patterns while changing the musical melodies to better adapt the songs to their own culture. One noticeable change between troubadour to trouvères is that in the South most of the poetry was written in a register for courts, whereas, “The Northern sources, on the other hand, preserve in addition to courtly songs hundreds in the popular register, a majority of them anonymous” (Aubrey 7). This change allowed more people to enjoy the poems.

Because troubadour poetry brought with it more or less the same rules and tendencies when it migrated to the north it seems reasonable that just as trobairitz wrote in the South, women would have written in the North. That trobairitz wrote in the South is undisputed, “The existence of at least twenty women poets who lived in southern France from about the mid-twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century and who participated in the highly conventionalized poetic system created by the troubadours” (Bruckner 865). Bruckner also tells us that the trobairitz were noble and as such “...the courtly lady is often shown to be threatening and dangerous, potentially at odds with the world around her” (866). That the courtly woman was threatening and dangerous explains the fearless nature with which women express themselves in certain songs. Their nobility is unsurprising because the rules of *fin’amor* indicate that only nobility can be held to these standards of knighthood. A well-known example is the story *Lancelot ou le chevalier de la charrette* by Chrétien de Troyes. A typical knight and his lady, Guenièvre, the queen, must keep their love secret from the King (her husband). Andreas Capellanus in *The Art of Courtly Love* makes several references to the exclusivity of *amour courtois* in the courts. For example,

“We say that it rarely happens that we find farmers serving in Love’s court” (149). So also, he includes remedies and methods for seducing both women and men of a higher class than oneself:

If a man of the middle class seeks the love of a woman of the higher nobility, he ought to have a most excellent character, for in order that a man of this class may prove worthy of the love of a woman of the higher nobility he must be a man with innumerable good things to his credit, one whom uncounted good deeds extol (53).

In fact, in his dialogues pertaining to the attainment of love, Capellanus distinguishes between nobility and the highest nobility. In the above quote, a man must “have a most excellent character.” In the dialogue just before Capellanus discusses a man of middle class speaking with just a noble woman and explains that:

If he finds that the woman, although noble, is not sophisticated, all the things will service which were given in the dialogue between the man and the woman of the middle class, except that here commendation of the nobility of her family may claim a place (44).

The rank of the family is the only difference from a non-sophisticated woman of only noble decent. In all cases, character is the big distinguishing factor. The rules of courtly love, when broken, result in a broken character, undeserving of love.

The topic of courtly love, intrinsically sexist, seems to resist the voice of a female speaker. However, the poems proposed by female authors are reactions to these male voices of desire and attraction. The *chanson de malmariée* portrays the image of poorly married women abused by their husbands, abandoned by their lovers after consummation, and even still, women abandoned for having been too distant during the early stages of the male’s attainment. These

male betrayals are not bemoaned by speakers in the male trouvères poems. Female trouvères treat the betrayals differently than their male counterparts and this moves the reader in circles of betrayal. From the female perspective, the circles of betrayal do not circle solely around the male but also circle around the betrayal of family members and the betrayal of community members. Women faced all of these betrayals and reacted to them in a way that male authors would not have been able to, suggesting female authorship.

The songs that modern scholars associate with the women trouvères vary in genre as is typical of trouvères tradition. The songs range from *aube* to *chanson de malmariée* to *chansons religieuses*. As Bruckner points out:

The act of speaking out—and its converse, remaining silent—have emblemized a whole spectrum of feminist projects. While silence has become the metaphor of a suppressed female other, women's *prise de parole* signifies an act of power, a self-empowerment that announces their entry into language and the public spheres of social interaction, whether in oral or written exchanges (867).

These women add their voices to the poetry that exists so that their family and friends may enjoy their stories. Although not a woman trouvère, Marie de France wrote her *lais* with men and women sharing the roles as hero and villain so women would be heard and perhaps less victimized by either too much praise or too much toxicity. And although nineteenth and twentieth century scholarship often implies that women wrote as part of *inferior* genres, as if to say women could not have maintained the rules of *amour courtois* and troubadour/trouvères poetry, this could not be farther from the truth (Bruckner 874). The *lais* of Marie de France are an example of complex writing; she wove her tales to explain the intricacies of human relationships. From *Bisclavret* to *Eliduc* no class or type of person remains innocent. Her *lais*

also show that women were not confined to a certain role or genre of writing, "...without assuming that the trobairitz are "slaves of tradition" and without assuming that all women want or say the same thing, even within the highly conventionalized strategies and images of troubadour lyric. The voice each trobairitz (re)invents within the varied parameters of medieval lyric remains uniquely her own—if we will only allow ourselves to pursue and hear the difference" (Bruckner 891). They were free to self-express in a way that the male trouvères and troubadours were not. The men did not question or move away from tradition until later while the women were writing and expressing very different stories.

In the same way as the sex can be ambiguous, so can the position of the narrator. Marie de France and male trouvères often give clues to their authorship. Female trouvères songs, however, often lack this reliability and therefore nameability. Like most facts, this information can be used to make an argument for potential male authorship of the poems. However, the ambiguity leaves the argument inconclusive. In addition, the ambiguity potentially proves female authorship because women would not necessarily be forward enough to include their names.

The medieval love song cannot exist without the women. Their mere presence is required even without the existence of female writers. Female characters give the male characters something about which to sing:

Although woman has always been the crux of the "courtly love" dilemma, much current scholarship rethinks the question of woman's place in courtly literature. It displays an awareness of woman's problematic status in medieval history, a sharpened recognition of the linguistic and cultural effects of gender, and an increased sensitivity to the difference of female experience (Burns 211-12).

The women were problematic, perhaps, to history, but essential for both troubadour and trouvères poetry.

An essential place to start when discussing women trouvères and their poetry is at their establishment as part of the canon. Although for many years, a debate has continued about whether or not female trouvères existed, this debate is more or less over now. Quite frequently, names are associated with the poems in the original manuscripts such as the Duchesse de Lorraine, just as male names were associated with the author's respective poems. Nobody questions male authorship. However, as is often the case, historically, women do not have the luxury of simply existing in the canonical world. Because of pronoun use, we do know for sure that poems written in a female voice exist. The debate is whether a man or a woman authored these poems. On this question of authorship in the landmark text *Songs of the Women Trouvères* Doss-Quinby et al's *féminité génétique* or "female authorship" is not really the argument for studying female voiced poems differently than those of their male counterparts. However, this does not mean that the idea of their authorship should be excluded from the canon and included in the realm of impossibility. I tend to believe that actual women wrote the women's voices in these poems, and that their voices are real and a looking glass into the other sex's vision of the world. I also believe that by identifying and understanding the different ways in which male and female voices address different subjects and ideas, such as the *lauzengiers* and the *mesdixans*, we have a better understanding of the medieval world from which these poems come.

Until recently, male scholars ignored and excluded female trouvères from the canon. To modern readers, the reasoning for the oversight of these poems seems arbitrary and outdated. Although it would be easy to blame sexism, there is little scholarly doubt about female

authorship of the *trobairitz*, the female *trouvères* southern *cousin*. *Trouvères* poetry itself is a hard genre to categorize:

Of course, the most serious shortcoming of the typological approach has always been that the *trouvères* themselves seemed to value, or at least not to mind shifting narrative voices and intermingling elements from a wide variety of registers. Their works vigorously resist classification. Therefore, scholarly prejudice against the existence of women *trouvères* as something other than an aberration and over-emphasis on typology consigned the female composer to her sewing closet where, yes, she was allowed to craft a lyric fabric in her own limited way, but was not allowed to engage in “masculine” pursuits (Evans, “Seeking” 141).

There are many different types of poetry that fall into the category of *trouvères* that even if solely males were responsible for the entirety of the canon, the genre would resist boxing in a way that the poetry of later “modern” poets such as Whitman and Dickinson resist labeling. To assume that women would not have composed within such a varying genre, even though their southern contemporaries did, is false. Evans also argues that because women were perhaps more involved in day-to-day life than modern scholars assume or understand is further evidence for women *trouvères*. “Furthermore, women participated in courtly debates of both the literary *débat* and real-life varieties...Ample theoretical analysis of woman’s voice, whether being “silenced” or finding full expression in art and society, has already been pursued by numerous scholars in recent years” (“Seeking” 142). However, despite this involvement in daily *débat* Evans does not necessarily subscribe to the idea of women *trouvères*:

The above reflections on refrains and gender markers in the group of *chansons d'ami* under scrutiny suggest that evidence of “*féminité génétique*” may not be indisputably present in these songs, whether or not they display other often-cited traits of “feminine voice,” such as “simplicity of vocabulary and syntax” and “lack of narrative and descriptive detail (“Seeking” 145).

Evans prompts the modern reader and scholar to move away from the argument that simplistic language equates to female authorship. This argument demeans potential women authors while uplifting the voice of male authors who may not deserve such praise in regards to a more complex vocabulary. She writes:

Rather, I seek to place maximum distance between myself and the notion that “simplicity” and “lack of detail” were overly prized by either female or male composers of the thirteenth century. As concerns women, the same would hold true for “emotional, often exclamatory language” and a “strong element in the speaker’s account of herself and her feelings... In summary, none of these remarks mean that women were not full participants in the production of song (“Seeking” 147, 148).

Furthermore, Burns explains that:

Because men dominated the production of literary, legal, and religious writing in the Middle Ages, the extant manuscripts with female signatures or attributions are precious instances of feminine textuality. A further problem...is posed by the *chansons de femme*, such as the *chanson de toile* poems whose female voices are written by male poets (216).

The mystery of the female voice remains a mystery. Current scholarship (myself included) however, sides with the authorship of the woman trouvères.

In this thesis, I argue that whether actual women wrote the female voiced poems, or whether men pretending to understand the female voice wrote them, my argument that the voices treat betrayal differently does not change. It is true that if men wrote these poems instead of women, the differences in perception tell us a different story, after all, a woman's actual perspective is highly unlikely to be the same as the imagined female perspective written by a male. However, even if the men were trying to mimic the female voice, it would be interesting to see how men understood the worries that women would have concerning betrayal.

The language in male voiced poems tends to be more egocentric. Their poems are layered with references to their own worries, needs, and desires, rarely (if ever) referencing the needs of their lover. In the example of Bernart de Ventadorn's poem "Non es meravelha s'ieu chan."<sup>4</sup> He is talking about his great talents at writing and performing as well as claiming that his heart is more adept at love than the hearts of other troubadours or *chevaliers*, we do not know for sure which one. The female trouvères poems pay attention to and focus on not only their own talents and needs but also on the needs and desires of their lovers. The *chanson d'ami* "Lasse, pour quoi refusai" (RS 100) clearly demonstrates this point when the speaker sings about her worries over the man whom she refused:

A touz ceus qui l'ont grevé  
Dont Deus si fort destinee  
Q'il aient les euz crevez  
Et les orilles coupes!

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<sup>4</sup> "Ce n'est merveille si je chante/ Mieux que tous les autres chanteurs,/ Mon coeur va plus fort vers l'amour/ Et je suis mieux fait à ses ordres" (1-4).

[To all those who have tormented him/ May God give this harsh fate:/ Let their eyes be plucked out/ And their ears cut off!] (37-40).

Even more in the refrain she writes, “G’en ferai/ Droit [a son plesir, / S’il m’endaigne oïr]” [I will do/ Justice to his wishes/ If he should deign to hear me]. In this particular poem, the woman is self-blaming. Her lover has left her and she believes it to be her fault because she did not pay him enough attention, or love him enough. Now, alone, she misses him and bemoans her loss, wondering if she can get him back.

She does not just speak of her own losses, however. She speaks also of his, not wanting revenge on him for having left her, but wanting revenge on those who slandered his name. The male voices are generally quick to blame the women who ignore their pleas and invitations. In these circumstances, the men do not wonder if she is ignoring him because she already has another lover, or if she is happily married, although it is established that in French medieval poetry marriage does not equate loyalty, or, even unhappily married as in the women of the *mal mariée* genre. She is responsible for his sadness, if the woman does not accept the invitation for *amour*. There are countless numbers of poems in which the man abandons his lover but far fewer where the woman leaves her lover for another. There are the “mala cansos” where bitter men, who were unsuccessful in their endeavors, write songs of disgust, but even these blame other people, never themselves. Otherwise, we see very little of this. Quite frequently, however, we see that the man abandons his lover for reasons that remain undisclosed.

If men are responsible for the authorship of female voiced poems, we should be able to find poems, established to have been written by men, through the male voice, that show these same themes of empathy and remorse as we see with “Lasse, pour quoi refusai.” I believe that the reason these male poems of empathy exist only rarely because these female voices are

actually written by women. In Thibaut de Champagne, for example, we see in the first and second strophes of “Chançon ferai, car talent m’en est pris<sup>5</sup>,” where he explains quite explicitly that without the woman’s love he will not be able to live. However, these examples are isolated and still more self-seeking than the lines of “Lasse, pour quoi refusai.” It does not seem plausible that the male poets, almost egotistical in their own poems, would somehow channel an inner sensibility for empathy when writing in the female voice.<sup>6</sup>

When husbands discover that their wives are being unfaithful, the male voices worry about this because their hearts are on the line. For the women, it has more to do with imprisonment in a tower. She would lose everything. This suggests quite strongly that men did not write the poems in the women’s voices; female trouvères wrote them.

The goal of this paper is to demonstrate a less discussed proof of female authorship. Although the debate is more or less over, continued evidence of female authorship continues the conversation about the female trouvères. My method of verifying female authorship is to point out that women trouvères sang about various forms of betrayal in their songs in different way than their male counterparts. This is mostly because their historical view would have been very different from that of a man, and yet, because courtly love deals predominantly with the noble class, the differences are nuanced.

In part one, I talk about the betrayal of family in medieval female trouvères songs. Our twentieth century perspective wants to believe that family has been the center of the world since the start of humanity. However, helicopter parents are a new phenomenon. For medieval women, there were really only two choices in life: marriage or the nunnery. Even from a historical context, marriage was to the most appropriate suitor and had little to do with love and more to do

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<sup>5</sup> TR

with courtly dealings and politics. However, in their songs, these women sing about the hardships of these choices that they viewed as betrayals. The singers very often already have lovers, and therefore both the nunnery and marriage to somebody else, both feel like a prison.

In the second section, I discuss the betrayal that takes place in relationships. Sometimes, this is the husband betraying the wife. His betrayal usually takes the form of imprisonment in a tower because of his jealousy. Then there is the betrayal of a lover. The singers' lovers choose to move on from them for a variety of reasons and the woman either remains with her family, with a jealous husband, or trapped in a nunnery. With all of these options, the woman imprisons herself in her own mind.

The third, and most nuanced form of betrayal, is societal. The *lauzengiers* and the *mesdixans* are infamous characters in all forms of medieval French verse, from Marie de France to troubadours to women trouvères, all medieval poetry talks about these gossipmongers who destroy love and destroy relationships. What renders the female perspective unique is the fact that for the women these characters pose a very different type of threat. When women are betrayed by the *lauzengiers* they risk both literal imprisonment (family will send to nunnery/ husband will lock in tower) and the imprisonment of isolation for having committed adultery.

Since Eve ate the apple, women have faced discrimination because of their sex. Women trouvères were no exception to these problems. However, the fact that they sang about it, and that their songs were recorded, is indicative of the fact that even before the feminist movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries these women and their songs were important to someone.

CHAPTER 1  
FAMILY BETRAYAL

*“For when love is revealed, it does not help the lover’s worth, but brands his reputation with evil rumors and often causes him grief. Love between such lovers seldom lasts; but if sometimes it should endure it cannot indulge in its former solaces, because when the girl’s chaperone hears the rumors, she becomes suspicious and watches her more carefully and gives her no opportunities to talk, and it makes the man’s relatives more careful and watchful, and so serious unfriendliness arises” (Capellanus 34).*

In the popular American “chick-flick,” *27 dresses*, the female lead, played by Katherine Heigl, is in love with her boss. At a party, the boss falls in love with the lead’s sister. Instead of surrendering peacefully, Katherine Heigl’s character sabotages the relationship and eventually breaks the couple up. From a modern perspective, a sister’s betrayal is one of the worst kinds that there is. The women *trouvères* also felt this betrayal. Although they feel the betrayal more often from their parents than their siblings, the feeling of familial betrayal remains the same.

Family betrayal in the context of *trouvères* poetry occurs when a young woman’s family forces her to do something contrary to her will. Family betrayal often occurs long before a marriage. Most at risk before marriage, the two most common forms of family betrayal included marriage to a strange man when she was already in love with another and punishment for being

female and sent to live in a nunnery. Historically, both options were for the girl's best interests. If the family was too poor to raise or marry the girl well, she was thought to be better off in a nunnery. In addition, if the family believed that she was recklessly in love, they married her to a more suitable candidate than she had perhaps chosen herself.

There are in fact two sides to family betrayal. There is the side of the family, who has society at its defense. In addition, there is the side of the young woman, who has the defense of her lover and our twenty first century views. When comparing these two sides we are at risk of imposing an anachronistic twenty first century view 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century France when we apply the term betrayal to arranged marriages. After all, arranged marriages were time-period appropriate and more or less considered to be 'normal.' However, the betrayal that we are talking about here is not just arranged marriage. It is the idea that a woman, in love with another man, is still being forced to go through a marriage that she does not want. And, being sent to a nunnery, whether 'for her own good' or not, although regarded as something not far from religious hypocrisy, is something that even in twelfth century France was regarded as unfair and horrible, we have the voices of the female *trouvères* telling stories that confirm this.

Parental roles in women's lives were ultimately the deciding factor of a woman's future. In fact, Catherine White argues that, "The daughter's identity is always shaped, at least in part, by her father," and furthermore "The father-daughter relationship, it seems, is often relegated to the status of background information, and viewed as the obvious psycho-social structure, i.e., the family. The family can be undertaken as a microcosmic expression of feudal society" ("Women and their" 42, "Not so Dutiful" 189). As a microcosm of the feudal system, it comes as no surprise that the father-daughter relationship would be more poignant than that of the mother-daughter. Like the king is over the queen, and the knight is over the woman, the father is over the

daughter. Because the feudal system is roughly based on the idea that God's relationship with the world the relationship between the King and his people therefore mirrors this relationship and, of course, the father has the right to decide what becomes of his daughters. A parent with too many daughter's might promise one or more of his daughter's to the church, a reliable home for them where their physical needs would be cared for instead of perhaps an even worse fate (in society's eyes), living as a maiden.

This complicated "feudal" system of family gave medieval women and their fathers a unique relationship. White postulates further that:

The significance of fathers with regard to their adult daughters seems to be composed of two dominant facets: protection and oppression. The price the women pay for this protection is, ultimately, the elimination of their own power. The father is the ultimate sources of all social determinations, and therefore of all aspects of female existence. One might go so far as to say that the father is the *original misogynist* ("Women and their" 42).

Although the word misogynist is perhaps too harsh, it works contextually here to explain that the woman had zero power. The poems by the women *trouvères*, that bemoan a harsh reality, a separation from their lovers, imprisonment in a tower, is merely a reflection of how it felt for women to go from one form of betrayal to another one, from the father to the husband. The fact remains, however, "Whether built on conflict or harmony, the father-daughter relationship is central to the portraits of women" (White, "Not so Dutiful" 195).

Although this relationship of betrayal is most prevalent, there are examples of loving familial relationships such as *Le Roman de Silence*. The parents dress their daughter as a boy and raise her as such so that she will be allowed to inherit property, "...a woman born to noble

parents, is determined even before her birth” (White, “Not so dutiful” 192). However, even in this act of love, the parents have chosen a fate for their daughter. This decision is for her good, but just as the women are either sent to nunneries or married to *gelos*, Silence had no say in her upbringing and ultimately in her fate. White writes that “Family relationships are often glorified in literature, and the father-daughter relationship is no exception” (“Not so dutiful” 190).

Although her argument for this is valid, I would argue that the relationships between women and their families, especially as female *trouvères* poetry is concerned, are more often fraught with betrayal. Women who were allowed to live were already better off than those who were killed as infants (White, “Women and their” 44). The simple point is that from birth her family decided a woman’s fate for her. The songs of the women *trouvères* can be interpreted metaphorically as representing the plight of women throughout northern France. Betrayal by one’s family was likely determined long before the women even knew that there could be another option. “Our century permits us new readings of very old works, discerning female characters as reflections, even specular images, of the patriarchal value systems in which they are portrayed-not terribly different from century to century” (White, “Not so dutiful” 189). It is easy to believe that viewing these familial decisions, as betrayal is simply an imposition of modern thought onto medieval families. However, if this were the case, the poems would not point us to the pain that these women felt. When the speaker in *Motet 67* (Tr 736) cries, “Nus ne mi pourroit conforter/...Aymi! Que ferai je, las !” [No one could ever comfort me...Wretched me! What will I do, alas!] there can be no doubt that this young woman is suffering in her predicament (lines 1, 5).

Although it pertains less to the poetry of the women *trouvères* it is interesting to note that White brings up the point “...fathers not only play central roles in the lives of their daughters,

but are in fact, significantly more influential than mothers. If the mother's absence, seen not as a cultural construct, but as a literary one, allows room for the father's influence, she has to be considered influential *in absentia*" ("Not so dutiful" 197). This appears to be an unsurprising fact because the mother was likely once in the same role as the daughter. Was the mother once imprisoned in a tower? Nearly sent to a nunnery? A woman who suffered the pain of separation from her lover? As readers, the women trouvères do not give us any information about these things. We have only the first person perspective of suffering from the speaker. Moreover, readers do not know the future of the singers after their songs. While the male trouvères often have manuscripts of songs with traceable story lines, a lack of authorship and consecutive manuscripts makes this impossible for us to know<sup>7</sup>.

Whether or not the mother is present affects only the daughter's psychological state, not her fate. In the feudal family, only the patriarchy has power to negotiate. In addition, he is negotiating with other patriarchies that are concerned with the same goal: marry daughters well. This does not stop the speaker from *Motet 64* (Mot 353) from blaming her mother, "Por coi m'aveis vos doneit, / Mere, mari?" [Why have you given me, / A husband, mother?] (1-2). It is not hard to imagine that here, the daughter is blaming her mother, for not having stopped the marriage. Betrayal of women in medieval France started in the home.

Women with lovers were betrayed when their families were aware of their feelings and then blatantly disregard regard them. Although this 'love' can be understood as the flighty feelings of a young woman, it is still a disregard for her feelings. In the introduction to *Songs of the Women Trouvères* we read, "She cannot be dissuaded from loving, despite the opposition of her parents and the threat posed by detractors: gossipmongers, flatterers, and slanderers" (Doss-

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<sup>7</sup> This would make for an interesting paper. Generations of sufferers having been married to a *gelos* and separated from one's lover. It does matter though. Women raised by women who suffered might suffer less from the existential knowledge that their fate is sealed.

Quinby 127). The young women in these poems, though often dismayed, are unwilling to write off their love. They fight for it with their words. These young women were probably early to late teens. These *chanson d'amis* represent the early coming of age story. A young woman, torn from her young love, and forced into the reality of a world she is ill equipped to navigate. This state of mind makes reactions like that in *Motet 65* (Mot 466) unsurprising. Readers can almost imagine a pouty fourteen-year-old girl with her arms crossed:

De mari sui mal païe:

D'ami m'en amenderai,

Et se m'en savoit mal gré

Mon mari, si face amie,

Car, voelle ou non, j'amerai ! (10-14).

[I am poorly rewarded in my husband ;/ I will compensate for it with a lover,/

And if my husband resents me for it,/ Let him find a mistress ;/ For—whether he  
likes it or not—I will love !]

She uses rebellious vocabulary: “mal païe,” “mon mari, si face amie,” “voelle ou non.” She is determined to make up her own mind. What makes our protagonist different from her *gelos*, however, is that she does not care what he does. She is uninterested in what her husband does, in fact, she encourages him with her words to go and find his own lover. Not a weak little girl who lacks gumption, she is merely a cog in the wheel of a society that says, “You have no power.”

The *chanson d'ami* “Deduxans suis et joliette, s'amerai” (RS 59a=983) details a young woman's quests into her father's orchard where she has several rendez-vous with her lover. In this particular poem there is no reference to her fear of being married to another but in line nine she writes, “Mon fin cuer mal greit peire et meire li donrai” [I will grant him my true heart

despite my father and mother] (8). Surely, opposition had to exist for this young girl to write about a love ‘despite’ her parents desires for her. Again, there is a reference to her father and mother as a single entity and in this song, she determines to do what she wants; she at first appears unfazed by their rejection of her love, “mal greit.” The strong personages that we see in these poems are more in line with what one expects of Roland and Lancelot, but here we have young women, the earliest feminists trying to write their own stories “mal greit peir et meire li donrai.”

The speaker goes beyond herself and inclusively speaks to not only other women but other lovers in general. Demonstrating that her situation is not an isolated occurrence the speaker dedicates her song to all true lovers, “Chanson, ‘e t’anvoi a toz fins loialz amans,/ Qu’il se gaircent bien des felz mavais mesdisants” [Song, I send you to all true, faithful lovers,/ So they may guard against mean, wicked slanderers] (10-1). Speaking out against slanderers more than family her reference to ‘true’ lovers indicates that what is most important here is that her love is (at least in her opinion) authentic and therefore valid. The real enemy in this poem is her parents. Forced to meet her lover in the grove of trees, her love like the references to the dawn and blossoming (spring) trees, is young and fresh and true (1-2). It is only her family and potential slanderers that stand in the way of her and her lover’s happiness.

In the motet “Je me doi bien doloseir” (Tr 354) readers glimpse how both a man and a woman feel when a woman is married against her will to another man because motets are written in more than one voice. The poem starts with a man’s voice and the purpose for writing is changed because the object of his desires is married. Unlike “Ier matin me levai droit au point dou jour” where the woman writes to encourage other lovers, this speaker mourns the loss of his lover:

Je me doi bien doloseir

Et de chanchon faire reposeir

Cant celle ki mun cuer at pris at mari (1-3).

[Rightly must I grieve/ And cease composing song/ When she who has stolen my  
heart has taken a husband]

Although composing a song he determines to write songs no longer because for the purpose of song writing is to express his love and now his love has been taken from him, married to another man. This example is a portrayal of how the family act of betrayal is harmful to more than just the woman. It harms her lover too who now must make a distinction between loyalty to his lover and loyalty to societal codes of conduct, however differing they are from the codes of trouvères poets.

When we arrive at the second stanza and hear the female's perspective, it sounds eerily similar to the man's almost mirroring it. I think that the similarity in the verses makes a strong argument that this female voice may have been written by a man. "Por coi m'aveis vos doneit,/ Mere, mari?" [Why have you given me,/ A husband, mother?], she demands to know (1-2).

From her perspective, we hear a real sense of betrayal in her voice:

Diex! J'astoie si bien assenneie,

Et vos m'aveis marieie! Aimi !

Ja saviés vos bien k'avoie amis.

[God! I was so settled/ And you have married me off! Woe to me! You knew I  
had a sweetheart] (11-13). (Mot 353)

At the end of the first stanza reads “Tant k’ameit bien se porat/ Li siens clameir” [That the one who belongs to her/ Can claim to be loved passionately] (15-16) (Tr 354). While the woman’s stanza ends wither her complaint to her mother, there is quite an ode to the man:

Ki tant m’at honoreie

C’onkes mais nus mieus ne deservit

K’amors li fuist graeie (7-9). (mot 353)

[Who has so honored me/ That no man has ever been more deserving/ To have love granted to him]

These verses tell the readers (or the listeners) that in fact both lovers are hurt by this family betrayal. The perspective that we do not have is that of the woman’s husband. The poem leaves us longing for answers: who is her husband? Does he have a lover? Surely he cares that his wife could potentially be disloyal but does he know about the lover?

Similarly in *Motet 72* “L’abe c’apeirt au jor” (Mot 1099), *Motet 73* “Osteis lou moi” (Mot 1100), and *Motet 74* “Trop suis jonette, maris” (Mot 1124) we have example after example of women who are unhappily wedded to the one they do not love. In “L’abe c’apeirt au jor,” a dawn song about a painful parting, the female speaker mourns, “Ke malz nos fait, Dex li don’t pix,/ Ki moi et vous depart, dous amins!” [That he does us harm—may God give him worse!—/Whoever separates me and you, sweet love!] (13-14). The aforementioned ‘he’ could be assumed to be a jealous husband (as I have done)<sup>8</sup> or perhaps any potential ‘he’ that could come to separate them. Either way this woman is unhappy at the separation from her lover at dawn as it can be assumed that perhaps she is unsure when she will see him again. In “Osteis lou moi,” a very short motet, the speaker rhetorically demands for the ring symbolizing her marriage to be removed from her finger. Her argument continues, “Je ne suix pas mariee a droit” [This marriage

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<sup>8</sup> Is there anything in the original that grammatically prevents this assumption?

is not right] (9). At one point even referring to her husband as “vilains” this speaker is in a very typical unhappy marriage (3). The other motet “Trop suis jonette, maris” recounts the tale of a young woman married to an older man with whom she does not believe it possible to be happy, “Por vos; trop fut anfantis/ K’il nos fist assambleir” [It was too foolish/ To join us together] (2-3). In the English, the “it” implies that the decision was either not her own or one that she regrets. In keeping with what is most common, it seems quite likely that she had very little to do with the union and that in fact the union was forced upon her. A common theme in trouvères poetry is that not only is the husband jealous and boorish but he also is often old. This fits quite well here when the speaker opens the poem “Trop suis jonette, maris” [I am too young for you, husband]. She is too young implies that he is too old. Because in medieval French poetry, old was considered to be contrary to *amour courtois* and youth was praised, the implication that “Trop suis jonette” is really an insult to the husband and a praise of her.

A common betrayal amongst young women in medieval northern France, family married young women off for convenience and political gain more often than for love. These poems show us that this was common because of the frequency with which it is mentioned in the poems. So also, the motets demonstrate to us that not only did the women suffer in these forced marriages but their lovers suffered as well.

In the second type of betrayal, we have families that send young women to nunneries instead of trying to find them husbands. In *Songs of the Women Trouvères* the introduction explains this too us well:

A variant of the chanson de malmariée, the chanson de nun, gives voice to a young nun cloistered against her will, who laments her confinement—pointing an accusatory finger at those who have sentenced her to the convent—and years for a

lover who will liberate her. Young women of noble birth were often forced to take the habit when their families could not secure the dowry needed to arrange a marriage (Doss-Quinby 151)

Although there are the *chansons pieuses* we get a different perspective. These women happily serve God and live a life dedicated to him. The women forced to go there in these motets are not happy to be in the nunnery. They feel shunned and repressed both sexually and spiritually. Just as women were often betrayed in marriage, women were also betrayed when they were unable to be married and therefore sent to the nunneries.

Such a young woman presents herself in *Motet 67* “Nus ne mi pourroit conforter (Tr 736 Mot 737).” She is locked in a nunnery waiting for her lover to come rescue her, hoping in her song that she will be rescued, but she must know that she won’t be. Her hope and joy is wrapped up in thoughts of him:

Nus ne mi pourroit conforter/

Ne donner joie et soulas,/

Se la bele non au vis cler,/

Qui m’a do tout mis en ses las (Tr 1-4)

[No one could ever comfort me/ Or bring me joy and pleasure/ Save the beauty with the radiant face,/ Who has completely ensnared me]

We know that she is in a nunnery because of her introduction in the second stanza, “Nonne sui, nonne, laissiés m’aler” [I am a nun, a nun, let me go] (Mot 1). And furthermore, we know that she is unhappy not only because she would be unhappy missing her lover but because she is being detained, “...laissié m’aler/ Je n’i [puis plus arrester,” [...let me go, I can stay here no longer] (Mot 1-2). The poor young girl is stuck in the nunnery, separated from her family,

friends, and lover, and forced to “Matines sonnent” [Matins ring] (Mot 11). She continues in her stanzas to recount why she is so unhappy and how she cannot be happy living in the nunnery.

Both ensnared by the love she has and the nunnery walls this young girl is destined to suffer the rest of her life within these walls where nothing can help her (Mot 3, 11).

With a slightly more bitter tone the speaker in *Motet 71* “Joliement en douce desirree” (Q 720 Tr 721 Mot 722) describes her experiences in the nunnery by describing in detail the one’s on which she is missing out. Like the last motet, this girl has been sent to a nunnery and is stuck there. She writes also of her lover, “Comme celi ou j’ai mis ma pensee” [Who occupies my thoughts] (Q 6).

This speaker fears that her life will be short lived because of her unhappiness:

Pour noient

Maintieg cest abeïe:

Trop use ma vie

En grief tourment ;

*Je ne vivrai mie/Longuement. (Tr 22-27).*

[For naught/ Does this nunnery confine me:/ I am wasting my life/ In bitter torment./ *I will not live/ Long at all*]

She turns to cursing the one who put her here, mentioning like in previous poems an unknown “he.” We don’t know who this he is but we can assume like before that it is likely her father:

De Diu ait maleiçon

Qui m’I mist!

Mal et vilanie et pechié fist

De tel pucelete/ Rendre en abiete (Mot 12-16).

[May God curse/ The one who put me here !/ An evil, vile, and sinful thing he  
did/ Sending such a young girl/ To a nunnery]

The nunnery confines her. She does not want to be there, and for this speaker her life will be one dedicated to religious studies and loneliness. Her focus on the fact that she is a “pucelete,” a young girl who should be free to write *aubes* and *pastourelles* is instead confined. This confinement in the nunnery is not so different from that of the married woman from earlier poems who are betrayed by family and forced to marry a *gelos* instead of a lover. Both are betrayals of *amour courtois* and to the victims of the betrayal, both are equally egregious.

To conclude, family betrayal in women *trouvères* poetry occurred when the family either married their daughter to a *gelos* or forced her to live in a nunnery. Because the women of these poems lacked the societal power to make their own decisions, they were at the mercy of their family’s decisions. This rarely allowed a woman to marry the man that she loved or to choose whether she wanted to marry at all. Family is the first chapter of betrayal because that is where a woman’s life started, in the family. The next chapter on betrayal in relationships continues the woman’s life.

## CHAPTER II

### RELATIONSHIP BETRAYAL

*“That love is suffering is easy to see, for before the love becomes equally balanced on both sides there is no torment greater, since the lover is always in fear that his love may not gain its desire and that he is wasting his efforts” (Capellanus 28).*

In the popular French film *La Vie d'Adèle*, Adele comes of age on the big screen. Early in the film, she falls in love with a blue-haired girl from the art school and discovers herself while questioning her sexuality. At one point, she cheats on her blue haired lover with a man, under the context that she is out with friends. When the blue haired girl discovers the infidelity, she ends the relationship with Adele and evicts her from the apartment in a heartbreaking on-screen breakup. Although the scene is a dramatization, viewers almost feel as though they are intruding on this couple's very intimate destruction. This same feeling of intrusion often occurs reading the songs of the women *trouvères*. Written hundreds of years ago, these songs are full of both happy meetings and heartbreaking endings to which modern readers can easily relate. Although not displayed in theaters like *La Vie d'Adèle* the women likely performed them for friends and maybe even family.

Just as the blue-haired girl suffers the betrayal of her lover, the women *trouvères* often suffer the betrayal of their lovers. Therefore, betrayal in relationships is the second topic of

betrayal in this paper. This betrayal took shape in many different forms. This chapter focuses on the tonality of trouveresses poetry when her lover either betrays her by abandoning her or moves on to another lover. This chapter starts with a discussion of what love meant to the medieval poet as a basis for expanding upon why betrayal was such an egregious error in the medieval court of love. Although the focus is on women betrayed by the men in their lives, it is often true that the women were responsible, or viewed themselves as responsible, for having betrayed the men.

Andreas Capellanus wrote *The Art of Courtly Love* based on Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, The Art of Love. Written in antiquity, Ovid's book sought to understand how and why people love romantically. Capellanus does something very similar. His work, however, also takes inspiration from the trouvères. The poets did not follow his rules of love; rather, his rules of love are an indication of an unwritten code by which the trouvères wrote. Because Capellanus based his *Art of Courtly Love* on the works of the trouvères poets, the rules are understood to be an indicator of the trouvères code.

Rule number eight<sup>9</sup> in Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love* states, "No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons" (185). Contextually he is discussing the ins and outs of love and the anxieties that result when a man loves a woman who does not love him in return or vice versa. Capellanus believes that love should not be withheld from a lover unless there is a good reason. Amongst the "good reasons" are significant differences in social class and differences in character because another *rule* of courtly love is that "Character alone, then, is worthy of the crown of love" (35). The rules did not ensure serenity in a loving relationship because "A new love puts to flight an old one" and "If love diminishes, it quickly fails and rarely

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<sup>9</sup> Although further mention of Capellanus' rules will be discussed, for a full list of the "rules" please see Appendix 2.

revives” (185). In fact, nothing truly protects love except secrecy. Love is fragile, fickle, and not easily maintained.

The analogy of love easily lost is representative of betrayal within established relationships because to abandon one’s lover for another, although not technically a betrayal of the rules, is a betrayal to the other person. In this chapter, frequent characters are the *malmariée* (the sadly married woman), the *femme* of the *chanson d’ami* who wonders if her lover left because she was not attentive enough, and the nasty *gelos* (jealous husband) who deserves betrayal because of his evil nature, old age, lack of character, and therefore lack of capacity for love. Relationship betrayals in medieval poetry form a complicated web. Male lovers betray their female companions by falling in love with other women, female lovers betray their husbands by falling in love with other knights, and as represented by the *femme* in the *chanson d’ami*, female lovers who *betray* their lovers by not being emotionally available enough, or too coy.

Although not a *trouvère*, Marie de France is an logical place to start in medieval betrayal because in her *Lais* there are a variety of relationship betrayals that introduce a full picture of how the idea was viewed in literature. The *Lais* are also important to the context of *trouvères* and their poetry because a woman indisputably wrote them. Not only do the manuscripts cite her as the author, but she also cites herself in the beginning lines of *Guigemar*:

Ki de bone mateire traite,

Mult li peise si bien n’est faite.

Oëz, seignurs, ke dit Marie (1-3).

[Quand la matière est riche,/ l’auteur est désolé de ne pas lui rendre justice./

Écoutez donc, seigneurs, les récits de Marie]

eliminating any doubt that she is in fact the author, or at least teller, of the tales. The *lais* discuss not only male betrayal of lovers but also of female betrayal of husbands. In *Guigemar*, the wife is consistently betraying her husband. She falls in love with a knight from another land and is only discovered when the chamber lady betrays their relationship to the king. After two years locked in a tower, she manages to escape on the same mysterious ship that brought her lover, wounded, to her so many years ago. Another king falls in love with her and attempts a rape that she escapes only because of the chastity belt that her lover left with her before his expulsion. In *Equitan* a seneschal's wife falls in love with a king. When the seneschal discovers his wife and the king together, the king tries to hide in a bathtub and boils to death in the too hot water. Then, the seneschal is so angry that he throws his wife into the tub as well. *Laustic* tells of a woman in love with the knight next door who goes to the window to speak to her lover while her *gelos* sleeps in bed. When her husband discovers her, she lies, explaining that she rises from bed at night to listen to the nightingale. In revenge, he kills the bird, knowing that his wife is being unfaithful. All of these examples of women betraying their husbands are contrary to the model of the woman *trouvères* poems which more commonly tell the tale of lover betraying them. Nearly every *lais* of Marie de France involves a form of relationship betrayal, indicating that in medieval relationships this was problematic.

In medieval relationships, God was a protector of lovers. At first this appears to contradict God's own laws that forbid adultery, but in fact, according to the laws of *amour courtois* God protected the lovers over the unhappy marriage. Therefore, although quite common, betrayal of the lover is more personal than the betrayal of a husband and a wife. Although many poems focus on the betrayal of husband and wife, the more egregious form of

betrayal in trouvères poetry took place between lovers. According to medieval thought, the love of lovers was the purest form of love because love and passion belonged outside of a marriage:

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, in a society that was gradually losing its inflexibility and where more and more men were allowed to marry, the poems and romances that gave expression to men's dreams still showed a clear distinction between the erotic extramarital games reflected in André le Chapelain and the charitable relationship that was supposed to exist between husband and wife (Duby 225).

Furthermore, "Nuptial benediction was now a generally accepted formality, belonging to that everyday life about which romance had nothing to say" (225-6). The cultural lacking of love and romance in a marriage only encouraged women (and men) to seek elsewhere for this desire. Capellanus warns strongly against seeking the love of prostitutes "...because it is most shameful to have dealings with them, and with them one almost always falls into the sin of lewdness," because instead men were to seek the love of women who have characters that are similar to their own, and equally noble in the sense that they are worthy of love (150).

Although most commonly a woman who betrays her husband is considered far worse than a man who betrays his wife, there is evidence to the contrary. Sara McDougal suggests that "detailed analysis of court records, especially from the fifteenth century, when they are most plentiful, shows that some local courts prosecuted men more often than women for adultery and related sexual offenses" (207). Her postulating implies that although we often impose a twenty first century view on medieval France and "popular imagination often paints a picture of considerable gender disparity" this may not be the case (206). In her case study "Drawing primarily on court records from northern France," she suggests that men found guilty of

committing adultery were tried more harshly than women (207). Furthermore, wives' lovers were tried more often than men who slept with unmarried women (209). But tried by whom was often the question because, "In the Middle Ages almost everyone with any authority claimed some form of jurisdiction over adultery: the church (in its courtrooms as well as in confession), the king, the noble and municipal powers, the community, and the husband" (212). She suggests that men were judged more harshly because of the religious implications and impositions of marriage. The religious imposition states, "The idea that a husband, as male and household head, was responsible not only for his own behavior but also for that of his wife, even in matters of adultery, is found in Christian doctrine, in cannon law and theology, long before the fifteenth century" (223). Women were property of their husbands. We see this quite clearly through the recurrent example of the *gelos* who imprisons his wife out of jealousy. With this religious and legal implication, we can now understand these husbands' decisions through his own lens, perhaps he did not want to be found guilty for having "allowed" his wife to have extramarital relations. If McDougal's statistics are correct and in fact:

The vast majority of those people ordered to pay fines for illicit sex were men, not women. Out of 306 cases of illicit sex from the records of alleged offenders punished by fines in the first half of the fifteenth century in the diocese of Troyes, 231 men were fined (75 percent), as opposed to only 75 women (25 percent)," then it makes perfect sense why a *gelos* would be afraid and overly protective (215).<sup>10</sup>

it is understandable that the man would want to protect his property. However, property or not, the women's plea remains the same. An interesting question to ask is, "Why would society have wanted to protect the jealous husbands?" The response to such a question is not simple.

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<sup>10</sup> Please see Appendix 3 for a more detailed display of McDougal's findings.

McDougal suggests that “The idea that a husband, as male and household head, was responsible not only for his own behavior but also for that of his wife, even in matters of adultery, is found in Christian doctrine, in cannon law and theology, long before the fifteenth century” (223). The husband was the responsible party for the family. He could be punished for adultery in the same way he would later be ostracized or cuckolded if his wife were to be found cheating on him. Society is by definition simply a group of people who decide to live by the same morals and rules. Therefore, it is in society’s best interests to defend the husband even if he is perhaps *old* or not of great moral character, a *gelos*. Furthermore:

The vocabulary makes the marriage contract parallel to the vassalic one: both unite two parties equal in nature but necessarily unequal in power, so that one must serve the other. The relationship between husband and wife reflects at a lower level the primal relationship between the Creator and his creatures (Duby 214).

With a vassalic relationship intended to represent God’s relationship with the church, the husband and the wife are partnered more than just on Earth, they are eternally partnered in Heaven and:

Marriage thus occupied a key position in the Church’s ideology and its image of a perfect society. Together with the theory of the three functional orders, it formed the cornerstone of the social edifice. The whole universe was hierarchal, with order maintained throughout all levels by the presumption that every superior could expect reverence and obedience from his subordinate, while owing him aid and comfort in return (Duby 215).

The idea of the church here goes beyond societal norms and protecting a husband from supporting another man's children. The intent of marriage is to protect both partners from being overly emotional, overly in love.

In trouveresse poetry, there are many examples of betrayal in relationships that Capellanus' rules explain. In the *chanson d'amour* "Plaine d'ire et de desconfort" (RS 1934) the speaker writes :

Dame cuidoie ester d'autrui,  
mais bien sai que folie fis,  
Car conquise sui par celui  
Cui je cuidoie avoir conquis (9-12).

[I thought I was another's lady,/ But I am sure I acted foolishly,/ For I am  
conquered by the one/ I thought I had conquered]

Although she believed that she belonged to him, he obviously felt differently and chose to leave her, though the speaker does not divulge much detail beyond his abandonment of her emotions.

She continues :

Or e nest devers moi li pis,  
Car il siens est et je si sui:  
Ensi somes sien ambedui,  
S'il est ensi com je devis (13-16).

[Now the worst has devolved on me,/ For he is his and I too am his:/ Thus we are  
both his,/ If things are as I imagine]

In line seventeen, she blames herself, saying that she made a mistake loving him because:

Qu'il n'a cure, ce m'est avis,

Ne de moi ne de mon solaz ;

Desqu'il ne m'aime, je me haz (19-21).

[For he shows no concern, it seems to me,/ Either for me or for my comfort; Since he does not love me, I hate myself]

In these lines we get a glimpse of what Romantic poets would copy some 500 years later, an obsession with self and hyperbolic expression. She feels so betrayed by the lover's abandonment of her that she ends her *chanson d'amour* "Ensi ma mort quier et porchaz" [So do I seek and pursue my death] (24). For all the emotions that the poem gives us, the poet sees no reason for the abandonment and thus gives us nothing. The mistake she admits to on line seventeen is having loved him, not having done something to dissuade him of her character. In lines four and five she writes that "Car assez trop hardie fui/ Quant mon cuer ne ma boiche mui" [For I was much too bold/ When I made moan with heart and mouth] and yet Capellanus explains with lines fifteen and sixteen that physical changes of pallor and heart rate that these changes should have helped the young sufferer (185). For whatever reason, the fine balance of passion was destroyed, leaving this young girl alone and prepared to die because, "Et s'amie serai toz dis,/ Encor soit il mes enemis:/ Ensi ma mort quier et porchaz" [Yet I will always be his love,/ Though he be my enemy] (22-3).

*Chanson d'ami* "L'on dit q'amors est dolce chose" (RS1937) is a similar story of betrayal by one's lover. Crying to her friends, the speaker sings:

De ce me plaing qu'il m'a traïe- ;

S'en ai trop grant duel acoilli,

Quant je qui sui leals amie

Ne truis amor en mon ami (11-14).

[My complaint is that he betrayed me ; And I have reaped such great sorrow,/ For  
I who am a faithful lover/ Find no love in my beloved]

She is faithful, is of good character and moral standing, and yet like the speaker in this song, was betrayed, “Estre cuidai de lui amee...a sa voiz iere si sanee” [I thought I was loved by him...By his voice I was revived] (21,25). Here too Capellanus’ rules have failed the woman. She is betrayed by the man and by the rules of courtly love because rule four, “It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing” (184). His was decreasing; hers was increasing. Like two train cars on separate tracks, love pulled them apart. Both *Chanson d’amour 17* “Plaine d’ire et de desconfort” and *Chanson d’ami 23* “L’on dit q’amors est dolce chose” have in common that they admit to weeping in order to recover joy. In *17* she cries, “Plor: en chantant m’en rededui” [I weep: by singing I recover joy] (2). In *23* the speaker’s refrain reads, “Ses duels li part qui s’ose plaindre;/ Plus tost en puet son mal estaindre” [She who dares lament chases her sorrow away;/ She can sooner extinguish her pain]. The intent of these songs is to heal the women’s hearts. In the case of *17*’s speaker, readers can only hope that she chooses to find another lover in lieu of death.

A more hopeful look at betrayal is through the speaker’s eyes in *Chanson d’ami* “E, bon amourette” (RS 970). Like the speakers of “Plaine d’ire et de desconfort” and “L’on dit q’amors est dolce chose” she is singing for joy in her refrain:

“E, bone amourette,  
Tres saveroulette,  
Plaisans,  
N’oblēiz nuns fins amant (1-4).

[Hey, pleasing love song,/ So delectable,/ So charming,/ Do not forget any true  
lover]

Her joy comes not from sorrow, however, it comes from being in love. Through her love she is hopeful and worried that her lover will betray her, “Amins, cui je n’oz nomeir,/ Ne me fauceir mie » [Sweetheart, whom I dare not name,/Do not betray me] (30-1). She follows the rule of love that Capellanus explains, “When made public love rarely endures” and, she remains hopeful that for her this will be enough (185).

In the *Chanson de malmariée* the women are always betrayed by the *gelos* and often times are betrayed also by the *lauzengiers* and family. The *gelos* is often abusive, skeptical, unfeeling, and old. In this regard, he of course is a betrayer because being of poor character makes one unworthy of loving and being loved. The women are victims in these songs even moreso than the abandoned speakers in “Plaine d’ire et de desconfort” and “L’on dit q’amors est dolce chose.” *Chansons de malmariée* “Au cuer les ai, les jolis malz” (RS 386) is no exception to this rule. In this poem the *gelos* betrays his wife; he spies on her while she is in the market:

Kant li vilains vait a marchiet,  
Il n’I vait pais por berguignier,  
Mais por sa feme a esgaitier  
Que nuns ne li forvoie (3-6).

[When the boor goes to market,/ He does not go there to bargain,/ But to spy on  
his wife/ Lest someone seduce her]

The original “vilains” here is translated as boor, but an equally accurate translation would be villain, or man of the town. It truly was considered egregious to be on such a low level of moral

ground. McDougal's research gives context to why the husband would have been spying, however, in the poetry world his behavior was wrong, no exceptions.

The speaker in this poem, however, is brave. Not the weak perception that is often imposed on medieval women, this speaker boldly stands against her boorish husband, "Vilains, car vos traits en lai,/ Car vostre alanine m'ocidrait" [Boor, get away from me,/ For your breath will kill me] (9-10). Very unlike our speaker in *17* who pursues her own death, this speaker seeks the death of her husband:

Vilains, cuidiez vos tout avoir,

Et belle dame et grant avoir?

Vos avereiz lai hairt on col,

Et mesa mins lai joie (15-18).

[Boor, do ou think you can have it all,/ Both a lovely lady and great wealthy?/

You'll have a noose around your neck,/ And my lover will have joy]

Not only is she unafraid of her husband's spying, she has a lover of whom she is quite fond. Although her singing could be viewed as a sort of therapy, here she is singing more out of rebellion. She will not be stopped by his jealousy.

The poetry gives concrete examples of how women felt when being betrayed by their lovers. The mere idea that her lover might betray the speaker of "E, bone amourette" has her worried and singing for hope. Despite cultural norms, these women have worries and lovers and rewards for their strong, or weak, characters. It is not anachronistic to believe that in relationships both men and women felt secure as they do today. In fact, many of our modern ideas of love and manners date back to Medieval French Poetry. Betrayal of ones lover was painful for the women who were already risking their reputation by either straying from their

parents rules or straying in their marriages. Women went from the property of their fathers to the property of their husbands. Because love was not secure in either the family or the marriage, women sought it elsewhere. This allowed them to be more vulnerable to the consequences of betrayal by one's lover.

### CHAPTER III

#### SOCIETAL BETRAYAL

*“He fears, too, that rumors of it may get abroad, and he fears everything that might harm it in any way, for before things are perfected a slight disturbance often spoils them” (Capellanus 28).*

The final chapter starts on *Wisteria Lane* created for the popular ABC show *Desperate Housewives*. *Wisteria Lane* is fraught with marriages ruined by betrayal, runaway teenagers, and even sometimes, murder. And yet, somehow, viewers “root for” the lives of these women to be successful. We are sad for them when their husbands leave them even though they were unfaithful and we hate the women responsible for betraying these women’s secrets to their husbands. The hated nosy neighbors, who spy through slits in blinds and cracks in backyard fences, collecting data to use against their neighbors, are the enemies to love. These gossipmongers, these *lauzengiers*, are characters that society loathes, and have loathed since the women *trouvères* complained about the same kinds of characters in their songs.

Defining the role of the *lauzengiers* and *mesdixans* in the poetry of the *trouvères* and the *trouvèresses* is not as simple as it has been historically treated in medieval studies up until this point. Glynnis Cropp explains that their role is to do harm to the lovers. Because *amour courtois* and courtly life in general adhered to the idea that life was a balance (young versus old, courtly versus villain) the *lauzengiers* are present in the poetry as a sort of equilibrium to the good of the

lovers. If God is for the lovers, as was mentioned earlier, then there has to be a presence that is strongly against them. The *lauzengiers* fill this role. God protects the lovers, and the *lauzengiers* destroy them. It would be easy to translate the word to something like “gossip-monger” or “rumor-weed.” But this type of definition only encompasses the people (whether male or female) who like in the aubes, or dawn songs, would hide in hopes of betraying the lovers. A more complex definition encompasses any betrayer of the lover. Under this definition, the *gelos* would fall under the category of *mesdixans*. So also would the parents, families, and any other betrayer to the lover’s serenity. The protection of this balance, good versus evil, in the idea of the *amour courtois*, protects the *lauzengiers*. Cropp wonders whether or not the destruction of the *lauzengiers* would actually destroy the concept of the *fin’amor*. It could be said that the *trouvères* do not see the *lauzengiers* as true menaces to their love but more simply as just annoyances, another hurdle to overcome in the adventure of love and romance. For *chevaliers* to be truly against the *lauzengiers*, they would have to be against the idea of the *fin’amor* which insists upon an equilibrium. Whether it be an evil mother in law, a jealous husband, a *mesdixans* or a *lauzengier*, if lovers have the defense of God, there must be the other side. The *lauzengiers* add an equilibrium to the poem and they demonstrate a difference in authorship.

Although not translated identically, the words *lauzengiers* and *mesdixants* equate to roughly the same idea in English. Even though the poetry exists in a predominantly “Christian” culture, the role of God is not to protect marriage but to protect lovers. Ultimately, lovers need protection from the *lauzengiers* because if word reaches the jealous husband that his wife is being unfaithful there were serious cultural consequences such as imprisonment in a tower or perhaps even death. In His role as protector<sup>11</sup>, God does not follow his own Biblical commandment forbidding adultery. In this world of medieval poetry, God protects lovers

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<sup>11</sup> (there could be something interesting in God as protector=the doorkeeper)

because in the world of *courtoisie* love is above all other things. This all surpassing love, best encompassed by knights in the *fin' amor* and *amour courtois* tradition crosses in between Northern and Southern France and when discussing the *trouvères* is essentially the same voice in troubadour writing of the south (Jewers 1).<sup>12</sup>

It is hard for us to know if the word *lauzengiers* refers to either a man or a woman. Because they are referenced as an “other.” In his book on courtly vocabulary Cropp refers to them as definitively male, “En premier lieu, les *lauzengiers* sont toujours anonymes et on suppose qu’ils sont hommes, et non femmes (244-5). In my imagination I had always imagined them to be female. Maybe this is a reflection of my modern idea of the caddy woman imposed on a twelfth century text, or maybe it is because it seems to me most likely that women would be more afraid of another woman’s betrayal than that of a man. Cropp’s opinion makes sense too. Men were the holders of power, the characters who could make or a break a woman’s reputation. Nobody would listen to the busy-body woman but the *lauzengier* male, hiding in the bushes, especially a man of higher rank, could make a tremendous impact on the reputation of a woman. Although slightly insignificant either way, for the purposes of this paper it is important to note that because they are ambiguous, they can be imagined as either male or female, as Cropp and I have done.

Helen Dell suggests through the poem *Cuidoient li losengier* (RS 1287) that the women were actually enthralled with the idea of the *lauzengiers*. Stanza one reads :

Cuidoient li losengier  
por ce si il ont menti  
que je me doie esloignier  
d’amors et de mon ami.

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<sup>12</sup> “[does] not differ in tone or content from those of the troubadours” in the female voice (Jewers 1).

E non Dieu, je l'amerai,  
et bone amor servirai  
nuit et jor,  
sans fere folor (1-8).

[Did the slanderers think that/ because they lied/ I must keep my distance/ from  
love and from my friend ?/ Ah! God, no! I will love him/ and serve true love/  
night and day,/ without falsehood]

She is unafraid of the gossipmongers, and even less afraid of the consequences that they may bring. Of her Dell writes:

This is not the weeping, lamenting woman described by Bec. She is more like Michelet's wild sorceress, being carried off on a black horse spurting fire from his eyes and nostrils... Her enjoyment is paired with her intention to transgress, and it carries a note of insistence ill at ease with pleasure. She stresses the beneficial and enjoyable power of love, but, even more, of transgression. Flouting the *losengier* to their undoing is her delight, but it is a manic delight (103).

This speaker, however, is an exception to the rule. Most female *trouvères* address the *lauzengiers* with disgust and annoyance. Dell is right, however, that this speaker is seemingly unafraid. In a later stanza she writes, "Mesdisanz, fol losengier,/ je ne vos pris un espi" [Liars, mad slanderers,/ I don't give an ear of corn for you!] (31-2). She speaks in lines 25 and 26 about defeating and overcoming them. She is brave.

In the middle ages, a woman's reputation was her entire future and was entangled precariously with her sexual purity both before and after marriage. She had little opinion or choice in choosing a husband. Her parents made this choice for financial and political reasons. If

her husband was violent with her or neglectful, there was nothing that she could do to remedy the situation. Doss-Quimby explains that even finding joy in a lover was problematic because the woman was stuck between two contrary ideas: she has to keep the love secret in order to be in line with the rules of *fin'amor* but in doing so the woman can be overly coy and secretive, ultimately resulting in a loss of her lover as demonstrated in “*Onques n'amai tant que jou fui amee*” (RS 498). In this poem the speaker blames the *lauzengiers*, or more specifically her fear of them and therefore losing her lover because she follows the rules of the *fin'amor*, “*Des mesdisants doutoie la noumee*” [I feared the ignominy caused by slanderers] (15). Male voices do not lose their lovers and then blame the very rules of order that they live by.

Male poets rest easy in a comfortable position. Although it is true that in the system of *fin'amor* men can earn the reputation of *vilain*, a fear of this fate does not manifest itself in the poetry. Guillaume de Poitiers' speaker in “*Ab la dolchor del temps nouvel*,” (PC 183.1)<sup>13</sup> brags that he does not worry about the *lauzengiers* because while they are hiding and gossiping him and his lover are living the high life. Because of their general positions of power in society, *chevaliers* had the luxury of not caring about the negative words of others. Women, however, could not think like this. For them the *lauzengiers* matter.

Female voices evidence the worries of the *lauzengiers* and *mesdixans* simply through the usage of the terms and references. The visibility of these references demonstrates that at the very least, these extra-characters played a role in the thoughts of the women. In “*Mesdixant, c'an tient a vos*” (RS 2048) the refrain of the poem addresses the *mesdixans* directly:

Mesdeixant, c'an tient a vos

Se je voil ameir par amours

Ains ke fuxe mariee

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<sup>13</sup> Pillet-Carstens *Bibliographie des Troubadours*, Halles, 1933.

Fu je par amors amee.

A tort m'an ont escuzee

Li mavais lozangeours.

Mesdixant, c'an tient a vos

Se je voil ameir par amours? (1-8).

[Slanderers, why should you care/ If I want to love faithfully?/ Before I was married/ I was loved faithfully./ Wrongly did they deter me,/ The wicked scandalmongers./ Slanderers, why should you care/ If I wasn't to love faithfully]

In this poem, the speaker describes that she loved a man before she was married to her husband. As readers, it is unclear whether she is a *malmariée*. We simply know that he was not the one she loved. Incapable of choosing loyalty to her husband over joy in her life, she chooses to continue seeing her lover. She tries not to care about the spies and their rumors but her inability to do so is evidenced by her continued repetition of the refrain.

In the fourth strophe of the poem, she no longer speaks of her story but transitions into discussing her frustrations, rhetorically demanding why slanders care what she does; which is to say that she who adheres to the laws of *fin'amor* should not have to suffer at the mouths of the *lauzengiers* and the envious. The verb tense that the speaker uses is key because someone who loves in the present should not be plagued with this cloud of doubt. She has to worry about the words of the *mesdixans* and as a *chanson de malmariée* this poem serves as a means of venting frustrations. This woman's situation contrasts with that of Poitiers. He ignores the *mesdixans* because for him they are but a trifle, a minor inconvenience. For her the situation could quickly become very serious. She must guard her happiness by keeping it out of the hands of the *mesdixans*. In a final example of the woman betrayed by the ultimate betrayer, there is the

*chanson de malmariée* “Mesdixant, c’an tient a vos” (RS 2048). The speaker in this poem has been betrayed by the *lauzengiers*, “A tort m’an ont escuzee/ Li mavais lozangeours” (Wrongly did they deter me,/ The wicked scandalmongers) (5-6). Just before these lines, the speaker divulged that before she was *malmariée*, she had been in love. She blames the betrayers for her current predicament. She bemoans the fact that “Or suis-je bien asenee/ D’estre par amors amee” [Now I am destined/ To be loved faithfully], but the problem is that now she is married to someone else (15-6). The presence of the *lauzengiers* deterred her from her love in the first place, and now they continue to deter her because she is married and to seek love outside of this relationship would be an egregious error. The speaker goes on, “Qui bien ainme a recellee/ Haïr doit les anvïous” [She who loves sincerely and discreetly/ Should disdain the envious] (23-4).

Dell explains that:

The joyous *malmariée*, like the girl of the triumphalist *chanson d’ami*, is supremely active—vehement and headstrong, rebellious and rash. She is her older, married sister. Her narratives are an outpouring of goings-out and ‘goings-on,’ in response to the desperate attempts of others to keep her in. Unlike the shepherdess, who stays put, patiently awaiting the arrival of the narrator, the *malmariée* is always escaping from the control of her husband and ranging the town where she seeks solace with the friend (120).

This *ballette* is an example of this statement exactly. The woman is battling against a monster that can neither be tamed nor overcome. The *lauzengiers* will not go away. Bec writes that, “Seule, une terrible fatalité l’en empêche, traditionnel obstacle à la *fin’amor*, symbolisé ici non pas par le *gilos* ou la cohorte des *lausengiers*, mais par le parrain même qui a présidé à sa

naissance et l'a voué à ne pas être aimé" (140). The *lauzengier* is one of few things that can destroy the *fin'amor*. Cropp continues, "A vrai dire, le rang social du *lauzengier* importe peu, car en médisant ou en calomniant il a renoncé à toute noblesse de caractère ; il a donc renoncé au privilège d'appartenir à la société courtoise" (245). The role of the *lauzengier* is at the same time worthless, and considered the lowest rang of society, and yet they hold an enormous amount of power in society.

For medieval writers the right to be daring was a luxury. Many poems demonstrate that men believe they must risk something in order to fully appreciate and experience true love. Men risk the label *vilain* but for some, risking is everything. The motet "J'ose bien m'aime a parler" (#)<sup>14</sup> is a perfect example of this. The first strophe describes how the speaker dares to hug his lover in front of her husband. In front of the jealous husband, this speaker takes his lover into his arms. His sense of self-confidence and lack of concern for what this could mean for her is evidenced by his daring.

This attitude is not only selfish but also shows a general disregard for the woman he is claiming to love, breaking the rules of courtly love. The *gelos* could imprison the woman or put a guard outside of her bedroom door. He did not even think of the potential consequences he thought only of 'the win.' Later he writes that he does not dare to see his *amie* because of her husband which seems contradictory to his earlier actions. He does not dare to visit her but dares to take her in his arms in front of the jealous husband. In a way this demonstrates a lack of the speakers understanding of his own feelings.

Speakers of the female voice would never dare to take their lover in their arms in front of their husbands. In the *chanson d'amour*, the woman would not even dare admit her love because of the fear of the slanderers. Now, she suffers because she is alone, unloved. It was more worth it

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<sup>14</sup> Dr. O and I are working on finding the official citation for this poem.

to this speaker to give up her lover as opposed to being outed by the *mesdixans*. The voices of the poems are intended to be young women who are living the struggles that their voices decry. Nevertheless, it is nearly impossible with unnamed authors to know who the writers are. This leads us in a circle to female authorship and the question of who wrote what.

In the *aubes*, or dawn songs, betrayal is prevalent. In essence, sorrow characterizes these songs because they are indicative of the parting of two lovers. Although the awakening of a new day, dawn is the moment at which the lovers must return to their regular lives. *Songs of the Women Trouvères* discusses in its introduction, the *lauzengier* in the *aube* “Cant voi l’aube don jor venir” (RS 1481) writing that, “The song sometimes includes a third figure, a watchman who warns the lovers of the advent of day...the genre found more resonance among the Occitan troubadours and German minnesingers” (Doss-Quinby 148). The *lauzengier* here is a threat to the lover’s secrecy. Sometimes hiding in the bush, these characters are there only to disrupt the pleasure of the lovers, and to add to the female *trouvères* anxiety. Not only must she part from her lover, but she must also part carefully, watching closely her surroundings in case the neighborhood gossip is there. The mere presence not enough to scare the lovers out of their affair, but enough to create an anxiety in the *aube* voice of the woman *trouvères*. It is through these bush-abiding others that the jealous (or even not jealous) husband discovers that his wife is unloyal. This betrayal of the wife against her husband is egregious because it calls into question who is the father of the woman’s children and who will inherit the land. These are terrible things for the medieval man to worry about.

The *aube* is a song about partings that transcends time and genre. In comparing the various *aubes*, Brown explains that:

As in religion, so in philosophy, perhaps most memorably in Plato's Myth of the Cave in book seven of the *Republic*...The philosopher, on the other hand, turns away from the shadows, leaves the cave, and eventually works his way arduously up to where he can see the sun itself. To move from darkness to light is to move from confusion and sin to truth and virtue (9)

To him, the lovers of these songs know that they are doing wrong because of the fear that they experience in the morning, just as in Plato's Cave, the philosopher turns from the shadows and into the light. Furthermore:

At the first sign of dawn, then, the lovers in countless albas find themselves at a liminal moment. Behind them is the night—their secret passion, their rapture, their sin. Before them is the day—public virtue, law, righteousness, and, if they linger too long, exposure, retribution, punishment, death. When they can no longer deny that dawn is upon them, the lovers may act with such passion in reckless disregard of the danger they face that they appear to defeat, at least for a moment, the coming of the light (Brown 10).

These lovers know that what they are doing is wrong, the *lauzengiers*, for Brown, in these poems represent a sort of guilty conscience.

“Cant voi l'aube dou jor venir” (RS 1481) is one of these *aubes*. The writer blames the *lauzengiers* and the daylight while at the same time she is blaming herself for the love, “Et se vos di trestout por voir/ K'en agait sont li enuious” [And this I tell you in truth:/ The envious lie in ambush] (9-10). Her refrain reads, “Or ne hais riens [tant com le jour,/ Amins, ke me depairt de vos] [Now I hate nothing so much as day,/ Beloved, for it parts me from you.]. The speaker here appears to take no blame or guilt for her actions. She even spites the slanders who get in her way,

“Ens en despit des mesdixans/ Et des mavais maris jalous” [Quite in spite of slanderers/ And mean, jealous husbands] (27-8). Not as bold as the speaker in “Cuidoient li losengier” she is equally determined, albeit more afraid. What Brown’s reading, does not take into account however, is the medieval idea that God was a protector of the lovers. Just as the *lauzengiers* have to exist to create a sort of universal balance, God is also there protecting their love. The God that condones the love of the lovers, is not the same God of the church who prescribes marriage as a necessity. The speaker in “Cant voi...” writes, “A Deu soit vos cors comandeis./ Por Deu vos pri, ne m’oblieis” [May God protect you./ In God’s name, I beg you, do not forget me!] (20-1). She wishes the very praises and protection of the lover’s God over her lover so that he will be neither harmed, nor discovered, but also so that he will not forget her.

In a final example of the *lauzengiers* comes in the form of a *Jeux-partis*, or poems in which two characters debate a specific subject are also a genre of trouvères poetry in which the idea of the *lauzengiers* arises. The *Jeux-partis* “Douce dame, volantiers” (RS1338) between *La Dame* and *Rolant de Reims* is a poem between two speakers debating which is worse for society: a slanderer or an arrogant person. This *jeux-partis* is even more interesting because the two characters are a man and a woman. Rolant de Reims asks of the Dame:

Lou keil miex vos ameriés  
 Se ester lou covenoit:  
 Ou chivaillier orguillous  
 Ou un autre, mesdixant (3-5, 8).

[Which would you choose,/ If you had to:/ Either an arrogant knight...Or  
 another, a slanderer]

She replies:

Ja n'amerai mon vivant

Mesdisans, nuns ne les doit ;

Chascun fuir les devroit (18-20).

[Never in my life will I love/ Slanderers ; no one should./ Everyone should shun them]

Although admitting that she would never get involved with a knight who behaved thusly (because that would make him ineligible for love according to *amour courtois*) and yet she still states that she could not tolerate a *mesdisans*. He goads her stating:

Orgoiz est pires de tous

Mesdisans bien s'aparsoit,

Mais orguillous ne poroit (25-7).

[Arrogance is the worst vice of all./ A slanderer could well amend,/ But an arrogant man could not]

They go back and forth thusly until in stanza four when she states:

Mais langue de mesdisants

Ocist proudome et dessoit,

Et fait de l'anver lou droit (38-40).

[But a slanderer's tongue/ Can kill a man of worth and deceive him,/ And turn everything topsy-turvy]

He attempts to defend them:

Teiz mesdit qui s'an repant

Aprés, cant il s'aparsoit;

Mais orgoiz ploier ne doit (48-50).

[Someone can slander, then regret it/ When he realizes what he has done/ But  
pride must not yield]

But, she stands her ground against the *mesdixans*:

Mesdixans pires ne soit:

Mesdixans et losangiers

Ont mis lou monde a destroit (52-54).

[That a slanderer is worse:/ Slanderers and gossip-mongers/ Have subverted  
everything]

*La Dame* is so against the *mesdixans* even more so than a man who is arrogant and non-conforming to courtly love standards because she knows that the *mesdixans* can do more harm to the destruction of relationships than an uncourtly, and therefore unlovable man. This *jeux-partis* confirms that women and men viewed the *lauzengiers* differently and for different reasons, further impressing the idea that female authorship can be confirmed through the use of this term.

The frequent presence of *lauzengiers* in female *trouvère* poetry demonstrates a level of anxiety that does not exist in poems written by their male counterparts. While men have the luxury of ‘ignoring’ the *mesdisants*, the women are the ones who must worry about potential consequences. Although an encouraging amount of literature dealing with *trouvères* poetry exists, there is a surprising lack of research dealing with the female perspective of the *lauzengiers*. Doss-Quinby et al, Grimberts, Pfeffer, and Aubrey’s *Songs of the Women Trouvères* thoroughly covers the idea of the *lauzengiers* as an idea but not in a way that shows the female perspective differs from that of the male voice. This paper explores the anxieties of the female voice in *trouvères* poetry as it applies to the gossipmongers by contrasting it with how the male voices in the same genre handle similar negativity.

Women believed in the confidentiality of love and the protection of God just as did their male counterparts. In the last quarter century, we have witnessed a huge push in the research on the female voice in medieval *trouveresse* poetry. Finally, the voices and the perspectives of these women are not only being heard but also being accepted players in medieval discourse. And yet, there is very little research to be found about the opinions of women and how they interacted and understood the *lauzengiers* and the *mesdixans* even though it was the women who had everything to lose. However, even though research on this specific topic is minuscule, the references to the *lauzengiers* and the *mesdixans* both in the poems and the research found on the female voiced *trouvères* poems are highly numerous. Often times, seemingly unrelated articles mention in passing the *lauzengiers*. Beverly Evans, in refuting Pierre Bec's statement that there is no evidence of female authorship explains that these *lauzengiers* and *mesdixans* were the real enemy of the female voice<sup>15</sup>. In the poetry credited to female voices, there are scattered references and in some cases entire poems that refer to the *lauzengiers* and *mesdixans*. With the surge of interest in the female perspective the growing pool of research and the availability of the poems gives researchers new access to understanding the struggles of the female *trouvères*.

The number of references that we have to the *lauzengiers* and the *mesdixans* I argue that it is safe to say these characters were people about whom female poets worried. They worried about what would become of them if their relationship was discovered and their names slandered.<sup>16</sup>

The female view of the *lauzengiers* becomes even more interesting when contrasted with the male usage of the same characters. How did their views of these slanderers differ? In

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<sup>15</sup> describes the female enemies, "these enemies take the form of the nasty slanderers, "médisants" or "losengiers," whereas in others, they take a slightly divergent form" (4).

<sup>16</sup> Almost an anti-God character. If God protects the lovers above, then in the battle field so to speak, the *lauzengiers* destroy it. They are by definition destroyers of *fin'amor*. Not loyal neighbors but rather sneaky gossipers.

comparing the two points of view, masculine and feminine, it becomes clear that for the female voice the *lauzengiers* were dangerous and to be feared and destroyed. Women, however, lacked both the political and social power to change their situations. This is a good argument for Cropp's definition of the *lauzengiers* as male. The males had the power. But, the women did what they could, they met up with their girlfriends, composed poems, and sang. They could not change their situations, but they could sing against the *lauzengiers*, almost like the modern day rapper, rapping against his enemy to take away their power.

## CONCLUSION

« *Quant se depart li jolis tans* » [When the joyful season ends] (Poem 62)

It is a mistake to look at the Medieval period and assume it was a time “*Quant se depart li jolis tans*.” In fact, the Middle Ages were a time when although the writings and productions of art were very different from our own, they were being written and created. The women *trouvères*, like our heroines in *27 Dresses* and *Desperate Housewives* felt things very similar to how we feel them now. For the women *trouvères* betrayal was not just a breaking of the bonds of trust and destruction to the laws of *amour courtois*, it was an intriguing game and a massacre to character. Women faced betrayal on all sides. They faced the chance at betrayed by families who often had little concern for their ultimate wellbeing, caring instead about financial and political climbing. They were sent to nunneries and married to character lacking *gelos*.

Similarly, even in love, women were not secure in protection from betrayal. Families could split lovers who they deemed unworthy of each other. Lovers often left their women, and women too were subject to being betrayers by not following courtly law and abandoning their lovers.

Perhaps the most egregious of the betrayals, however was that of the *lauzengiers*. With the number of references that scholars have to the *lauzengiers* and the *mesdixans* it is safe to say these characters were people about whom female poets worried. They worried about what would become of them if their relationships were discovered and their names slandered by these

traitors. The female view of the *lauzengiers* is interesting and special when contrasted with the male usage of the same characters because men felt betrayed and lost their lover but the woman was often the one enslaved to a tower by her family. In comparing the two points of view, masculine and feminine, it becomes clear that for the female voice the *lauzengiers* were dangerous, and yet intriguing. The *lauzengiers* in medieval poetry are menaces to and betrayers of love. In the realm of trouvères poetry, God sought to create a heaven for the lovers while for the *lauzengiers*, the gossipmongers of the town, God exists to create a Hell. The way in which *lauzengiers* and *mesdixans* are treated differently between the male voices and the female voices demonstrates not only female authorship but also a different perspective on love in medieval France. And, even if the sex of these voices cannot be proven or authenticated, they provide us a broader understanding of a medieval woman's perspective on the *amour courtois*.

In the poetry of the women trouvères betrayal is cyclical. Throughout her lifetime a woman risks falling prey to a number of different types. First there is the family. Because marriage was a political act, women were often married off not to the man of their own choosing but to a man who offered either wealth or power. At the risk of seeming anachronistic (imposing my modern day interpretation of betrayal onto the women), we know that these women felt betrayed by their families because there are poems where women mourn their lovers. A second type of betrayal that families could impose on women was the idea that she could be sent to a nunnery. Unmarried women were often a financial burden on the families. So also, a rebellious woman was a danger to the families name. For these reasons, parents would sometimes send their daughter (or imprison them...) at a nunnery. Young girls must have felt this to be a betrayal. Then there was the cyclical betrayal in marriage. Though often the betrayer in poetry, women were often betrayed by their husbands in marriage. We know this not because of the

women saying it, but because of the poems written in male *trouvères* voices. A third type of betrayal is betrayal by society in the form of the *gelos*, the *mesdixants*, and the *lauzengiers*. These ‘gossipmongers,’ would lurk in the bushes hoping to ambush the lovers and wreak havoc on the lovers by making known their love. Only secret affairs were holy and protected by god. The *joie* of the *amour courtois* fades when the lovers are discovered. So also, this put at risk the reputation of the women.

These betrayals are different when presented by the women *trouvères* because there was more for them to risk: reputation, marriagability (if she wasn’t already married), and family honor. Essentially, women were protected by no one (with the exception of close friends). They could be betrayed by their families, their husbands, and their society—which could be friends sometimes. In love, they weren’t protected by the rules and regulations of *fin ’amor*. They were betrayed even by those because men had the freedom and the power:

On the most fundamental level, we do have to wonder how Bec, or any other contemporary academician, could feel secure in denying the existence of women *trouvères*, given the seven or more centuries that separate their lives from those of the medieval composers...Bec has to be wrong and that, certainly, many women must have been writing and performing songs in northern France, hardly solves the problem of the limited number of irrefutable attributions that can be made to female poet-composers (Evans, “Women Trouveres” 1).

Although a title is given to the *gelos* there is little to no mention of the wife of the lover who is equally being betrayed. This is most likely because less about misogyny and more about the fact that the culture preached for marriage without passion or love because marriage was a reflection

of God's relationship with the church and like this relationship was intended to be without passion.

In traditional trouvères poetry, the *lauzengiers* and *mesdixans* are read as antagonists whose sole purpose is to destroy the relationship between lovers by carrying news of the secret liaisons to the jealous husband who will in turn retaliate by imprisoning the woman. This reading of trouvères poetry, however, only justifies the suffering of the trouvères who risks little more than losing access to his *amour*. The women of these poems are the ones who truly suffer when their liaisons are exposed. Not only do they risk the loss of their lovers, but they also risk imprisonment in towers, public and familial shame, and a subsequent loss of honor.

These poems matter today not only because they give modern readers a road into the difficulties of a woman's quotidian and how she dealt with them, but these poems also give us cultural ties to a time period that often feels distant and unlike our own. These women struggled with the same emotions and problems that exist in our society today. Although American society is not one that participates openly in arranged marriages, there are still many corners of the world, such as India, that do. Not so irrelevant to today's atmosphere as we may think, the songs of the women trouvères give us insight into a distant culture as well as tie us back to this culture.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## Appendix 1

**Aube**—also referred to as *alba*, or simply a *dawn song*. These songs speak about the painful parting between lovers when the morning comes.

**Chanson d’ami**—these are songs sung by women about their lovers. They often contain refrains and are sung in a variety of registers which is to say they range from formal to informal.

**Chanson d’amour**—a type of *chanson d’ami* specifically dealing with love.

**Chanson de malmariée**—a type of *chanson d’ami* written only by women, in which women sing about their bad marriages.

**Gelos**—the jealous husband of women poets; often viewed as an antagonist.

**Trobairitz**—female medieval poets from the South of France, composed in the Occitan language.

**Troubadour**—male medieval poets from the South of France, composed in the Occitan language.

**Trouvère**—male medieval poets from the North of France that took their general style of writing from the troubadours of the South; female *trouvère* is a term often used to indicate *trouvèresse*

**Trouvèresse**—female medieval poets from the North of France that took their general style of writing from the troubadours and trobairitz of the South.

## APPENDIX B

## Appendix 2

Capellanus, Andreas. *The Art of Courtly Love*. Tr. John Jay Parry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. Print.

“Know, then, that the chief rules in love are these twelve that follow:

1. Though shalt avoid avarice like the deadly pestilence and shalt embrace its opposite.
2. Thou shalt keep thyself chaste for the sake of her whom thou lovest.
3. Thou shalt not knowingly strive to break up a correct love affair that someone else is engaged in.
4. Thou shalt not choose for thy love anyone whom a natural sense of shame forbids thee to marry.
5. Be mindful completely to avoid falsehood.
6. Thou shalt not have many who know of thy love affair.
7. Being obedient in all things to the commands of ladies, thou shalt ever strive to ally thyself to the service of Love.
8. In giving and receiving love’s solaces let modesty be ever present.
9. Thou shalt speak no evil.
10. Thou shalt not be a revealer of love affairs.
11. Thou shalt be in all things polite and courteous.
12. In practicing the solaces of love thou shalt not exceed the desires of thy lover.”

(Capellanus 81-82)

“These are the rules:

1. Marriage is no real excuse for not loving.
2. He who is not jealous cannot love.

3. No one can be bound by a double love.
4. It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing.
5. That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.
6. Boys do not love until they arrive at the age of maturity.
7. When one lover dies, a widowhood of two years is required of the survivor.
8. No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons.
9. No one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love.
10. Love is always a stranger in the home of avarice.
11. It is not proper to love any woman whom one would be ashamed to seek to marry.
12. A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
13. When made public love rarely endures.
14. The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.
15. Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
16. When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.
17. A new love puts to flight an old one.
18. Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.
19. If love diminishes, it quickly fails and rarely revives.
20. A man in love is always apprehensive.
21. Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.
22. Jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved.
23. He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.
24. Every act of a lover ends in the thought of his beloved.
25. A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved.

26. Love can deny nothing to love.

27. A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.

28. A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved.

29. A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.

30. A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.

31. Nothing forbids one woman being loved by two men or one man by two women.”

(Capellanus 184-6)

## **APPENDIX C**

### Appendix 3

McDougal, Sara. "The Opposite of the Double Standard: Gender, Marriage, and Adultery Prosecution in Late Medieval France." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 23.2 (2014): 206-226. Web.

TABLE 1. PUNISHMENTS FOR THOSE ACCUSED OF ADULTERY FROM TROYES, WITH THEIR ACCOMPLICES

Amount of the fine	Persons accused (and fined by the court)	Their accomplices
10 livres (200 sous)	1 priest	A married woman
100 sous	7 men (6 married men, 1 layman)	2 married women, 5 (unspecified) laywomen
2 écus (80 sous)	1 married man	1 woman (his maid)
60 sous	5 men (4 married men, 1 chaplain)	1 married woman, 1 widow, 3 other women
6 lb. wax (54 sous)	2 married men	2 laywomen
1 écus (40 sous)	17 persons (13 married men, 2 laymen, 2 married women)	5 married women, 4 widows, 2 laywomen, 2 laymen
4 lb. wax (36 sous)	1 married man	1 woman (his maid)
30 sous	3 married men	3 laywomen
22 sous	1 layman	1 married woman
20 sous	17 persons (11 married men, 1 curate, 2 laymen, 2 widows, 1 married woman)	5 married women, 4 widows, 5 laywomen, 2 unmarried laywomen, 1 layman
2 lb. wax	3 persons (2 laywomen, 1 married man)	2 married men, 1 woman
10 sous	3 persons (1 married man, 1 layman, 1 laywoman)	1 widow, 1 married woman, 1 married man
1 lb. wax	2 persons (1 layman, 1 married woman)	1 married woman, 1 layman
Unknown	2 married women	2 laymen

AD de l'Aube G243, G4171, and G4172.

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