

Prison Poetry in France (1400-1900): Charles d'Orléans, François Villon, Clément Marot,
Théophile de Viau, and Paul Verlaine

By

Anthony Nicolas Radoiu

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(French)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2025

Date of final oral examination: 12/12/2024

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Martine Debaisieux, Professor Emeritus, French
Florence Vatan, Professor, French
Ullrich Langer, Professor Emeritus, French
Richard Goodkin, Professor Emeritus, French
Ernesto Livorni, Professor, Italian

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	viii
Introduction	1
1. Prison Poetry and the Emergence of the Autobiographical “I”	1
2. Methodology	9
3. Chapter Outline	17
Chapter 1. Charles d’Orléans: the Rise of the Autobiographical <i>Je</i>	22
I. Introduction	22
II. Captivity in England: Part 1 (1415-1429)	27
III. Self-Fashioning and the Captive Poet: Early Prison Poetry	34
IV. Captivity in England: Part 2 (1429-1436)	64
V. Towards an Imagery of Desire: Later Prison Poetry	71
VI. Captivity in England: Part 3 (1436-1440)	77
VII. From the Metaphorical to the Epistolary: Prison Poetry Shortly Before Liberation	80
VIII. Conclusion	84
Chapter 2. François Villon: the Realism of an Authorial Self	87
I. Introduction	87
II. Charles d’Orléans, François Villon, and the Autobiographical Shift	89
III. A Biographical Sketch of François Villon Before His Imprisonment	103
IV. Nuanced Depictions of the Poetic Self: <i>Les Lais</i>	107
V. Fashioning a Victimized Self: <i>Le Testament</i>	114

VI. Conclusion	130
Chapter 3. Clément Marot: the Poet Martyr on Display	132
I. Introduction	132
II. The Advent of Sixteenth-Century (Protestant) Prison Writing	136
III. Life Before Imprisonment	140
IV. Prison Poetry from the Châtelet	147
V. Conclusion	196
Chapter 4. Théophile de Viau: Persuasive and Affective Appeal	198
I. Introduction	198
II. Autobiography and the Authority of the Prisoner's Experience	201
III. Théophile de Viau and "Le Libertinage"	204
IV. Parallels Between the Prison Poetry of Théophile de Viau and of Clément Marot	217
V. Prison Poetry from the Conciergerie	224
VI. Conclusion	249
Chapter 5. Paul Verlaine: Healing the Authorial Self in the Safety of Prison	253
I. Introduction	253
II. Lost in the Wilderness: Poetic Transgressions	256
III. Prison Poetry from Belgium: Brussels and Mons	267
1. Daily Carceral Experience	267
2. Verlaine's Staging of the Self and Representations of Selfhood	279
3. Infinite Expansiveness and Vastness	292
4. The Carceral Space	302

5. Spiritual Renewal and Return to Catholicism	308
IV. Conclusion	315
Conclusion	317
Bibliography	323

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The inspiration for this study on prison poetry was a result of two main influences. My grandfather, Nicolae Radoiu, was arrested, questioned, and imprisoned by the Securitate, the secret police of the communist Socialist Republic of Romania, in the years following the Second World War in 1949. A medical student, he was falsely suspected of sympathies to the previous Romanian government and was imprisoned in labor camps in Romania and in the former Yugoslavia. He managed to escape from his first two prisons by, in one instance, waiting until the prison guards were intoxicated celebrating the Serbian national holiday in order to sneak out undetected. He was captured both times and told he would be killed after a third attempt. This time, he hid submerged in a train's water tank to cross the Austrian border and eventually emigrated to France, Canada, and finally the United States. During my Master's studies at the Université de Paris Sorbonne IV, I completed a Minor specialization in *Études médiévales* and studied the poetry of Charles, duc d'Orléans in seminars offered by Professor Joëlle Ducos. Also my thesis advisor, I am indebted to Professor Ducos for introducing me to the fascinating works of this prince, poet, and prisoner captured at the Battle of Agincourt and held hostage for twenty-five years in England. He spoke in the first person with a personified language that was so normal, everyday, and relatable. He captivantly romanticized common body parts, calling his eyes "windows" and, in his grief after being captured and separated from his homeland and wife, casted his Heart as a prisoner, a weary, besieged defender of a fortress, or a sobbing roommate reading from the "Book of Pleasant Thought." He spoke of his joy and renewal upon his return to France through the arrival of the "ship of Good News," the "free air of Generosity," and being cleansed of the "mold of Sadness." He spoke of his anxiety through the reoccurring figure of an ever-present and dubious female companion, Melancholy, but also through spaces such as the

“Prison of Misery” or the “Purgatory of Sadness.” I was absorbed by Charles’s allusions to chivalric and military imagery, such as “armor rusty with Indifference” or “throwing down a glove to challenge Danger,” and by his allusions to “playing tennis and chess with Age” as a way to express coming to terms with growing older. I brought my *Livre de Poche* copy of his works with me during my commute to the Sorbonne on the Paris Métro and I strived to read every one of his *ballades* and *rondeaux*.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my former advisor Professor Ullrich Langer and to my current co-advisors Professors Martine Debaisieux and Florence Vatan for their eternal guidance, support, and countless hours of dedication in consultation via email, independent studies, and Zoom meetings without which this study would not have been possible. I am also deeply grateful for the guidance and assistance of my other committee members, Professor Richard Goodkin, who offered priceless contributions to my nascent chapter on François Villon during our PhD dissertation preparation seminar (grateful, too, for allowing me to join the course by distance via Skype during this pre-pandemic, and this “pre-Zoom,” moment), and Professor Ernesto Livorni on the Italian side, in whom I found a kindred spirit both in soccer and poetry. I am also thankful for all my previous professors in the Department of French and Italian, whose instruction and mentorship also made this project possible. My years in our Graduate program were also made less intimidating and adversarial by a small band of fellow PhD candidates in French and Italian, Corie Marshall, Aniello Di Iorio, and Eric Wistrom, whose solidarity and kindness I will never forget. I am also thankful for my undergraduate mentors at Virginia Tech, Professor Sharon Johnson, who encouraged me to apply to the French PhD program at her *alma mater* UW-Madison, and Professor Corinne Noirot, who helped grow my passion for the French language teaching me my first (elementary) college French course.

This dissertation would finally not have been possible without the love, caring, and encouragement of dear family and friends. I am eternally grateful to my wife Amira Hassnaoui for her tender support sharing our PhD journeys in parallel together through the bumpy road of relocating to a new city, apartment, and university, and at the end, for being able to wryly call ourselves a “stressed academic household of two PhDs in *different* disciplines.” Your strength and resilience inspires and is an example to me each and every day. I am also grateful to my father Mike for our many conversations cultivating our Francophone heritage and sharing our interest in medieval history through the poets I studied, to my mother Sharon for imparting her steely resolve to “get over the finish line” with my PhD as it dragged on, when patience, time, and funds were wearing thin, and to my brother Mick and my sister Gabi for their constant support after I left home for Paris and then for Madison. I am finally grateful for my *tante* Tina, who also encouraged my French studies and supported me both in Europe and the United States. *Je vous aime toutes/tous infiniment.* I would also like to thank my childhood friend Stephan Pietrowski for his generosity when I returned to Virginia and for his perspectives on Early Modern literature as we compared themes in Shakespeare’s works and in those of my poets, not to mention through our jokes about Charles’s English “pal,” William de la Pole. I could not have survived this journey and produced this dissertation without any and all of you, and thus I will be forever in your debt.

ABSTRACT

Across literary history, it is generally known that the prison setting contributes to a paradoxical dynamic whereby the physical and psychological constraints of imprisonment foster textual fecundity. Prison poetry remains a relatively understudied phenomenon inside the greater corpus of French prison literature, although the poetic form is a privileged genre for the prisoner-poet's desire for self-expression on account of its aesthetic and formal possibilities. In order to communicate their singular and diverging experiences of incarceration, prisoner-poets sought to fashion desired images and representations of their self, similar to a playful wearing and taking off of masks, dependent on the presence of the other, their audience or interlocutors, in the interest of survival or self-defense. This dissertation investigates how prison poetry increasingly brings into play the poet's personal and autobiographical "I" or "me" over time by examining the works of five French prisoner-poets who prominently illustrated this phenomenon: Charles d'Orléans (1394-1465), François Villon (1431-1463?), Clément Marot (1496-1544), Théophile de Viau (1590-1626), and Paul Verlaine (1844-1896). Its comparative approach situates these poets both in their literary and also in their historical and cultural contexts to underline similarities and contrasts between them. This study additionally adopts a unique trans-century approach as a means to better systematically examine the factors and stimuli behind the gradual emergence of the prisoner-poet's autobiographical "I" or "me" throughout French literature.

INTRODUCTION

1. Prison Poetry and the Emergence of the Autobiographical “I”

As a literary genre, prison writing offers remarkable insight into the capacity of expression brought out by the constraints of confinement. It is also a widely pervasive genre throughout history with countless imprisoned authors choosing to put pen to paper to recount their hardships. Many narratives of imprisonment have been composed in prose, texts more often studied by critics,¹ but this study is instead interested in poetry, a less-explored domain, although a substantial corpus of prison poetry also exists. It adopts a cross-century perspective, as opposed to studies focused on one sole author or on one defined period. The transformative tendencies in poetic expression and their effect on the rendering of personal experiences and self-examination in confinement is an important subject that merits examination.

This dissertation explores the ways in which prison poetry increasingly involves the poet’s personal and autobiographical “I” across time. It examines the works of five French

¹ While not an exhaustive list, some examples of studies previously conducted on prison prose writing include Ioan Davies, *Writers in Prison* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); *Expériences limites de l’épistolaire: lettres d’exil, d’enfermement, de folie*. ed. André Magnan (Paris: Champion, 1993); Jacques Berchtold, *Les prisons du roman (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle). Lectures plurielles et intertextuelles de “Guzman d’Alfarache” à “Jacques le fataliste”* (Genève: Droz, 2000); Gerard A. Hauser, “Prisoners of Conscience and the Counterpublic Sphere of Prison Writing: The Stones that Start the Avalanche,” *Counterpublics and the State*, eds. Asen, Robert and Brouwer, Daniel C. (Albany: State University of New York Press: 2001): 35-58; Joanna Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); “*Le loro prigionie: scrittura dal carcere*,” eds. Anna Maria Babbi and Tobia Zanon (Verona: Fiorini, 2007); William H. Sherman and William J. Sheils, “Preface;” Thomas S. Freeman, “The Rise of Prison Literature;” Molly Murray, “Measured Sentences: Forming Literature in the Early Modern Prison;” Ruth Ahnert, “Writing in the Tower of London during the Reformation, ca. 1530-1558;” Jerome de Groot, “Prison Writing, Writing Prison during the 1640s and 1650s,” and Rivkah Zim, “Writing Behind Bars: Literary Contexts and the Authority of Carceral Experience,” eds. William H. Sherman and William J. Sheils, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72.2 (2009): 127-215, 291-311; Ruth Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Zim, “‘La nuit trouve enfin la clarté’: captivity and life writing in the poetry of Charles d’Orléans and Théophile de Viau,” *The European Journal of Life Writing* 2 (2013): 79-109; Salomon de Izarra, “L’écriture de l’enfermement: de la narration de l’incarcération aux perspectives et illusions d’évasion et de métamorphose” (PhD dissertation, Université François Rabelais de Tours, 2017); Natacha Galvez, “Écrivains en prison et écrits de prison: entre acte de création littéraire, survie personnelle et engagement social,” *Champ pénal/ Penal field* 24 (2021): accessed July 13, 2022. <http://journals.openedition.org/champpenal/13385>.

prisoner-poets that most prominently illustrate this phenomenon: Charles d'Orléans (1394-1465), François Villon (1431-1463?), Clément Marot (1496-1544), Théophile de Viau (1590-1626), and Paul Verlaine (1844-1896).² Its comparative approach situates these poets in their literary as well as in their historical and cultural contexts to trace similarities and contrasts between them. The poetic form exhibits a particular complexity and richness in its aesthetic objectives and formal constraints. Prison writing in verse tends to convey its message or predicament in various tonalities, from lyrical to ironic or humorous, and at times these shifts occur all within the poetry of one author. Personal experience is diffused, redirected, displaced, or condensed through poetic expression, proving and presenting the complexity of the poetic genre. The experiences of imprisonment in the lives of some of its canonical poets has been largely neglected by scholars. This study intends to address and fill this *lacuna*. The prison poems analyzed in this dissertation include ballads, roundels, epistles, odes, sonnets, octets, dizains, elegies, *complaintes*, and *requêtes*.

Previous studies³ on prison literature have emphasized that prison writing expresses a prisoner's desire to address, and rectify, an absent or interrupted communication with the outside world. These studies also generally focus on the liberating and meditative solitude of prison and the psychological trajectory of a prisoner's retreat into themselves in order to (re)discover their inner voice. They highlight the importance of a prisoner's inward search to transmit an inner

² Our corpus covers the period from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century with a chronological gap for the eighteenth century. While André Chénier (1762-1794) is a recognized prisoner-poet figure of the eighteenth century imprisoned and guillotined at the end of the Terror, I decided not to pursue Chénier due to the lack of a clear-cut presence and representation of his, the poet's, autobiographical "I" in most of his prison poetry, with the exception of his poems "La Jeune captive" and "Derniers vers," for instance.

³ See note 1. From this list, most recent studies include the special journal issue *Prison Writings in Early Modern England* (2009), Ahnert's book *Rise of Prison Literature* (2013), Zim's article "'La nuit trouve enfin la clarté'" (2013), Izarra's dissertation "L'écriture de l'enfermement" (2017), and Galvez's article "Écrivains en prison et écrits de prison" (2021).

dialogue of the self from the sequestration of prison: this process turns prison into a hermeneutic space of self-discipline and self-examination. A general tendency is also to focus on specific languages, contexts, and time periods. In the context of Early Modern English literature during Reformation England, for instance, two scholars in particular, Ruth Ahnert and Rivkah Zim, have paved the way in the last two decades for a greater visibility of prison writing, centering on the rise of religious martyr literature and first-person trial narratives. Ahnert importantly underlines the relationship between the prison space and the urge to write or compose, or rather, create, literature. She asserts that when prisoners “write about their occupation in these activities – either explicitly or implicitly – they become part of an active, creative process” and thus, they “practice the prison as a site of literary production.”⁴ Ahnert also crucially stresses the phenomenon of a “flourishing of prison literature” and “the emergence of the prison as an important and influential literary sphere.”⁵ Whereas Ahnert focuses on “dissident prison communities”’ prose texts from the Early Modern English Reformation – “explicit narratives of oppression and rallying of dissident communities against the dominant power” in the “literary, political, and religious landscapes in England”⁶ – this dissertation will instead focus on the French context and offer an alternative perspective and critical study of poetic texts from late medieval until nineteenth-century France.

Furthermore, previous literary studies mostly emphasize the prisoner’s consideration of their writing’s readership outside their prison walls. Zim advances that prisoner-writers demonstrate a need to communicate from behind bars, or what she terms as a “politics of prison

⁴ Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature*, 31, 73.

⁵ Ahnert, 6-7.

⁶ Ahnert, 7.

writing [...] concerned with power and status from late Antiquity onward.”⁷ Zim’s focus remains heavily vested in law, authority, persecution, and oppression in Ahnert’s similar context of religious strife in Early Modern England.⁸ However, Zim also examines the prison poetry of two of this study’s prisoner-poets, Charles d’Orléans and Théophile de Viau. She remarks that these poets’ “affective” prison poetry, as a form of “life writing,” was composed for “specific pragmatic functions” and “calculated strategies of resistance.”⁹ Their poetry was an example of deploying “affective means of rhetorical persuasion in life writing dedicated towards an overall strategy of self-impression for actual self-preservation.”¹⁰ The process by which prisoner-poets’ represent themselves is achieved by blurring boundaries between fictional and autobiographical narrative within the formal constraints of the poetic genre. Prisoner poets chose to communicate their meditations on life, death, and existence, born in part from the need to survive within the prison cell. In addition, poetry offers greater creative, aesthetic possibilities in the intentional manipulation of its structure, for example in a poem’s rhyme, meter, or stanza or verse length.

⁷ Rivkah Zim, “Writing Behind Bars,” 311.

⁸ Another work, Jean-Marc Varaut’s *Poètes en prison: de Charles d’Orléans à Jean Genet* (Paris: Perrin, 1989) explores the “creative” effects of prison in the experiences of a succession of French poets and therefore closely mirrors the scope and intent of this study. While not inherently conceived as a critical study, Varaut’s work nonetheless remains valuable for its emphasis on prison as a location favorable to the creation of poetry, its chronological retelling of the imprisonments of each prisoner-poet examined in this dissertation, and for its emphasis on “carceral poetry as a spiritual exercise” (p. 9). Varaut also intriguingly highlights the lives and works of a number of prisoner-poets from the time period directly following that of this study: Guillaume Apollinaire, Robert Desnos, Jean Cassou, Benjamin Fondane, Jean Cayrol, Max Jacob, Robert Brasillach, Charles Maurras and Jean Genet. However, due to its limited focus on textual and literary analysis, Varaut’s work will not feature prominently in this study.

⁹ Zim, ““La nuit trouve enfin la clarté”” 80.

¹⁰ Zim, 82.

The fairly recent term “life writing”¹¹ aptly describes the process of writing one’s personal experience in prison (prison writing) and creating literature inspired by it. Juliane Prade-Weiss notes the limitations in applying this term because it has no clear criteria or norms, and it intersects and overlaps with autobiographical writing. The forms and modes of writing on one’s own life differ historically, culturally, and individually in so many aspects: in what “life” is, the extent to which it is “one’s own,” what shapes it and has to be taken into account, and the genres and conventions that allow one to give a personal account.¹² Similarly, James Farr and Guido Ruggiero reuse the term “egodocument” first coined by Dutch historian Jacques Presser (1899–1970), to consider life writing “personal narratives as historical sources.” Farr and Ruggiero suggest that egodocuments are subjective, told from the perspective of a unique individual, fashioned in and through available literary conventions and rhetorical strategies, and always have an eye toward an imagined reader or audience. Egodocuments are never simple reflections or reports of experience, but are always mediated by the narrator and elicit an amount of elaboration, or rather, fictionalization.¹³ In his work, Max Saunders does not directly allude to poetic writing. He instead focuses on “the autobiographical novel” and remarks that the term

¹¹ James Farr and Guido Ruggiero note that “the field of Life-Writing” “emerged in the 1980s and has enjoyed enormous popularity in a wide range of disciplines, including cognitive, social, clinical, and counseling psychology, sociology, ethnography, film studies, literature, literary criticism, and many more. Life-Writing focuses on texts that record memories and experiences found in many genres, notably autobiography, memoir, diaries, letters, testimonies, and biography.” Max Saunders similarly adds that life-writing “has been an area of major development in literary studies since the 1970s,” defining it as when “different ways of telling a life story – memoir, autobiography, biography, diary, letters, autobiographical fiction – are discussed together,” and as when “the distinction between biography and autobiography is being deliberately blurred.” *Historicizing Life-Writing and Egodocuments in Early Modern Europe*, eds. James R. Farr and Guido Ruggiero (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 2; Max Saunders, *Self-Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹² Juliane Prade-Weiss, “Finding a Tongue. Autobiography and Infancy in and beyond Joyce’s *Portrait*,” *The European Journal of Life Writing* 6 (2017): 21.

¹³ *Historicizing Life-Writing*, eds. Farr and Ruggiero, 2-3.

“autobiography has a radical ambiguity” as “it can mean a mode of writing that is separate from other forms (drama, poetry, fiction, and so forth),” thus seemingly separating the poetic and autobiographical genres.¹⁴ Nonetheless, he observes that an auto/biography – the fusion of autobiography and biography – cannot be kept entirely apart from fiction. Similarly, this study asserts that a poet is entirely able to simultaneously retell their life story in verse both in the first-person as an autobiography and also by staging themselves as a character in the third person as a biography. Saunders additionally uses the term “autobiografiction,” inspired by autobiographer and literary critic Serge Doubrovsky’s term “autofiction,” to connote more clearly the literary relationship between fiction and a self’s autobiography, rather than between fiction and a self.¹⁵ When a poet’s goal is self-preservation and persuasion, as often seen in the prison poetry to be examined here, it is essentially performative. It (re)introduces ideas of fictionality and creativity, resulting in hybrid self-representations where imagination seeps into autobiography. The prisoner-poet “makes themselves knowable,” as Saunders posits, to their reader(s) and “produces themselves as a subject of knowledge.”¹⁶

When studying prison poetry, we must keep in mind two premises. First, what are the implications of prison experience on poetic output? Second, does the poetic voice amplify language’s transformative and transmutative dimension in a broader way? In that regard, the phenomenon of self-fashioning becomes particularly relevant. According to Stephen Greenblatt,

¹⁴ Saunders, *Self-Impression*, 4.

¹⁵ Doubrovsky coined the term “autofiction” when it was used on the back cover of his 1977 novel *Fils*: “fiction, d’évènements et de faits strictement réels; si l’on veut, ‘autofiction’ [...]” Serge Doubrovsky, *Fils* (Paris: Galilée, 1977); *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction. Volume 1: Theory and Concepts*, ed. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 2;

¹⁶ *Self-Impression*, 6-7.

particularly in the sixteenth-century, “there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process.”¹⁷ Self-fashioning is a “single, complex process” that allows us to understand how “social and literary identities were formed” and “the consequences for human expression – for the ‘I’ – of a specific form of power, power at once localized in specific institutions – the court, the church, the colonial administration, the patriarchal family – and diffused in ideological structures of meaning, characteristic modes of expression, recurrent narrative patterns.”¹⁸ Ullrich Langer similarly elaborates on the Renaissance notion of the “rhetorical self:” “When this rhetorical notion of a person is self-expressed or self-constituted, it becomes a rhetorical notion of a ‘self.’ It is not centered on what is unique to the self. Instead, it is formed by what is measurable in relation to other persons. A rhetorical self possesses attributes, understood as virtues, that are shared with others, or attributes whose contours are derived from emulation with, or imitation of, predecessors.”¹⁹

Self-fashioning subsequently introduces to the idea of playfulness: it implies masks, dissimulation, and the ability to stage oneself as another. The prisoner-poets studied here clothe themselves with various *personae* and masks depending on their prison poems’ real or imagined recipients. The poems’ at times judicial format or content recalls procedural codes and maneuvering found in sentencing and trials during imprisonment. The pronouncing of the poet’s “I” therefore has an essentially performative dimension: the “I” or “me” is always presented in juxta/opposition to the “you” of the recipient or always defines itself in relation to a “us” or

¹⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 2.

¹⁸ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 6.

¹⁹ Ullrich Langer, “Is There a Self in Renaissance Lyric?” *Représentations de soi à la Renaissance. Representing the Self in the Renaissance*, eds. Véronique Ferrer, Eugenio Refini, and Luc Vaillancourt (Paris: Hermann, 2023).

“them.” The plurality of the “I” is both performance and negotiation depending on external factors and circumstances, such as the poet’s relationship as a victim to the recipient, social reputation, literary renown, or posterity. Prisoner-poets stage themselves according to their relationships with an “other” or “others” through speech acts that utilize an intricate interplay of pronouns.

These two premises explain the prisoner-poet’s return to the self and result in a reorientation towards an “I,” an interior experience, and borrowing a rhetoric and tonality traditionally found in poetic forms such as the *complainte*: a poem that laments or protests unrequited love or tells of personal misfortune, misery, or injustice.²⁰ Prisoner-poets either produced original portrayals or fell back upon accepted stereotyped imagery in their presentation of their prison environments. For example, while Charles d’Orléans’s poems feature intimate, personified objects from everyday life that are part of his captive space, Villon, Marot, and Théophile emphasize the dark, putrid, and deathly abyss of prison. Among prison poets, therefore, lyric poetry is a genre privileged for the expression of intimate feelings that emanate from the poet’s “I” or “me”.

Prisoner-poets indeed actively engaged in strategies of self-preservation: their prison poetry bears witness to their attempts through literature to secure their freedom and avoid death. An alternative perspective that shifts away from the more-frequently analyzed literary strategies (and communities) of resistance and of political survival will prove beneficial to understanding poets’ gravitation toward the poetic genre, rather than to prose, to recount their episodes of imprisonment. Likewise, moving toward a discussion on prisoner-poets’ readiness to self-identification and autobiographical perspective through their texts’ “I” will help us frame the

²⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. “Complaint,” last modified November 16, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/art/complaint-literature>.

importance and power of the poetic form to transmit the heightened emotivity of incarceration and sequestration. As a result, this dissertation strives to discover what precisely constitutes the poetic “I” who is speaking inside these prison poems and in what modes it expresses itself. Its goal is also to trace the growing presence of an autobiographical “I” across literary history as a token of greater authenticity and authority.

2. Methodology

Our exploration of French poems from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries will involve a combination of close reading and historical contextualization. We will trace the emergence of the autobiographical “I” by paying close attention to the formal features of the poetic texts and the poets’ strategies of self-representation. The close reading this study employs brings into conversation previous critical studies on prison literature, and more specifically prison poetry, both as a point of reference and as a starting point for our hypotheses on the increased presence of the author’s “I”. In addition, the historical contextualization we undertake encompasses a chronological examination of French prison poems in this selected period, which allows us to trace the emergence of autobiographical poetry through prisoner-poets’ development of self-preserving persuasive strategies.

Several critical works serve as a foundation and inspiration for our examination of the personal, autobiographical “I” that increasingly became prevalent in prison poetry across this period. In order to better organize our inclusion and brief presentation of these critical works here, we start with those who specifically address prison poetry. We next move to those who examine the field of prison literature as a whole from the Middle Ages through the Early Modern period. Finally, we consider those who serve as a useful reference and backdrop for either the

prison conditions conducive to producing such unique and intimate literature like poetry, or for the growing autobiographical nature of prison poetry and the corresponding imagery that poets chose to represent their “I” or “me”.

Perhaps most prominently, Victor Brombert’s *La prison romantique* (1975) is one of the few studies that examine the relationship between isolation, confinement, and poetic fruition in the French literary context. According to Brombert, the prison cell is a place of suffering but also a place of protection, dreaming, freedom, and protective enclosure as found in numerous folk and fairy tales throughout literary history.²¹ Brombert suggests that the act of imprisonment entails two simultaneous yet opposing movements within the prisoner: “the one toward an inner center (a search for identity, knowledge, the operations of memory); the other toward a transcending outside which corresponds to the joys of the imagination and the *ecstasy* of spiritual escape.”²² Brombert stipulates that “a wide range of mediating and stereotyped images links the dream-prisoner to what lies beyond the symbolic walls: windows, hills, clouds, birds – even water,”²³ all which evoke ideas of vastness, open space, and free movement. He asserts that prison walls “ask to be scaled” and “the eye seeks the chink, measures the distance.”²⁴ For prisoners, “neither the island nor the narrowest of cells represents an obstacle, in metaphoric terms,” and “nothing appears more constant than the notion of freedom associated with the cell – freedom, as it were, from the imperatives of time and space” according to what Brombert names

²¹ Victor Brombert, *La prison romantique. Essai sur l’imaginaire* (Paris: José Corti, 1975), 16.

²² Victor Brombert, *The Romantic Prison. The French Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 10.

²³ Brombert, *The Romantic Prison*, 13.

²⁴ “Le mur appelle l’escalade.” Brombert, *La prison romantique*, 16; *The Romantic Prison*, 11.

“the dynamics of escape (and escapism).”²⁵ As he remarks, for prisoner-poets as a whole, the tragic prison becomes a beneficial one: “the link between visible loss and secret victory underlies the prison theme. It is not unrelated to the Christian notion of lost paradise and *felix culpa*.”²⁶ Similarly, “Western literature provides countless illustrations of the salvational virtue of the prison cell” where the prisoner “discovers that a ‘new man’ has risen up in him as he confronts the peeling walls that enclose him.”²⁷ The prisoner seeks spiritual atonement through imagination: “salvation through enclosure, insight into darkness – the paradox is rooted in the age-old symbol of the captive soul, in the religious notion of a happy captivity.”²⁸ The closed space of prison is also a place of artistic creation through what Brombert terms as the “brain-jail:” “what the brain of the poet holds locked up preciously is nothing less than the infinite dimension of poetry and the secret of the world.”²⁹ In this sense, “poetry *becomes* prison, just as the mind (more specifically the skull) becomes the substitute for the abstract notion of closed space.”³⁰ Examining authors such as Stendhal, Victor Hugo, Gérard de Nerval, Charles Baudelaire, and Huysmans, Brombert attributes poetic inspiration gained from the experience of imprisonment to the Romantic movement’s tenets and aesthetics of the tension between psychological and physical captivity. The chronology of our corpus instead requires a reflection

²⁵ “Une poétique de l’évasion.” Brombert, *La prison romantique*, 17; *The Romantic Prison*, 11.

²⁶ *The Romantic Prison*, 12.

²⁷ “Assoiffé de pureté, il découvre qu’un ‘nouvel homme’ s’est levé en lui entre les quatre murs qui le confinent.” *La prison romantique*, 17-18; *The Romantic Prison*, 13.

²⁸ *La prison romantique*, 19; *The Romantic Prison*, 17.

²⁹ “Le cerveau-cachot.” *La prison romantique*, 19; *La prison romantique*, 16.

³⁰ *La prison romantique*, 16.

upon why earlier poets used poetry to express their condition and represent themselves in a way that departs from Romantic modes of self-representation.

Johanna Summers's *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography* (2004) importantly emphasizes the autobiographical dimension of prison literature. The "shared experience of alienation," where "the prisoner is objected to, subject to, and opposed by others who may decide his fate," contributes to what Summers terms as a prisoner's literary self-portrayal or "self-inscription."³¹ Summers also emphasizes the "inherent credibility in writing from prison," underlining the influence of prior philosophical and Early Christian models and traditions of imprisoned authors on medieval prisoner-writers.³² Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (ca. 523 AD)³³ established an "evolving tradition rather than a fixed text" and a "legacy" of Boethius's "imprisoned self," contributing to the late-medieval conceptualization of the *Consolation* as "an autobiographical account of an honorable public servant."³⁴ Summer indicates that literary self-inscriptions attempt "to overturn the impotency of the author's imprisonment – to turn it to advantage in portraying the author as 'purified' by experience of incarceration."³⁵ She also stipulates that literary self-inscriptions are caused by "persuasive"

³¹ Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 3.

³² Summers, 4.

³³ Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (ca. 480-ca. 525) was an intellectual allied by birth, upbringing, and marriage with the last patrician families of ancient Rome. While holding public office, he was charged with treason, leading to his disgrace, exile, and execution at Pavia. Before his death, he composed the *Consolation of Philosophy*. Through its authorial persona of a condemned prisoner, it offers readers a defense of Boethius's ideas of Roman culture and civilization: self-sufficiency, religious devotion, book learning, imitation of ancient Greek ideals, and a strong tradition of public service. Rivkah Zim, *The Consolations of Writing. Literary Strategies of Resistance from Boethius to Primo Levi* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 21-23.

³⁴ Summers, 13, 18.

³⁵ Summers, 4.

political motivations and alludes to the literary spark and fruition stemming from the experience of imprisonment. The isolation, powerlessness, and persecution that an author might profess in an autobiographical work is enhanced by their imprisoned state, which forges a stronger link between subjectivity and subjection as the author “attempts to ‘market’ his character and write himself out of confinement and subjection into favor.”³⁶ While Summer’s examples and field of focus are limited to medieval English prose prison writing and occasional poems, her study importantly emphasizes the autobiographical nature of prison literature, especially during the more obscure literary late medieval period that encompasses Charles d’Orléans and François Villon.

Other key studies shed light on the deliberate expression of a prisoner-poet’s singular authorial voice that emerges from the (larger) relationship between confinement or constraint and writing. Jacques Berchtold’s *Les prisons du roman (XVIIe-XVIIIe)* (2000) offers an important and detailed perspective on the research conducted on literary carceral representation. Berchtold discerns how the “prison stay” became the object of romantic literary representations, elaborating that a certain “systematic description of the prison space” emerged that, at its base, pitted a novel’s protagonist against the frightening carceral environment. He details how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prison novelists felt a “threat of incarceration” or “worry of avoiding prison.”³⁷ and as a result, portrayed mobility and fixity through the spaces and characters they create in their novels, such as Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Charles Sorel’s *Histoire comique de Francion*, Cyrano de Bergerac’s *L’Autre monde*, Alain-René Lesage’s *Gil Blas*, Abbé Prévost’s *Manon Lescaut*, Voltaire’s *Candide*, and Diderot’s *Jacques le*

³⁶ Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 23.

³⁷ Berchtold, *Les prisons du roman*, 18-19.

Fataliste. In these novels, the experience of incarceration appears as a sort of constant yet obligatory step in the errant journey of their protagonists or heroes.³⁸ Berchtold articulates how the “remarkable link” between prison and novels also involves a “reflection on creative freedom,” blurring the boundary between claustrophobia and claustrophilia (the desire to be confined).³⁹ Berchtold’s stipulations prove fundamental in understanding this three-way link between prison, writing, and creativity.

Michel Foucault’s seminal work on prison, *Surveiller et punir* (1975), notably defines the carceral space and examines the effects of incarceration on the mind and body of the individual prisoner, providing useful support for an examination of how the prisoner-poet calls upon poetic expression to illustrate such effects.⁴⁰ The poetic conceptualization of this prison space in the poetry we analyze also precludes an evocation of a space inhabited by the poet’s “I” or “me.” To this end, Gaston Bachelard’s *La poétique de l’espace* (1958) helps decrypt the valorization and use of imagery relating to the enclosed space of prison among prisoner-poets. Prison represents what Bachelard describes as an imagined and privileged site of dreaming and safety, whose most fundamental role is that of a shelter and abode: any truly lived space can transform into a dwelling inside which, as humans, “we comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories, while leaving them their original value as

³⁸ Berchtold, *Les prisons du roman*, 747.

³⁹ Berchtold, 752.

⁴⁰ Foucault focuses on prison as an institution and judicial tool for punishment: “Cet espace clos, découpé, surveillé en tous ses points, où les individus sont insérés en une place fixe, où les moindres mouvements sont contrôlés, où tous les événements sont enregistrés, où un travail interrompu d’écriture relie le centre et la périphérie, où le pouvoir s’exerce sans partage, selon une figure hiérarchique continue, où chaque individu est constamment repéré, examiné et distribué entre les vivants, les malades et les morts – tout cela constitue un modèle compact du dispositif disciplinaire.” Foucault’s sources are mostly judicial (archives) and provide insight into an array of primary sources that had long been overlooked. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 230.

images.”⁴¹ Each individual, according to Bachelard, possesses a “dream house:” “a dreamer of refuges dreams of a hut, of a nest, or of nooks and corners in which he would like to hide away, like an animal in its hole. In this way, he lives in a region that is beyond human images.”⁴² Poets similarly draw their audience to the center of the house, “as though to a center of magnetic force, into a major zone of protection” in a phenomenon that Bachelard calls the “hut dream.”⁴³

Bachelard compares this hut to a mother’s womb or embrace, uniting the “Mother image and the House image,” because the “house acquires the physical and moral energy of a human body” and “clings to its inhabitant and becomes the cell of a body with its walls close together”⁴⁴ The “dream house” is juxtaposed with “intimate immensity:” Bachelard posits that embracing immensity “permits us to be elsewhere, in an absolute elsewhere that bars the way to the forces that hold us imprisoned in the ‘here’.”⁴⁵ In their prison poetry, prisoner-poets articulate wide and vast spaces, such as water (the sea), the sky, and expansive countryside landscapes, as alluded to by Brombert. In this sense, the desire for vastness appears primarily as a phenomenon of psychological and affective compensation. Bachelard’s work is thus most beneficial to understanding the relationship between (imagined) enclosed spaces and creativity in prison poetry through his dialectic of the “inside-outside.”⁴⁶ Since “to make inside concrete and outside

⁴¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 6.

⁴² “Une maison du souvenir-songe,” “un au-delà.” Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l’espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), 45; *The Poetics of Space*, 30.

⁴³ “Rêve de hutte.” Bachelard, *La poétique de l’espace*, 45; *The Poetics of Space*, 31.

⁴⁴ *The Poetics of Space*, 46.

⁴⁵ *The Poetics of Space*, 207.

⁴⁶ “Dedans-dehors.” *La poétique de l’espace*, 20; *The Poetics of Space*, 215.

vast is the first task, the first problem, it would seem, of an anthropology of the imagination,”⁴⁷ a prisoner-poet’s imagination fashions the world outside their prison cell as open splendor and the world inside it as a dark abyss of tunnels and caverns. While Bachelard does not dedicate further attention or analysis to the phenomenon of composing poetry in prison, he usefully deconstructs the psychology behind poets’ privileging of certain images in situations such as imprisonment.

Finally, given the role and place of the author-narrator-character in prison poetry, some passages of specific prison poems can be considered autobiographical. Such a possibility leads to a reevaluation of what limits and constraints personal writing and the representation of the “I” or “me” exhibit when expressed through poetic forms. This possibility also opens a debate on how to make sense of the aesthetic effect that is sought and the influence of tradition when one sets out to discern the “authentic” expression of poets’ reactions to incarceration. Can we affirm, in certain cases, that the “poetic” prevails over “confession” or lamentation? One example among the prisoner-poets examined in this study is Théophile de Viau, who as a court poet and pamphleteer equally produced poetic and prose works to communicate his ordeal of imprisonment. As the chapter devoted to his poetry explores, Théophile saw different opportunities for aesthetic expression and rhetorical device in each genre depending on the context and on what reader(s) he envisioned for each work. He chose poetry to create an intimate conversation with loved ones (“Lettre de Théophile à son frère”) and the powerful (“Requête de Théophile au Roi”) as a persuasive tool to obtain safety. By contrast, his prose pamphlet works (“Apologie de Théophile,” “Apologie au Roi,” “Theophilus in carcere”) typically present and deliver a singular defense or plea of his innocence. Both constitute rhetorical strategies, but retain different aesthetic goals and take different aesthetic forms.

⁴⁷ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 194.

In some ways, prison poetry can be associated with “autoportraits,” a category that could be applied to Summer’s notion of “literary self-inscription” in prison literature. Anne-Marie Monluçon, Agatha Salha, and Brigitte Ferrato-Combe additionally introduce the terms “biographical fictions” and “fictive biographies” to describe the imaginary aspects of real peoples’ biographies or fictional characters’ life stories that take the form and conventions of the biographical genre.⁴⁸ While the authorial intent and design in some of the prison poetry examined here could align with biographical fictions, it also parallels autoportrait. Other recent studies have investigated the forms of personal expression across literature, especially in the French context,⁴⁹ but it is nonetheless necessary to situate prison poetry outside the two genres (autobiography, autoportrait) above, or rather, to emphasize the difficulty of identifying prison poetry under either of them.

3. Chapter Outline

Our study of these five prisoner-poets’ works centers around the principal question of exploring the gradual emergence of the author’s personal and autobiographical “I” or “me” in prison poetry across the centuries. Chapter One focuses on Charles d’Orléans, a French duke and prince captured at the celebrated battle of Agincourt (1415) and held captive for ransom in England for twenty-five years. Charles is perhaps one of the first authors of the medieval period to directly claim ownership and relation to the works he composed. Charles initiates a shift in

⁴⁸ *Fictions biographiques. XIX-XXIe siècles*, eds. Anne-Marie Monluçon, Agatha Salha, and Brigitte Ferrato-Combe (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2007), 8-10.

⁴⁹ See, among others, *Les enJEux de l’autobiographie dans les littératures de langue française*, eds. Susanne Gehrmann and Claudia Gronemann (Paris: Harmattan, 2006); *Fiction and Autobiography: Modes and Models of Interaction*, eds. Sabine Coelsch-Foisner and Wolfgang Görtzschacher (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2006); *Fictions biographiques. XIX-XXIe siècles*, eds. Monluçon, Salha, and Ferrato-Combe; Ann Jefferson, *Biography and the Question of Literature in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); *Modernism and Autobiography*, eds. Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

self-identification as poet and author from overt allegory and metaphor to a biographical stipulation on the conditions of his captivity and the question of his ransom. This can notably be seen in the epistolary ballades addressed to his brother and fellow Agincourt prisoner, Jean de Bourbon. Charles's poetry is coded in a chivalric language of conduct and warfare, through which he chooses to narrate his experience of prison. Charles d'Orléans's prison poetry features several recurring themes such as misfortune, isolation, ageing, and self-examination, which he delivers through allegorical and chivalric expressions drawn from the medieval courtly tradition in order to convey his inner, autobiographical reflections.

Chapter Two explores the imprisonment of clerical student-turned-vagabond and petty street criminal François Villon in 1461. Incarcerated by ecclesiastical authorities, his imprisonment was markedly different from Charles d'Orléans's captivity in England as it was *dure prison*. His prison poetry conveys his physical suffering and always reverts to the question of life or death, where he equates prison with death and freedom with life. It also conceptualizes prison as an allegory to symbolize and reflect his feelings of being cut off from humanity and society. Villon calls out for pity in his prison poetry – the only thing the class of thieves, courtesans, and other marginalized of medieval society such as himself can give him – as they do not have the power or influence of the nobility to help liberate him. Tensions between the interior and the exterior characterize Villon's prison poetry as a “time warp:” Villon is separated from normal life which continues beyond his prison walls and to which he desperately seeks to return. Secular and religious tensions are also embedded in his poetry, concerning ecclesiastics who judge secular matters in secular terms and assume God's authority, when such judgement should be left to God. But unlike Charles d'Orléans, Villon does not draw upon the tradition of

larger allegory, metaphorical symbolism, or personified characters to communicate his experience of prison.

Chapter Three focuses on the poems written by King François I's *valet de chambre* and court poet Clément Marot during his incarceration in 1526. Marot became embroiled in the fractious advent of Protestantism, finding himself imprisoned by (Catholic) religious authorities for supposedly violating the Lenten obligation of abstaining from eating meat. His prison poetry tends to utilize irony and mockery to express the injustice of his imprisonment, but also to express his anger of betrayal by those in positions of power (at court) whom he regarded as close. Marot's poems seemingly juxtapose spiritual notions and preoccupations of a prison of earthly, mortal life and the freedom of eternal life in Heaven. Marot's journey from his native Cahors in southern France to Paris was also one from captivity to liberty. His prison poetry additionally communicates a sense of equality and duty. Since his king and master François I was held captive at the same time in Madrid after being captured by Charles V's forces of the Holy Roman Empire during his defeat at the battle of Pavia in 1525, it is right that he as his servant should remain in prison as well.

Chapter Four focuses on the incarceration of Théophile de Viau from 1624 to 1625, a Protestant-born court poet to Louis XIII and participant (and possible figurehead) of France's first literary and philosophical *libertin* movement. Like in the case of Marot, religious authorities accused him of blasphemy after the publication of his *Parnasse satyrique* (1622). Théophile's prison poetry brings into question the link between prison and consolation, a tradition established by, and embodied in, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. Similar to Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, his experience in prison may have taken the form of a conversion narrative in which he attempts to find a new path and life. Yet, Augustinian repentance and regret are absent from

his prison poetry. Théophile's poetry conveys numerous rhetorical tools and strategies of self-preservation and self-advocacy, underlining how poetic creation can be adapted to a personal mission of self-defense.

Finally, Chapter Five deals with the imprisonment of self-proclaimed *poète maudit* and melancholic Saturnian Paul Verlaine. Verlaine was imprisoned for shooting and wounding his lover, companion, and fellow poet Arthur Rimbaud during an altercation in Brussels in July 1873. His prison poetry evidences his reality and experience of imprisonment that was characterized by melancholy, self-reflection, and self-examination. He found solace in “the best of castles,” his second prison in Mons, and embraced his solitude in its structured and safe environment. Verlaine attempted to confront and resolve his identity crisis from his chaotic pre-prison life in his poems. Whereas the work of the other prisoner-poets associate prison with suffering and the denial of freely expressing one's self, for Verlaine, prison appears to be a safe haven. It expressed not only a crisis, but also the opportunity to heal his broken identity. Near the end of his incarceration, his poetry references his return to Catholicism, in particular on the subject of his confessions and repentance. Verlaine transformed and erected his autobiographical poetic text into a Belgian “adventure,” (re)casting a fictionalized image of himself emerging transformed, spiritually and physically, from his “prison-cave” where, instead of suffering, he experienced a life of meditation and adequate comfort.

This dissertation aims therefore at examining the dynamic between the limitations and constraints of prison and the poetic creativity it inspires. The works of these five prisoner poets illustrate the relationship between confinement or clausturation and literary fruition or effusion in

the creation of poetry. For these five writers composing poems in prison offered a way to confront or overcome one's imprisoned state. Our objective is to build upon alternative perspectives to previous studies that mostly focused on prison prose writing. Furthermore, the focus on French prison writing complements previous studies dominated by the English literary tradition. The poetic genre is both complex and rich on account of its aestheticism, form, tonalities, descriptiveness, and lyricism, and as a result, prison experiences expressed through poetry bring to the fore newer questions and possibilities. The originality of this study's approach lies in its strategy of textual and comparative analysis conducted among these poets. It dedicates itself to investigating the ways in which a prisoner-poet's autobiographical "I" or "me" gradually became more apparent and how poetry became a privileged medium considered more appealing and suited to communicate experiences of imprisonment than other literary genres.

CHAPTER ONE. CHARLES D'ORLÉANS: THE RISE OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL *JE*

I. Introduction

The experience of the author is a presence long felt in modern literature but uncertain in medieval literature, and even more uncertain in medieval poetry. Due to its physical constraint, solitude, and passivity, prison poetry tends to offer a clearer picture of the author's experiences. However, poetry that alludes to metaphorical imprisonment or constraint should be separated from actual lived experiences of imprisonment.¹ Michel Zink doubts whether all poetry can be fully understood apart from a real, lived experience.² He stipulates that it therefore may not be a fruitless endeavor to judge whether or not the removal of this experience would alter the poem's meaning.³ Zink advances that the relationship between poetry and prison is fundamental, a relationship which is impacted by "experiencing the world" both inside and outside of the prison cell.⁴ One can read prison poetry in its fullest richness by taking into serious consideration both

¹ Zink initially questions whether there exists a relationship between prison and poetry which is not contingent but necessary. Such relationship is defined not by an unforeseen biographical event or at the whim of inspiration, but by the very nature of each. He responds that this relationship exists and is double: of both opposition and of analogy. A relationship of opposition, because "la poésie est une présence au monde, tandis que la prison est un retranchement du monde. Il y a, dans le rapport au monde qu'instaure la poésie, quelque chose d'immédiat et de fusionnel, quelque chose qui appartient à la continuité de l'être, à sa réalité, et non à la distance de la fiction et de la représentation." A relationship of analogy, because "les mots sont une présence faite d'absence, que l'effort de la poésie vise à transmuier en 'réelle présence' [...] De son côté, la prison exacerbe les substituts de l'inatteignable présence. L'intensité de l'expérience qu'elle peut constituer tient à son vide même." Michel Zink, "La prison et la nature de la poésie," in *"Le loro prigionieri: scritture dal carcere"*, eds. Babbi and Zanon, 1-2.

² While poetry in general is often largely based on fantasy and association, Zink asserts nonetheless that "l'œuvre ne peut se comprendre sans l'homme et [...] la poésie ne peut se nourrir que d'une expérience réelle." Zink, "La prison et la nature de la poésie," 2.

³ "Est-il absurde de chercher dans une œuvre poétique la trace d'une expérience aussi traumatisante d'arrachement au monde que l'emprisonnement et de repérer ce qui disparaîtrait à coup sûr de cette œuvre sans cette expérience?" Zink, 2.

⁴ "Le retranchement du monde entre les murs de la prison n'exclut pas l'expérience immédiate du monde qu'est la poésie." However, Zink signals that this "world" differs according to each of the two relationships he outlines. If words are a presence made out of absence, he notes, then poetry is a metaphor of prison. Conversely, if poetry enables an ontological experience of the world, nothing would be more real than it, and it is prison which

prison and poetry, and one can better comprehend prison poetry's diversity through its link to the experience of imprisonment and its effects of confinement on the individual prisoner. This chapter aims to illustrate the emergence of medieval autobiographical poetry through French prince, duke, and poet Charles d'Orléans's (1394-1465) retelling of his captivity. Following King Henry V's invasion of France in 1415, Charles was one of the nobles summoned to command the French forces to confront the English army. Following the catastrophic defeat in the battle of Agincourt, Charles was captured and taken prisoner.⁵ According to historical accounts, the English found and pulled Charles alive from under a heap of dead bodies while they stripped fallen French knights of their armor, clothes, and possessions.⁶ Henry V brought Charles with his army back to England alongside other noble French prisoners – his cousin Jean duc de Bourbon, the Contes d'Eu, de Vendôme, and de Richemont, and Maréchal Boucicaut – where he was held captive for twenty-five years. This chapter seeks to explore both where and in what ways his carceral experience inspired autobiographical perspective in his poetry. This chapter also seeks to underline how Charles deploys combinations of allegory, personification, and autobiographical identification to communicate his experience of prison, which fostered an inward reflection and a rediscovery of his inner self. Charles's prison poetry demonstrates not

could be a metaphor, not of poetry, but of missing it, of a lack of poetry. Zink, "La prison et la nature de la poésie," 2-3.

⁵ The custom and practice of capturing enemy prisoners following a victory on the battlefield during the late medieval period and throughout the Hundred Years' War was a grim yet opportunistic practice. Victorious armies executed less wealthy prisoners or abandoned them after they swore to never fight again. However, those of high rank, status, and ultimately wealth were retained and held for ransom, often to the great expense of the captor, who hoped to gain much more in return for such the payment. The practice of ransoming noble and wealthy captives represented the possibility of a fortune to the noble family charged with their keeping. It was an asset kept within and passed down through generations of that family, and therefore keepers were driven to retain these prisoners for as long as possible in order to extract the greatest ransom payment possible. Pierre Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans* (Paris: Champion, 1969), 158-159.

⁶ Mary-Jo Arn, *Fortunes Stabilnes: Charles of Orleans's English Book of Love* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994), 13; Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 152; Enid McLeod, *Charles of Orleans, Prince and Poet* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), 129.

only the presence of the autobiographical among the allegorical, but also highlights how both coexisted.

Claudio Galderisi refers to the absence of a consideration of real, biographical events behind the numerous allusions to prison and imprisonment in medieval literature, which often remain on the level of simple allegory.⁷ According to him, the prisoner must not be separated from their biographical context in order to preserve the primal relationship between literature and lived experience. Authority, authorship, and (re)semblance play important roles in literary production. Completely severing the subject or metaphor of prison in a poem from its biographical referent presents a real risk, renewing the debate between real autobiographical perspective and poetic fantasy and resemblance.⁸ Galderisi's remarks are poignant for medieval literature, as during this period it is difficult to associate a work with its author, and therefore with its biographical and historical context, due to the lack of information and written record. Starting in the late Middle Ages, the biographical begins to emerge as an important element of prison poetry. Charles is one of the first authors of the medieval period to directly claim ownership in relation to the works he produces. According to Paul Zumthor, Charles's poetry marks the final, finished product of an entire medieval literary tradition, beginning with the *chants* of the *trouvères* and *troubadours* to his autobiographical poems, some of the first of their kind.⁹ Charles simultaneously writes to himself, as if to constitute some sort of diary, as well as

⁷ "Ils ne sont pas plutôt l'énième représentation d'un thème littéraire, d'une allégorisation sans fondement biographique particulier." Claudio Galderisi, "De la prison Dedalus à la mélancolie de la captivité anglaise. Charles d'Orléans en la prison de poésie," in *Le loro prigioni*, eds. Babbi and Zanon, 98.

⁸ "Dissocier le sujet ou la métaphore de la prison de son éventuel biographème [...] paraît problématique: le risque c'est de faire ressurgir l'éternel débat du vrai autobiographique et de sa vraisemblance poétique." Galderisi, "De la prison Dedalus," 99.

⁹ Zumthor teases out this claim on autobiography in medieval poetry as an "end product" of the entire genre and time period, writing "l'œuvre de Charles d'Orléans marque en cela un aboutissement: moins une fin qu'une convergence, à très long terme, de toutes les traditions issues des formes les plus anciennes du chant. Le

to an audience whom he clearly designates – his wife Bonne d’Armagnac (or de Berry), his cousin, Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne – or not. This autobiographical identification through which Charles d’Orléans the poet identifies as Charles d’Orléans the prince and the author of his poems affirms the importance of personal experience in not only medieval literature but also in medieval poetry. Borrowing the personifications and themes of earlier allegories, such as Guillaume de Lorris’s and Jean de Meung’s *Roman de la rose* (c. 1230-1280), Mary-Jo Arn and John Fox note that Charles deploys “fascinating” poetic devices that late medieval French narrative took from the lyric: a complex first-person voice, identified with the poet by use of the poet’s proper name¹⁰ or individual attributes but set within an imaginary realm peopled by mythic figures and personifications.¹¹ Norma Goodrich also observes the presence of (self-)identification in Charles’s poetry. She speculates that the poet’s concurrent need and tendency to portray himself intimately should perhaps be understood not so much as an isolated phenomenon, but rather as a perceivable trend throughout the fifteenth century. Such trend is also linked to a growing acceptance of the poet’s inner self as a subject suitable to poetry.¹² Arn and Fox comment that the simultaneously authorial and figurative *je* of Charles’s poems are

poète s’est enfin identifié avec le Prince: l’auteur de la ballade, avec celui à qui s’adresse l’envoi.” Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 279.

¹⁰ Explicit identifications of Charles’s full name and title appear in his *Requête* (“Supplie presentement, / [...] Charles, le duc d’Orlians [...]”), his *Quittance dessus dicte* (“Après qu’avons oy la plainte / De Charles, le duc d’Orlians [...]”), and to close out his “letter” to “Amour, Prince de mondaine douceur” in his *Songe en complainte* (“Le bien vostre, Charles, duc d’Orlians, / Qui jadis fut l’un de voz vrais servans”). *Charles d’Orléans. Poésies I: La retenue d’amours, ballades, chansons, complaintes et caroles*, ed. Pierre Champion (Paris: Champion, 1923; 1982), 105, vv. 179-181; 112, vv. 374-375; 118, vv. 549-550; Norma L. Goodrich, *Charles d’Orléans. A Study of Themes in His French and in His English Poetry* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), 37-38, 43.

¹¹ *Poetry of Charles d’Orléans and His Circle. A Critical Edition of BnF MS. Fr. 25458, Charles d’Orléans’s Personal Manuscript*, eds. John Fox and Mary-Jo Arn, trans. R. Barton Palmer (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS) and Brepols, 2010), xlv.

¹² Goodrich, *A Study of Themes*, 35-36.

echoed in the names of personifications in a way that shows a fluidity in identity, at times representing figures with dramatic agency and at other times slipping back into abstract nouns: for example, the “shadowy” presence of m/Melancholy, “looming” with unprecedented frequency over his poems.¹³ Goodrich adds that Charles’s assertions of authorship and search for self-definition seem to be ways in which he accepted responsibility for his creation, recognized the complexity of his own nature, and manifested his vitality and vulnerability.¹⁴ Charles’s poems likely not only represented an exercise of self-reflection, but also a heuristic exercise of self-awareness and self-discovery. Galderisi affirms that Charles’s prison poetry gradually became both “une forme de discours autoscopique sur la jeunesse” and a mode of apprehension on the world and on the present.¹⁵ Commentary on ageing, the natural passage of time, and current events appear in much lyric poetry by the fifteenth century, albeit through an allegorical prism. Charles’s anxiety on his world and on his experience of ageing are inexplicably tied to his captivity. He comments how he spars with old age in a game of tennis and frets whether his ransom will ever be met.

In what follows, I examine five of Charles’s *ballades* from his English captivity to show the appearance of the autobiographical among the allegorical. The *ballade* “Je fu en fleur ou

¹³ *Poetry of Charles d’Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, xlv.

¹⁴ Goodrich finds her stipulation in similar “modern-day” existential questioning in a passage by Jean-Paul Sartre, who comments on the need to belong to one’s world and process of one’s creation: “Un des principaux motifs de la création artistique est certainement le besoin de nous sentir essentiels par rapport au monde [...] en imposant l’unité de l’esprit à la diversité de la chose, j’ai conscience de les produire, c’est-à-dire que je me sens essentiel par rapport à ma création.” Sartre further comments on the writer’s unavoidable subjectivity – he reveals his own knowledge, his own wishes, and in short, himself – in his work (“object”): “Ainsi l’écrivain ne rencontre partout que *son* savoir, *sa* volonté, *ses* projets, bref lui-même; il ne touche jamais qu’à sa propre subjectivité, l’objet qu’il crée est hors d’atteinte, il ne le crée pas *pour lui*.” Goodrich, *A Study of Themes*, 43; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu’est-ce que la littérature? Situations II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 90, 92-93.

¹⁵ Claudio Galderisi. “*En regardant vers le païs de France.*” *Charles d’Orléans: une poésie des présents* (Orléans: Paradigme, 2007), 44.

temps passé d'enfance" reveals the sudden rupture of captivity and exile from France through a complex metaphor comparing the poet to a green, unripe fruit that was unjustly cut down from the tree and left to rot. The *ballade* "Cueur, trop es plain de folie" allegorically stages a confrontation between his personified heart and its personified abstractions, and jailers, Worry and Care. The *ballade* "Quant je suis couschié en mon lit" continues this staging of his personified heart, whose sobbing (longing for his "lady" and France) now prevents the poet from sleeping. The *ballade* "Nouvelles ont couru en France" takes on a more discursive form to refute any rumors that he withered away into anonymity from his English captivity. Finally, the *ballade* "Des nouvelles d'Albion" is conceived in the epistolary style to appeal to his cousin and duke of Burgundy, Philippe le Bon, for help in the final steps of paying his ransom. While many more of his *ballades* (and *rondeaux*) were composed during his captivity, these five are the most heavily associated with his imprisonment in their referential content and affective motifs of confinement, separation, solitude, and helplessness.

II. Captivity in England: Part 1 (1415-1429)

Before retracing Charles's twenty-five-year captivity in England and its expression in his prison poetry, one should note that he did not suffer as a traditional prisoner. He was spared the chains, bars, and rat-infested dungeon cells normally associated with prisons and prisoners.¹⁶ Champion similarly notes that Charles instead was given the deference shown to a high level

¹⁶ Rémy Ambühl asserts that "'prisoner of war' was a status which, in theory, guaranteed reasonable conditions of detention or, at the very least, better conditions than those enjoyed by criminals." Rémy Ambühl, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 120.

enemy noble and direct member of a royal family.¹⁷ Charles did not physically suffer from prison, but from exile and inactivity (*ennui*) which deprived him of his young adult life in a foreign land.¹⁸ Some of his English prisons permitted him more movement and sociability, thereby reducing his *ennui*, such as his enjoyable stay with William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, at his Wingfield castle. Others imposed a harsher regimen on the prince-prisoner-poet, for instance at the Pontefract or Bolingbroke castles. Each of his instances of imprisonment and physical locations of prison is foundational to understanding Charles's prison-poetry.

Charles, along with the other noble French captives, accompanied King Henry V and his army on his return to England shortly after Agincourt, making their way to Calais and embarking across the Channel. He first arrived in London while taking part in a victory parade for Henry V, and would be held for the first two years of his captivity primarily at the Tower of London, except for a few stays at Windsor castle and Westminster Palace.¹⁹ The true hardship Charles faced during this initial period and his entire twenty-five-year captivity in England has been questioned, leading to a larger debate. William Askins summarizes the general consensus that Charles's English years were worrisome, but not inhospitable, and observes that it is difficult to imagine how Charles could have turned out such a substantial body of poetry under harsh circumstances.²⁰ Similarly, according to Joanna Summers, the popular view that he simply pined

¹⁷ "Charles d'Orléans ne connut ni les chaînes, ni la paille des cachots, mais bien les égards dus à un prince de son rang." Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 221.

¹⁸ "Non, ce n'est pas de 'sa prison' qu'il souffrira matériellement, mais bien de l'exil, de l'ennui qui rongea sa vie et sa jeunesse sous un ciel étranger." Champion, 223.

¹⁹ One of Charles's instructions to his retinue is dated from Windsor and another from "the palace of London," presumably the White Tower. McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 143-144.

²⁰ Askins labels the locations of Charles's imprisonment "congenial," highlighting the "forces that stirred the mix of French and English literary cultures" that acted upon Charles while imprisoned, and finally posits that Charles instead responded to his "captivity" (the quotation marks seemingly confirm Askins's dismissal of the idea he was ever in any sort of prison) "with imagination and intelligence." William Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and

away during his imprisonment in England is inaccurate.²¹ As soon as he arrived in England in 1415, Charles's captivity likely instead consisted of frequent social activity and movement among residences whenever his keepers changed hands. King Henry V also freely granted safe-conducts to the prisoners' servitors to bring over to England personal possessions as needed, and to receive instructions for the administering of their affairs in France.²² Charles could meet visitors and come and go as he pleased, and his secretary Robert de Tuillières was able to accompany him.²³ Charles's imprisonment in the Tower of London also coincided with that of another lettered prisoner-prince and -poet, James I of Scotland, who composed *The Kingis Quair* ("King's Book"), a semi-autobiographical Middle English verse narrative that retells the main character's (James's) love and courtship of a lady whom he meets during his captivity through conventional portrayals of suffering and of the search for consolation.²⁴

Charles soon realized that his captivity allowed him to partake in activities such as a contemplation of his situation and transcribing texts, and more importantly, composing verse. Boethius's work from Late Antiquity, the *Consolation of Philosophy*, was widely-read and popular during the Middle Ages, and by Charles himself, who must have found it a source of

their Keepers," in *Charles d'Orléans in England (1415-1440)*. ed. Mary-Jo Arn (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2000), 27-28.

²¹ Charles did suffer periods of isolation, however Summer remarks that his time in England was "busy socially and otherwise" and he was "often on the move, either with his 'guardians' or because those responsible for his custody were frequently changed." Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 20, 90; Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," 27-45.

²² Charles "received safe-conducts for more than 100 men in his company when he was finally released in 1440." Ambühl, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War*, 122; McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 134.

²³ "Le secret dans lequel on tenait Charles d'Orléans n'était pas trop rigoureux. Il recevait des visites." Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 163.

²⁴ *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, eds. Mary-Jo Arn and Linne Mooney (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), 8, 10, 17.

inspiration and identity in his new situation and environment.²⁵ He likely responded to the work's philosophical and psychological themes on the mutability of fortune, the need for consolation in the face of it, the loss of freedom, the seeming unfairness of life's experiences, and ways to surmount difficulties dealt by Fortune.²⁶ The parallel between Boethius the Roman politician, philosopher, and poet who depicted himself consoled by the Muses and Lady Philosophy as a prisoner of the Gothic King Theodoric, and Charles the French prisoner-prince and -poet of the English King Henry V, undoubtedly made for a strong and appealing likeliness.

The medieval practice of gift-giving included small items, compliments, even kisses, and also the writing of poems, which Charles may have read aloud to his first keeper, Robert Waterton, and Waterton's family during leisure time or intellectual gatherings at their estate. Charles may have also met notable guests hosted by Waterton, such as the curate Richard Fleming, future bishop of Lincoln (1420-1431) and relative of his wife, Cecilia. Their access to literature positively influenced Charles's intellectual life and contributed to the library that he carted around with him in England.²⁷ Rather than picturing Charles moping in some chilly room in Yorkshire and turning out the occasional *rondeau* to alleviate his suffering, critics demonstrate that he was kept in a comfortable, hospitable, and encouraging social and lettered milieu. Askins

²⁵ In his inventory of the library which Charles brought back with him from England, Champion counts a transcription of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, and mentions that Charles also read the work himself. Fox and Arn specify that Charles had seven copies of it in his library. A work widely known in the late Middle Ages, the *Consolation of Philosophy* attracted translators and transcribers before, during, and well after the medieval period. Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 223-224, 232; *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, xlv.

²⁶ *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, eds. Arn and Mooney, 5, 9.

²⁷ Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," 32.

traces that this environment inspired his poetry in a beneficial way, contrary to previous romantic depictions of Charles's suffering.²⁸

Charles d'Orléans's Poetic Corpus

Most of Charles's prison poetry can be traced and dated to the period of his captivity at Bolingbroke when he had access to so few outside distractions and needed to rely on his passion for reading, meditating, and composing poetry.²⁹ The primary source and "highest authority" of his poetry is his personal copy and author-centered collection (BnF MS. Fr. 25458), probably commissioned in London near the end of his English captivity (1439-1440). Into it went most of all of the poetry he had written (he was forty-six at the time), which still left many blank leaves. He returned to France with the manuscript and continued to add lyrics until his death in 1465. The only poetry that the manuscript excludes was his early short poem "Le livre contre tout péché," a later work composed during his captivity, *Canticum amoris*, and the bulk of his English poems, found in BL MS. Harley 682.³⁰ While in England, Charles wrote *ballades*, but also *chansons*, *complaints*, *caroles* and in various other forms, such as narrative verse in his

²⁸ Although Waterton and his household reportedly "lived on a lavish scale," Askins believes that he cared for the men conferred upon him like Charles. Askins also disagrees that Waterton may have been "too free and easy" with Charles, which concerned Henry V. Rather than Waterton being at fault for too a lenient and careless keeping, Askins points to Henry V's political anxieties and Charles's reputation as a charming, socially-adept young prince as the impetus of such a letter. He argues that Waterton was just as "congenial" as Charles, citing his refined interests and sensibilities, and that the West Riding of Yorkshire "was hardly a cultural wasteland." McLeod similarly believes that "there is no doubt" Waterton was "on good terms with his charge," stating that "Charles's habitual patience, his courtesy, his cultivated mind and the sense of humor and amused irony which he revealed later in his poetry must have made him a pleasant and attractive prisoner to guard." Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," 32-33; McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 150, 153; Lucy de Angulo, "Charles and Jean d'Orléans: An Attempt to Trace the Contacts Between Them During Their Captivity in England," *Miscellanea di studi e ricerche sul quattrocento francese*. ed. Franco Simone (Turin: 1967), 69.

²⁹ McLeod, 167-168.

³⁰ *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, xv.

Songe en complainte including his vision of Age and withdrawal from the service of Love, and in pseudo-documents where he connected bits of narrative verse in as many different verse forms as he could, such as in his *Departie d'amours* containing seven unnumbered *ballades* with no *envois*.³¹ This copy became something more like a journal or notebook than an example of medieval *belles-lettres*, characteristic of the author-supervised manuscripts of the work of Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300-1377) or Christine de Pisan (c. 1364-1430).³² The manuscript features a first section of 107 *ballades* and a second of 164 *chansons* and *rondeaux* with four *caroles*. Because Charles ordered his manuscript both by verse form and by time period, adding new lyrics to each section as he wrote them, critics and historians can read his poetry in a number of ways. The early work is a narrative, beginning with the induction of the poet into the service of Love and ending soon after the lover's retrieval of his heart from Love and withdrawal to the *lieu de Nonchaloir* ("indifference"), a narrative that then ceases. The story gives way to a "purely lyric spirit," a body that has its own structural principles: one category of poems about *fin amor* love and another of those on miscellaneous subjects. Reading it can also produce a picture of a poet at a certain stage in his artistic life.³³ This frame aligns with the aims of my project in its investigation on autobiographical traces that prison poetry, and prison literature as a whole, leaves behind for us as readers.

The variety and range of Charles's genres and verse forms, in particular his frequent use of the *ballade* and *rondel*, reflects a taste he shared with his predecessors and contemporaries: Machaut, Jean Froissart (c. 1337-1404), Eustache Deschamps (c. 1340-1404), Oton de Grandson

³¹ *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, xvii.

³² *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, xviii.

³³ *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, xxvii.

(c. 1340-1396), Pisan, and Alain Chartier (c. 1380-1429).³⁴ However, Charles's collection as a whole does not set forth a coherent dramatic plot in the manner of many other late medieval assemblies of narrative verse and lyrics (Machaut's *Voir dit*, Grandson's *Livre Messire Ode*, Froissart's *La prison amoureuse*, Pizan's *Livre du Duc des Vrais Amants*) that envision extended interaction between different composing characters. Charles's collection demonstrates the extent to which the practice of poetry served as a vehicle for actual rather than fictive social exchange.³⁵ Within the changing forms of his poems, Charles also varies thematic concerns, employing a range of religious, military, and amatory imagery, as well as parodies of legal processes and medical formulas.³⁶ His poems exhibit a subjective attachment to prevalent fifteenth-century themes of courtly love through their focus on his "Lady," and in striving to capture "fleeting emotions," they do not construct any lasting narratives, but instead transfix and portray a (real-life) affective moment.³⁷ Across his poetry, the numerous references to Charles's "*dame*" are so circumspect that we can never be absolutely certain to whom they refer. She could be his wife Bonne or a French or English lady at court. The poem could also be an exercise on a well-worn theme in the medieval courtly tradition and nothing more: invoking and praising an archetypal

³⁴ *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, xl-xli.

³⁵ *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, xlii.

³⁶ *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, xliii.

³⁷ "Le poème, assez subjectif, s'attache à l'attitude de l'amoureux plus qu'à l'objet aimé. Dans ce dépassement de l'être aimé [...] tout naturellement, le poète cherche la vérité du sentiment dans son retentissement intérieur, plutôt que dans la circonstance extérieure [...] Charles d'Orléans cherche à traduire dans ses ballades et ses chansons une émotion fugitive, l'impression du moment. Et c'est dans l'instant, non dans la durée, que se cristallise cette affectivité authentique. Le poète est sincère, dans la mesure où il ne cherche pas à construire, à raccorder [...]." Daniel Poirion, "Création poétique et composition romanesque dans les premiers poèmes de Charles d'Orléans," *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 90 (1958): 204.

desired lady. Fox and Arn assert, however, that she is his wife based on the use of the expression *ma malassenee* – “my unfortunate (or unhappily married) wife” – in one of his *rondeaux*.³⁸

Charles’s poetry, while varied in theme, places an emphasis on personal emotions and experiences – a trend already visible in Machaut’s poetry – through his combination of introspective allegory and a deepening sensitivity to communal life. This angle proves important to this chapter’s aim of gleaning indications of a prisoner-poet’s positionality and happenstance from prison poems, including their feelings and reactions to their imprisoned situation. Charles’s poems often appear to address the poet’s psyche rather than a listener. As I will soon study in the section on Charles’s *Ballade* “Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d’enfance,” such references to the poet’s psyche include allegorical figures of interior thought and abstractions (*Merencolie*, *Espoir*, *Soussy*).³⁹ His poetry at this moment serves to demarcate a relationship between constraint (whether metaphoric or literal) and literary and creative fruition.

III. Self-Fashioning and the Captive Poet: Early Prison Poetry

At Bolingbroke, Charles enjoyed considerable freedom under Cumberworth and both keeper and captive spent much time traveling together.⁴⁰ Cumberworth and his circle hosted a substantial literary culture and environment in the English Midlands who all shared tastes in,

³⁸ *Poetry of Charles d’Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, xliii.

³⁹ *Poetry of Charles d’Orléans and His Circle*, xlv.

⁴⁰ Both travelled to London for the Parliament of 1425, and other times for leisure, such as during Christmas 1424 and 1426-1429, to Peterborough in September 1428 where Charles could have again visited his brother Jean at Maxey, and to Canterbury in March 1426. Given Cumberworth’s religious interests and devotion, Askins suggests that “it would not be inappropriate to suggest that Cumberworth took Charles on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas à Becket,” and that to show his gratitude to him, Charles attempted to restore a grant of wine to Canterbury from the French crown that it first received in the twelfth century. Askins, “The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers,” 36-37; Raymonde Foreville, “Charles d’Orléans et le ‘Vin de Saint Thomas’,” *Cahiers d’Histoire et de Folklore* 1 (1955), 22-32.

notably, Geoffrey Chaucer and circulated manuscripts of his *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.⁴¹ Charles and Cumberworth shared religious and secular literary interests, learned from one another, and participated in a vibrant manuscript culture of exchanging and copying titles. When Charles was moved from the royal court to the world of provincial gentry, he witnessed and participated in a flourishing literary culture practiced by the English provincial gentry, especially involving devotional works.⁴² Charles's imprisonment at Bolingbroke first allowed him to define and establish the boundaries of what exactly, according to him, comprises his experience in poetry. This period of incarceration serves to both (re)contextualize and (re)conceptualize how personal experience and emotion began to manifest itself in verse literature by the fifteenth century and end of the Middle Ages. Charles's expression of his incarcerated experience through the medium of poetry is highly important during this period when very few writers shared any autobiographic detail or personal feelings in their works.

Ballade "Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d'enfance"⁴³

Charles reacts to his physical surroundings of prison and transcribes this reaction into his poetry through powerful narrative and allegorical images. Combining the elements of age, time, personification, and the natural lifecycle of plants, he likens himself to a blossoming fruit on the

⁴¹ John Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of The Canterbury Tales, Studied on the Basis of all Known Manuscripts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), 189-197; cited by Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," 37.

⁴² Askins, 38.

⁴³ On account of the discrepancy in the numbering and organizing of Charles's poems, and to avoid privileging one editor's "system" or reasoning over the others, I will refer to his poems by their incipits. For example, Champion's edition, which will provide our French text, numbers this *ballade* 80, while Arn's and Fox's edition, who assert that they faithfully follow the order found in Charles's personal manuscript (BnF MS. fr. 25458), numbers it instead 120, and Mühlethaler's edition numbers it 103.

“tree of Pleasure” during his youth. However, he is prematurely knocked down, green and unripe, by his “mistress” Folly:

Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d'enfance
 Et puis après devins fruit en jeunesse;
 Lors m'abaty de l'arbre de plaisance,
 Vert et non meur, Folie ma maistresse.
 Et pour cela Raison, qui tout redresse
 A son plaisir, sans tort ou mesprison,
 M'a bon droit, par sa tresgrant sagesse,
 Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison.

En ce j'ay fait longue continuance,
 Sans estre mis a l'essor de largesse;
 J'en suy contant et tiens que, sans doubance,
 C'est pour le mieulx, combien que par peresse
 Deviens fletry et tire vers vieillesse.
 Assez estaint est en moy le tison
 De sot desir, puis qu'ay esté en presse
 Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison.

Dieu nous doint paix, car c'est ma desirance!
 Adonc seray en l'eaue de liesse
 Tost refreschi et, au souleil de France,
 Bien nettié du moisy de tristesse.
 J'attens bon temps, endurant en humblesse,
 Car j'ay espoir que Dieu ma guerison
 Ordonnera; pource m'a sa haultesse
 Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison.

Fruit suis d'yver qui a meins de tendresse
 Que fruit d'esté; si suis en garnison
 Pour amolir ma trop verde duresse,
 Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *Charles d'Orléans. Poésies*, ed. Champion, 130-131, vv. 1-28. This edition will provide the text for Charles's French poetry, while Fox's and Arn's edition (*Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer) will provide the English translations of the allegorical figures in his poetry.

As is consistent with the generally “fairly rigid pattern”⁴⁵ of Charles’s *ballades*, the 28-line poem is composed of ten-syllable (decasyllabic) verse (a staple of medieval heroic epics and *chansons de geste*) in three eight-line stanzas (*huitains*) followed by a four-line *envoi*. Its *huitains* follow his usual ABABBABA rhyme scheme (with the noticeable rhyming couplet in the middle) and its *envoi* features a simple alternating rhyme (ABAB). The *ballade*’s other noticeable features are its refrain “Mis pour mourir ou feurre de prison,” also used in one of its two exclamatory phrases (ecphonesis) with “Dieu nous doint paix, car c’est ma desirance!” (131, v. 17), and its two caesurae: “Dieu ma guerison / Ordonnera; pource m’a sa haultesse” (131, vv. 22-23), “Que fruit d’esté; si suis en garnison” (131, v. 26). In terms of its content, Krystyna Kasprzyk emphasizes that for Charles, the crucial moment of his ordeal is the realization that he is now “taken” (“la prise”): captured and an object possessed by his captors.⁴⁶ Charles combines the traditional, courtly, rhetorical and poetic allegorical ornaments of a genre and art in which he was well-versed with an autobiographical narration of his situation in order to project the realities of his imprisonment in vibrant images. Among these include the double image, or the collusion of a double association of ideas around the word “*feurre*,” (a spread-out bed of) straw where prisoners typically lie down or under orchards where fruits picked green are placed to ripen.⁴⁷ Charles compares himself to an unripe fruit prematurely knocked down from the tree and placed,

⁴⁵ *Poetry of Charles d’Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, liv.

⁴⁶ In correlation with Charles’s botanical, fruit metaphor, Kasprzyk relates the act of capture and subsequent imprisonment to an “intimate break” from a previous existence: “le captif se sent déraciné, privé non seulement de son milieu premier, langue, paysages, climat, famille, amis, mais coupé d’une partie de lui-même.” Krystyna Kasprzyk, “L’expérience de la prison et de l’exil chez quelques poètes de la fin du Moyen Âge,” *La souffrance au Moyen Âge (France, XIIIe–XVe s.)*, ed. Nicole Taillade (Warsaw: Éditions de l’Université de Varsovie, 1988), 168.

⁴⁷ Michel Zink notes how “Ici, ce refrain – ‘Mis pour mourir ou ferre de prison’ – joue d’une double image ou de la collusion d’une double association d’idées entraînée par le mot feurre (paille étalée, litière de paille).” Zink, ‘Mis pour mourir ou feurre de prison,’ 682.

not to ripen, but to dry up, rot, and mold not on the straw-lined orchard ground, but on the prison cell floor.

Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet observes how the straw floor represents a more dramatic version of the important image and *topos* of the bed. It was an essential piece of furniture which in the medieval tradition of courtly and chivalric lyric poetry was associated with love, heroic events (such as with Chrétien de Troyes's knights), or monastic meditation or contemplation in the *lectulus*, or little bed.⁴⁸ However, the straw floor radically abandons these traditional, romanticized conceptions of the bed and here in Charles's poem alludes to a more macabre one: death.⁴⁹ The analogy of death as sleep (the "eternal sleep") already had been current at the time of Charles. It has often been observed that sleep mirrors the first empirical sign of death experienced by those observing it: that is, the sleeping, like the dying, are inactive and unable to see or hear.⁵⁰ The association between sleep and death has also been reinforced by their relation to nighttime, when all light vanishes, all things sleep and rest, and all forms are undifferentiated by the enveloping magical, invisible darkness.⁵¹ Indeed, a thematic around this association

⁴⁸ Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, "Espèces d'espaces. Espace physique et espace mental dans la poésie de Charles d'Orléans," *Le Moyen Français* 70 (2012), 11.

⁴⁹ Cerquiglini-Toulet underlines the similarities between a lying sleeping body and a lying dead body: "lit et mort sont voisins dans l'imaginaire." Cerquiglini-Toulet, "Espèces d'espaces," 11.

⁵⁰ The nearly identical appearance of sleeping and dying also converge into what Edgar Morin terms "la mort maternelle," where he explains "la vie et analogue à celle du fœtus: latent, aveugle, endormie." He asserts that the analogy of the sleeping-dying-unborn infant are experiences observed and attested by everyone in daily life: "Cette analogie converge en plein vers le donné universel de l'expérience: le sommeil est la première apparence empirique de la mort." Edgar Morin, *L'homme et la mort* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 123.

⁵¹ Morin describes all three parts of his "sleeping-dying-unborn" analogy as nocturnal, and asserts that all three also await a "renaissance:" "La nuit entre majestueusement dans les anthologies de la mort. Au sein de ses ténèbres où tout s'endort, s'éteint, repose, s'indifférencie dans l'unité magique qui enveloppe la vie multiprésente et invisible, où les essences parlent dans la confusion des apparences, tout se prépare à la renaissance." This "renaissance" can be conjectured as awakening for the sleeping, the afterlife (heaven or hell, in the Abrahamic faiths) for the dying, and life for the infant in the womb. For this latter, he constructs the parallel between "nuit" and "sommeil" with "mort-maternité-naissance." Morin, *L'homme et la mort*, 124.

developed during the Middle Ages, as seen through funerary monuments (frequently portraying sculptured *gisants* of the deceased who were quite literally, as the name suggests, “lying” down on fanciful, carved marble beds and pillows). Charles was strongly drawn to the analogy of sleep-death that had traditionally featured heavily in literature, and especially in poetry, where poets frequently crafted multitudes of metaphors for death.⁵² In the imagery of his prison poetry, the analogy sleep-death is best found in the *ballade*’s “bed” of straw. Through a clever, and assuredly intentional, play on words, the poem’s refrain serves to reinforce this ambiguity by associating the straw floor with (eventual) death: *meurir* (modern French *mûrir*, to ripen) and *mourir* (to die) were very likely homophones in Middle French.⁵³ Charles’s use of “meurir” not only textually reinforces the association between sleep and death, but also suggests that feelings of resignation and death are a part of the helplessness and anxiety provoked within him in response to the more stern environment of his Bolingbroke prison.

Charles’s choice of the commonplace, day-to-day metaphor of knocking down a fruit from a tree reinforces the juxtaposition between such a mundane action and the force of the shock of the fruit falling down from the tree itself.⁵⁴ The figure of Folly, a faculty of his mind and inner process which he attempts to conceptualize through personification, accompanied him through a life of pleasure and merriment indicated in the passage above through the expressions

⁵² Besides sleep, Morin lists other literary metaphors for death: “les métaphores littéraires de la mort [...] non seulement utilisent les analogies consacrées du sommeil, repos, oubli, etc., le ‘Mourir, dormir, rêver peut-être’ d’Hamlet, mais encore retrouvent dans la description de la mort les leit-motives invincibles des eux-mêmes. C’est le fleuve qu’il faut traverser (mort de Jean-Christophe) [in Pierre Fisson’s *Voyage aux horizons*]. C’est la vague qui recouvre et submerge [in Arthur Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon*] ... C’est l’appel extraordinaire de mort marine heureuse dans la Ballade de [Paul] Claudel.” Morin, *L’homme et la mort*, 169.

⁵³ DMF: *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, version 2015. ATILF - CNRS and Université de Lorraine. Accessed May 10, 2019. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

⁵⁴ Kasprzyk, “L’expérience de la prison et de l’exil,” 168.

être en fleur and *devenir fruit*: “Je fus en fleur au temps passé d’enfance” (130, v. 1), “Et puis après devins fruit en jeunesse” (130, v. 2).⁵⁵ His harsh ordeal suddenly interrupted this youthful revelry and put out his “embers of foolish desire,” which he indicates through the metaphor *s’abattre de l’arbre*: “Assez estaint est en moy le tison / De sot desir” (131, vv. 14-15), “Lors m’abaty de l’arbre de plaisance” (130, v. 3). But it is also communicated through another double image and allusion around the expression *être en presse*, which could replicate the English “to be pressed (forced) [to],” or in line with his fruit metaphor, to be put too early in a juice press as a green, unripe grape or apple: “puis qu’ay esté en presse” (131, v. 15). Folly is indicated as a companion of days past, and is a figure that Charles clearly contrasts with Reason, a present-day master who exerts control and power over him. While the replacement of Folly by Reason is a common allegorical figuring of the process of maturing, it is not to be misunderstood as specific to prison. Charles’s premature fall from the tree is not associated with his capture at Agincourt, but rather with the folly of love (*le fol amour*), since the poet justly took Folly as a master.⁵⁶ For Charles, allegorical figures are a language whose transmitted message contains referential content – references to things, people, and places – which, despite being elaborated and nuanced in abundant expressive possibilities, strives to grasp the diversity of his perceived and lived universe.⁵⁷ Although Charles’ lived experience of imprisonment draws him to allegory, we must

⁵⁵ Goodrich, *A Study of Themes*, 67; Kasprzyk, “L’expérience de la prison et de l’exil,” 168.

⁵⁶ “Pourtant, ce n’est pas de cela [Agincourt] que parle la ballade: pas de bataille, pas de prisonnier de guerre. La chute prématurée du jeune fruit n’est imputée qu’à l’amour, implicitement, mais sans aucune équivoque. Le jeune homme a pris pour maîtresse Folie, et c’est elle qui l’a abattu ‘vert et non mûr’ [...] La folie des jeunes gens, c’est, dans le vocabulaire littéraire et moral du temps, le fol amour, la passion incontrôlée ou coupable [...]” Michel Zink, “‘Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison:’ le poète, leurre du prince,” in *Guerre, pouvoir et noblesse au Moyen Âge. Mélanges en l’honneur de Philippe Contamine*, eds. Jacques Paviot and Jacques Verger (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 682.

⁵⁷ “[...] la figure allégorique est, chez notre poète, un langage. Elle comporte son lexique, sa syntaxe, et ses divers niveaux de sens. Le message qu’elle transmet possède un contenu référentiel; mais celui-ci est élaboré, nuancé, en vertu des possibilités expressives.” Charles is effectively split between two uses of the “allegorical code,”

not incorrectly confuse this as un-autobiographical. On the contrary, concrete events, and not fictional dreaming, inspired him to employ allegorical language.

Not only does Charles draw upon lived events, but he also draws upon current societal customs at the time of his imprisonment. A major theme in Charles's prison poetry is his obedience and adherence to the chivalric code with its conventions. Yet, the chivalric life does not inevitably lead to capture, as one could win in battle and remain free. Charles's acceptance of his capture and captivity, a resignation to the consequences of the chivalric lifestyle, is a powerful theme that becomes more apparent throughout his poems.⁵⁸ His capture and subsequent imprisonment are the results of warfare and foolish young love prescribed by chivalry. As is indicated by the fruit metaphor, he is prematurely knocked down from the tree of Pleasure and set aside to rot, but he suggests that his fate could be a blessing in disguise. Charles shifts from lamentingly identifying Reason as the force that caused his untimely capture and imprisonment to seeing Reason as ultimately a force for good. He also shifts to comment how Reason was not at fault to place him on the straw floor to ripen and die through a clever play on words between *méprison* (error or wrongdoing) and *prison*:⁵⁹ "sans tort ou mesprison" (130, v. 6). The personification of *largesse* as Generosity, whose "free air" Charles, figured as a fruit, "never enjoyed," references the chivalric code and lifestyle by which he lived as a duke and noble:

one which aims to reflect his internal harmony, continuing (and perhaps bringing to a close) the tradition of medieval poetic lyricism, and the other which aims to reflect his everyday world: "Charles d'Orléans apparaît ainsi tiraillé entre deux poétiques, l'une repliée sur ses harmonies internes (dernier avatar de la poésie registrale primitive), l'autre avide de saisir, de tout son vocabulaire, sa syntaxe, ses images, la diversité de l'univers perçu et vécu." Paul Zumthor, "Charles d'Orléans et le langage de l'allégorie," in *Mélanges offertes à Rita Lejeune*, v. 2 (Gembloux: Duculot, 1969), 1493.

⁵⁸ "Charles ne se révolte pas contre sa captivité: chevalier, il acquiesce pleinement à la loi chevaleresque avec toutes ses conséquences." Kasprzyk, "L'expérience de la prison et de l'exil," 169.

⁵⁹ DMF: *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*.

“Sans estre mis a l’essor de Largesse” (130, v. 10). Maurice Keen likewise defines *largesse* as “generosity,” as does Richard Kaeuper, who explains it as a “magnificent, great-hearted generosity” and a “quality tirelessly praised in all chivalric literature,” whose practice by knights intended to create a distance between their exclusive, chivalrous life and the lives of the “sub-chivalric” bourgeoisie, and to create a sharp contrast between their virtues and such merchants’ “mean-spirited acquisitiveness.”⁶⁰ However, in Charles’s intended meaning, *largesse* refers to the physical ability to exercise the activities appropriate and entitled to a feudal lord, such as magnanimously bequeathing both material and non-material gifts to subjects and peers alike. Although Charles is resigned to his imprisonment, it nevertheless constrains him and takes away certain elements from his normal life. One of the greatest injuries to a nobleman like Charles, who was physically restricted (although not chained or locked in a cell like a convict), was the reduction of his chivalric right to participate in a gamut of aristocratic social activities ranging from courting to even engaging in jousts or duels.

⁶⁰ Maurice Keen remarks that Christine de Pizan’s *Letter of Othea to Hector* provides lessons of *largesse* in chivalry through stories of Perseus’s rescue of Andromeda. It writes that “all knights should succor women that have need of their succor” and compares Ceres’s giving of corn, while taking from none, to how “in the same way should a good knight be abundant to all persons and to give his help and comfort after his power.” In his treatise *De insigniis et armis*, fourteenth-century Italian law professor Bartolus of Sassoferrato and fifteenth-century lettered French knight Olivier de la Marche agree that wealth and a manner of living are requirements for the nobility. Bartolus adds that *largesse* is a “virtue opposite to nobility, and you cannot give *largesse* without riches.” However, both also insist that personal virtues are most necessary to nobility. Bartolus stresses the capacity to rule, and La Marche emphasizes valor and loyal service. Richard Kaeuper notes that the French troubadour poet Bertran de Born links *largesse* with prowess and love and in the Arthurian legend of Lancelot, where it “pointedly reinforces high social status.” However, he admits that “ideally, it was warfare, not simply the income from one’s own vast estates that produced the wherewithal for such lavish generosity.” “loot from raids during war could be distributed grandly and according to well-established rules.” Kaeuper concludes that *largesse* is enabled by “knights’ know-how to get money and how to spend it.” *largesse* “falls like ripe fruit from the tree of prowess into the strong hands of the worthy.” Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 2, 11, 111, 148, 151; *The Epistle of Othea*, trans. Stephen Scrope, ed. Curt F. Bühler, Early English Text Society 264 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 15, 36; Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 196, 198-199; Maurice Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1965).

Charles's acceptance to being imprisoned can be traced across three distinct stages. First, he laments his imprisonment, identifying Reason who sets all things straight according to his fickle nature as the culprit: "Raison qui tout redresse / A son plaisir" (130, vv. 5-6). Charles surveys his restricted actions and abilities, highlighting how he spent a long period of time deprived of "*l'essor de largesse*." Second, Charles accepts not only his fate and the fact that he is imprisoned but the consequences of his courtly lifestyle: both in a literal sense through his chivalric participation in the combat of Agincourt, and in a figurative sense, through his teenage foolishness as a courtly lover and brash young man. Here, despite commenting on the reduction of his (physical) freedom, Charles notes that he is, in a sense, "content" with his transformation and maturation. Third and finally, Charles begins to view his imprisonment as, to an extent, justified and deserved, and acknowledges Reason's great wisdom and beneficial role in putting out his "foolish" desire: "M'a bon droit, par sa tresgrant sagesse, / Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison" (130, vv. 7-8).⁶¹ Charles' stages of acceptance of his imprisonment demonstrate how he draws lessons from his experience as both an empirical and ethical act. Despite feeling content that he is no longer a foolish young man, Charles is nonetheless far from content with his imprisonment. His English captivity and all the suffering that it inflicts upon the prisoner-poet, even envisioning death, might be interpreted as a sort of cure that Reason administers to him, he whom Folly and Pleasure had controlled as they pleased.⁶² Charles begins to view Reason and her actions with respect, and alludes to her divine authority and power.

⁶¹ Reason must correct the foolish lover Charles after he took Folly as a master, as is her duty: Zink indicates that Reason also "cherche à détourner l'amant du *Roman de la rose*." As a result, Charles's prison of war becomes a prison of love: Charles "estime juste d'y avoir été jeté, puisqu'il s'est laissé cueillir par Folie" and "il juge sa situation avec une satisfaction résignée et mélancolique." The poet sees it as only natural if he withers (from inactivity) in prison instead of ripening normally: "Il ne s'en prend qu'à lui-même. C'est sa faute s'il se flétrit et vieillit au lieu de mûrir et si la prison l'entraîne du côté où il ne penchait déjà que trop naturellement, la paresse." Zink, "Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison," 683.

⁶² Galderisi, "De la prison Dedalus," 109.

Charles's acceptance of his imprisonment also leads to a self-addressed hermeneutic commentary on the natural passage of time and ageing. Jean-Claude Mühlethaler proposes that Charles's prison poetry diametrically opposes the notions of youth and old age, or rather the age of folly with the age of maturity,⁶³ which his *ballade* firmly demonstrates. He notes how, once again figured as a fruit, he is withering and heading towards old age: "Deviens flety et tire vers vieillesse" (130, v. 13). At this stage, Charles, has possibly passed beyond just ripening and has now began rotting, decaying, and ultimately, dying. He expresses both the first and second stages of his life as a fruit: he is simultaneously, or perhaps first, placed to ripen on the straw (floor) of prison, and then placed to die on the straw (floor) of prison. His acceptance of his ambiguous fate as a ripening and then withering fruit is also continually counterbalanced by hope, creating an oscillating pattern that rises and falls over the course of his long captivity.⁶⁴ Charles expects to be "cleansed" of the mold of Sadness which corresponds to the withered (*flety*) fruit that he became: "Bien nettié du moisy de Tristesse" (131, v. 20). However, in this instance, he does not perceive of himself as an entirely ripened or rotten fruit that can no longer be consumed nor enjoyed. His greenness (youthfulness) can be saved. He can be "refreshed at once" by the water of Happiness and soothing warm sunshine of the gentle lands of France: "Adonc seray en l'eau de Liesse / Tost refreschi" (131, vv. 18-19). Charles here might also be evoking England's rainier, gloomier, and colder conditions and comparing it to *la douce France* and the sweet, rolling countryside of his ducal Loire lands. The juxtaposition of withering (death) with rejuvenation (life) is evoked by the comparison found in the straw floor of a prison cell where he

⁶³ Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, *Charles d'Orléans, un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité* (Paris: Garnier, 2010), 207.

⁶⁴ Kasprzyk, "L'expérience de la prison et de l'exil," 169.

sleeps and ultimately dies. A dying Charles yearns for real events to grant him life: his ransom met, his release from English captivity and his return to France. Nevertheless, Charles's most significant and powerful metaphor comes in the form of allegorically clothing himself as a ripening fruit that will be refreshed by one personified object, the "*eaue de Liesse*," and cleaned of another, the "*moisy de Tristesse*," by the French sun. Charles conceives this moment as a sort of reset, at which his life, dramatically altered by his capture and imprisonment, will pick up where it left off, pre-Agincourt.⁶⁵

The oscillation between resignation (or, more aptly, sadness) and hope, and between the defining moment of being knocked down from the "*arbre de plaisance*" and the anxious wait for better, happier days is an essential theme for all of Charles's poems composed in captivity.⁶⁶ The tree of Pleasure in the medieval Christian tradition equally alludes to the garden of Eden and concept of original sin. Similar to Adam and Eve, the "I" or "me" (the poet, Charles) is a victim of his own foolishness, and in a sense, just like the biblical couple, can be interpreted as excluded from Heaven.⁶⁷ Zink speaks of prison as Charles's "unique" and "major biographical accident." Prison disappears in favor of evoking, by way of his poetry's "irritating charm" of generalized, "lackadaisical" metaphors or incomplete allegories, the stages of life from an adolescent madness of love to a resignation of ageing.⁶⁸ Yet Charles's "biographical accident" (sudden

⁶⁵ While Kasprzyk implies an absence of a moral lesson in writing "les années de prison seront annulées et la vie redeviendra ce qu'elle était auparavant," Charles's life would still not exactly be as it was before due to the hermeneutic process he would undergo. Kasprzyk, "L'expérience de la prison et de l'exil," 169.

⁶⁶ Mühlethaler notes that Reason's act of knocking down the "I" or "me" (Charles) from the tree of Pleasure can, with some degree of difficulty, evoke the battle of Agincourt and how the prince-poet was knocked down from his horse, and picked up from under the bodies, captured, and taken back to England. Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, 207.

⁶⁷ Mühlethaler, 207.

⁶⁸ Despite this assertion, Zink acknowledges the presence and power of the *ballade*'s biographical implications, namely Charles's implorations for an end to war and for a return home to France, where he can rightly

capture) moves beyond this allegorical veil. His *ballade* was likely composed during Charles's most prolonged, isolated, and perhaps somber period of imprisonment at Bolingbroke. His greater physical restraints led to a varying resignation to his captivity that fluctuates between hope and sadness. The roles of (and interplay between) the authority and wisdom of Reason and the carefree pleasures of Folly demonstrate Charles's substantial literary creativity to compose a poetry that blends elements from both traditional courtly love poetry and his personal experience of imprisonment.

Ballade "Cueur, trop es plain de folie"⁶⁹

In his prison poetry, Charles consistently highlights the stages of processing his imprisonment. First, he laments the fact he is imprisoned. Second, he accepts his fate. And third, he acquiesces to viewing it as a consequence of his participation in chivalry and youthful, foolish love. Borrowing once more elements of rhetorical, allegorical imagery, Charles stages a conversation between a prisoner, its jailers, his personified heart (a metonymy for the poet himself), and the embodied abstractions of Worry and Care. Karen Newman observes that during his captivity, Charles's poetry evolved from the conventional poetic mode of courtly love embodied by the *Roman de la rose* to a highly personal and individual poetry which makes use of allegory in striking ways.⁷⁰ However, the personification of one of his organs, the heart, is not to be understood as a separate figure from the poet himself and his overall body, but instead as

"mature:" "Pourtant, cet accident n'est ni absent ni oublié, et la prison a malgré tout dans le poème une réalité autre que métaphorique puisque la troisième strophe appelle de ses vœux la paix et le retour du duc en France, qui permettrait au fruit de retrouver les éléments favorables à son mûrissement, l'eau et le soleil." Zink, "Mis pour mourir ou feurre de prison," 685.

⁶⁹ *Ballade* numbered 81 by Champion, 121 by Arn and Fox, and 104 by Mühlethaler. See note 43 above.

⁷⁰ Karen Newman, "The Mind's Castle: Containment in the Poetry of Charles d'Orléans," *Romance Philology* 33, no. 2 (1979): 318.

one of his own emotional-physical faculties. Charles (the poet) takes the place of his heart and assumes the first-person perspective, evidenced by the use of the French informal second-person singular forms (subject pronoun *tu*, object pronoun *te*, disjunctive pronoun *toy*) by the jailers

Worry and Care when they address his heart/him:

Cueur, trop es plain de folie.
 Cuides tu de t'eslongnier
 Hors de nostre compaignie
 Et en repos te logier?
 Ton propos ferons changier:
 Soing et Ennuy nous nommons.
 Avecques toy demourrons,
 Car c'est le commandement
 De Fortune, qui en serre
 T'a tenu moult longuement
 Ou royaume d'Angleterre.

Dy nous, ne cognois tu mie
 Que l'estat de prisonnier
 Est que souvent lui ennuye
 Et endure maint dangier
 Dont il ne se peut vengier?
 Pource nous ne te faisons
 Nul tort, se te gouvernons
 Ainsi que communement
 Sont prisonniers prise en guerre,
 Dont es l'un presentement
 Ou royaume d'Angleterre.

En lieu de plaisance lye
 Au lever et au couchier
 Trouveras merencolie;
 Souvent te fera veillier
 La nuit et le jour songier.
 Ainsi te guerdonnerons
 Et es fers te garderons
 De soussy et pensement.
 Si tu peuz, si te defferre;
 Par nous n'auras autrement
 Ou royaume d'Angleterre (131, vv. 1-33).

The poem deviates from Charles's relatively consistent *ballade* pattern as it is composed of 33 lines in octosyllabic verse in three, irregular 11-line stanzas with no *envoi*. Its stanzas feature a modified version of the same rhyme scheme, this time with two rhyming couplets set together in the middle (ABABBCCDED) and concluding with the refrain "Ou royaume d'Angleterre."

Charles's metonymic portrayal of his heart fits into a larger medieval spiritual tradition of fragmenting the self into elements of the perceived soul. Such fragmentation of the self may be analogous to the medieval elements of the soul, such as the rational, the irascible, and the concupiscent, and it is intended that the speaker retreat with his heart into the fortified chambers of the mind.⁷¹ Charles's heart is a hallmark of his poetry both inside and outside prison, with seven *ballades*, six *rondeaux*, and one *chanson* alone beginning with the incipit "Mon cuer/cueur."⁷² Several others portray the poet speaking to his heart directly, including his *rondeaux* that open with an apostrophe to it ("Cueur, a qui prendrez vous conseil," "Cueur, que fais tu? Revenge toy," and "Cueur, qu'esse la ? Ce sommes nous, voz yeux"). These personified depictions of his own heart add an allegorical weight that distinguishes Charles as a poet and his poetry, combining older conventional medieval courtly traditions with referential content.⁷³ In this *ballade*, his captive heart is addressed by two jailers, which forms a concrete image. Charles communicates feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness through his symbolic depiction of his

⁷¹ Newman, "The Mind's Castle," 324.

⁷² *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, 863-864.

⁷³ Newman posits that on a literal level the poet describes his introspective withdrawal from society, but this activity is so closely related to the more spiritual activity of meditation that both meanings are implied. In fact, Charles's heart is frequently associated with meditation, as in his *ballade* "Mon cuer est devenu hermite" where it lives "En l'ermitage de Pensee" (64, v. 2). Newman signals how the deliberate obliqueness in the use of metaphor found in much fifteenth-century poetry required a perception of the levels and patterns of meaning beneath the surface, and how Charles's frequent allegorical metaphors couple a concrete image with an abstraction. Newman, 324, 327.

heart. The traditionally-accepted seat of emotion in the human body, Charles utilizes the heart to express moments of intense personal emotion, which this chapter strives to illustrate is unique to prison poetry.

The jailers Worry and Care speak in an ironic, mocking tone to Charles's captive heart, first insulting it, then ridiculing it. Rhetoric using mockery and irony occupied a central role in the chivalric code of conduct. As a nobleman, Charles was familiar with its use and may have practiced it in the context of challenging, or being challenged by, other noblemen. Knightly challenges were likely a visible part of Charles's aristocratic everyday life and experience, especially as its ritual element developed during the fifteenth century in *pas d'armes* jousting encounters and tournaments.⁷⁴ The embellished theatrical and artistic practice of giving and accepting knightly challenges, such as during jousting, was replete with splendid gestures and vociferations both derived from and also imitating feudal warfare, where frightening and intimidating the adversary were just as valuable as actual combat.⁷⁵ The ritualistic tradition of chivalric challenge was at times employed in a deliberately insulting manner as an expression of

⁷⁴ Keen describes how individual jousting arose from the knight's traditional and idealistic wait "in expectation of the man who will dare to fight him" and "longing for an antagonist." It also arose from a "kind of re-enactment of a classic military situation," also a well-established literary *topos* of early epic poetry, where a close-knit band or even single warrior vow to hold a specific, confined strategic position ("pass") from any assailants. Individual jousting also arose from the judicial duel, where a man puts himself before judges to uphold in arms his right or his (or his lady's) honor. These situations eventually "lent themselves readily to literary and theatrical elaboration" seen in extravagant fifteenth- and sixteenth-century jousts. As the ritual element of jousting and tourneying became much more complex and stylized, so too did the process of accepting challenge, formally indicating the nature of the trial to be undertaken, and the process of verifying the noble lineage of contestants become ceremonious and meticulous. By the late Middle Ages, jousting "was developing from a skill into an art," and connects the "expansion of the element of theatre in the *pas d'armes* and the growing divorce between skill in joust and tourney and true military skill," explaining that theatre and décor filled "the gap left by the declining relevance of chivalrous sport to martial activity." Keen, *Chivalry*, 201-203, 206.

⁷⁵ Matthew Strickland, "Provoking or Avoiding Battle? Challenge, Judicial Duel, and Single Combat in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Warfare," in *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France. Proceedings of the 1995 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Matthew Strickland (Paul Watkins: Stamford, 1998), 320; *William Marshal: The Flower of Chivalry*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 64.

the desire to avenge some willful or perceived slight inflicted upon the challenger that mirrors Worry's and Care's mockery and irony against Charles's captive heart.⁷⁶ As Charles may have witnessed at Agincourt or elsewhere, Matthew Strickland posits that the abuse of an enemy was commonplace during medieval warfare and stands in contrast to overt expressions of a chivalric brotherhood in arms that recognize, laud, and even reward the prowess and constancy of an opponent during hostilities.⁷⁷ Even though it is unclear whether Charles himself participated in this practice, the trading of insults still might have been compatible with acts of chivalric magnanimity. Abuse was very likely an integral part of the psychology of contemporary warfare and intimately connected with the mechanisms of bolstering warriors' own morale. Warriors

⁷⁶ Chris Given-Wilson states that such insults were recorded in *lettres de défi* exchanged between the French and English. The most famous was sent by Charles's own father, Louis d'Orléans, to English king Henry IV in person, resulting in a year-long correspondence from 1402-1403. Given-Wilson remarks that "there was nothing insulting in the language" of Louis's first *lettre*, but admits that "he had acted at best rashly, and more probably in a spirit of deliberate provocation." Henry's "brutal" response expressed "grant merveille" at the fact that Louis had written to him, seeing it as infringing upon the Anglo-French truce and their personal alliance concluded in 1399. Louis replied accusing Henry of "being a usurper," declaring that, "if [King] Richard [II] was dead, then 'God knows by whom'," evoking "the 'rigor and cruelty' which Henry had shown" towards Richard's former queen Isabelle, and goading Henry to either single or multiple combat. Henry's last *lettre* suspected Louis would not dare enter combat and "instead behave like 'the hireling shepherd [...] who, when he sees the wolf coming abandons his sheep and takes flight'." Louis ended by addressing him not as king but as Henry of Lancaster, "ravissant et regent indeument au royaume d'Angleterre." Chris Given-Wilson, "'The Quarrels of Old Women': Henry IV, Louis of Orléans, and Anglo-Chivalric Challenges in the Early Fifteenth Century," in *The Reign of Henry IV. Rebellion and Survival, 1403-1413*. eds. Gwilym Dodd and Douglas Briggs (Suffolk and New York: York Medieval Press and Boydell and Brewer, 2008), 28, 31-35.

⁷⁷ In medieval literature, Matthew Strickland emphasizes that trading insults is a prominent feature of chansons such as *Girart de Rousillon* and *Raoul de Cambrai*, where the protagonists hurl colorful abuse at one another, usually targeting lowly status and questionable paternity. Poet Jordan Fantosme portrays Henry II taunting his vanquished opponents after his triumph in 1173-1174, the rebel earl of Derby is mocked, and William the Lion's failure is parodied in burlesque incident in which a Scottish catapult at Wark in 1174 misfires and knocks over a knight. In medieval military history, in 1051 the garrison of a fortification near Alençon taunted Duke William (the Conqueror) by beating hides over the walls and shouting "Tanner!" in allusion to the supposedly lowly occupation of his mother, and, by implication, his bastardy. Duke William equally participated in taunting following the defeat of the Franco-Angevin force at Mortemer in 1054 when he had a messenger shout the news of the slaughter to the French camp from the top of a tree. Likewise, in 1136 the defenders of Exeter Castle hurled abuse at Stephen's besieging army, and in 1266 the rebel garrison on Kenilworth Castle mockingly conducted a papal excommunication of Henry III, his army, and his legate Ottobuono. Matthew Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 160, 162.

performed acts of braggadocio and of belittling their opponents to augment or denigrate reputation.⁷⁸ Such warriors employed gestures of ridiculing and taunting an enemy, though often the product of fear, as a psychological weapon in a ritual combination of boast and formal defense.⁷⁹ Charles's inclusion and depiction of Worry's and Care's mockery not only shows to what extent it existed as an integral part of the psychology of imprisoning enemy captives, but also to what extent it was part of Charles's daily reality of chivalric conduct. Including and depicting this scene also demonstrates how Charles was familiar with mockery as a means to elevate the jailers' reputation and denigrate that of the prisoner, yet paradoxically constituting correct or expected behavior.⁸⁰

The chivalric code of imprisonment, on the part of jailers and prisoners alike, therefore precluded the giving and receiving of abuse. Worry and Care abruptly shift to inform the heart that they intend to change its disposition, as they will accompany and stay with it according to the orders of Fortune: the singular figure responsible for its ordeal of imprisonment. Again, but now through the personified figure of his heart, Charles identifies Fortune as the force that

⁷⁸ Strickland refers to such insults as "the necessary, if darker corollary to a culture centred on honour and shame." Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 162.

⁷⁹ Strickland, 161.

⁸⁰ While Poiron alludes to Charles's self-perceived and allegorized discomfort ("le duc ira goûter quelque temps les rigueurs de la 'serre,' sous la garde moins sensible de 'Soing et Ennuy'"), threats to deny ransom, of violence and even of death were extremely rare. Strickland states that "in all such cases, the threat of death or physical suffering was only conditional, not wholly gratuitous," pointing out a "handful of notorious lords" in the entirety of medieval history who committed "outrages" against personal enemies and affirming that "such habitual cruelty on a large scale was the exception." He highlights that "by the fourteenth century, jurists were arguing that since a prisoner was held essentially as a pledge for the price of his ransom [...] death threats or any act contrary to law or the prisoner's honour freed the latter from his obligation." Strickland concludes that "while there were clear ideals of correct or praiseworthy conduct, in reality behaviour towards prisoners was largely dependent on personal volition." However, he adds that "at its most pragmatic, the desire to speed ransom payment had to be tempered by ensuring life, if not the well-being, of the prisoner. In the more intangible matter of honour, most, though not all, lords must have been constrained to some extent by fear of peer disapproval and the desire to embellish, not to sully, their reputation as knights." Poiron, "Création poétique et composition romanesque," 202; Strickland, 197, 199-200; Keen, *Laws of War*, 157-8.

incited his untimely capture and imprisonment. Similar to the first *ballade* (“Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d’enfance”) where he acquiesces to the power of reason, he resigns himself to the powers of fate which have kept him in prison for a long time. Charles’s resignation is reinforced by figures of authority such as the jailers Worry and Care, who represent and enforce the rules of imprisonment that govern captives. However, another double-allusion centered around the verb *demeurer* (to stay, live, or lodge) leads to a possible referential and autobiographical clue. The jailers inform the heart that they will “make their home with” it, signifying that Charles will be lodged with his English keepers “Worry and Care” in their manors (a proven historical fact), or that his mind will be “inhabited” (constantly pained) by “worry” and “care” during his captivity: “Avecques toy demourrons” (v. 7). Worry and Care’s use of *toi* in their mockery and irony while addressing the heart further elucidates the identification of the heart with the poet himself.

As in the previous *ballade* where Charles figures as an unripe fruit incapable of enjoying *largesse*, the chivalric right to exercise generosity, Charles’s heart is also in no physical condition to enjoy *largesse* in this *ballade*. Worry and Care continue mocking the heart by sarcastically asking it whether it acknowledges that the state of being a prisoner is to be often tormented and suffer much danger: “Dy nous, ne cognois tu mie / Que l’estat de prisonnier / Est que souvent lui ennuye / Et endure maint dangier” (132, vv. 12-15). That is, Worry and Care ask the heart if it actually knows what it means to be a captive in their custody. The jailers’ most potent reproach is found in the verb *ennuye*, “to be tormented,” which can also signify “to be annoyed” or “vexed”; a slight variation from one of its modern French definition “to be bored.”⁸¹ While Worry and Care explicitly say that they will be “doing” the heart “no danger,” they nonetheless tease the heart that it will be unable to exercise its noble duty to vengeance: “[...]”

⁸¹ DMF: *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, *Dictionnaire Larousse de la langue française*.

endure maint dangier / Dont il ne se peut vengier? / Pource nous ne te faisons / Nul tort [...]” (132, vv. 15-18). The jailers and the heart are not independent agents, but instead faculties of Charles himself that he fashions into practitioners of the codified, chivalric theatrical ritual. However, breaking from the medieval courteous lyric tradition, Charles alters the chivalric theatrical interplay to depict the heart as unable to act or avenge itself of the suffering of his imprisonment to preserve his honor. The jailers simply reiterate that they are following chivalric rules, and as such, they will not be harming the heart if they “treat” it “just as prisoners by custom are treated when taken in war:” “[...] se te gouvernons / Ainsi que communement / Sont prisonniers prise en guerre” (132, vv. 17-20). They insist that all prisoners taken in war are held in this fashion; they are acting as any other jailers would and should according to chivalric principle. His condition is not exceptional, and his suffering is not worse than the suffering of others.⁸²

While Charles’s condition as a prisoner of war is general and archetypal, his (re)conceptualization of it through the poetic medium is based on his individual experience. Charles’s heart, substituting for an “I” and “me” that he left out of the poem, represents an entire category of people (*prisonniers pris en guerre*) and conveys a solidarity through its anonymity. Its treatment as is customary (*communement*) of wartime prisoners does not raise it up as an ideal or model of chivalric virtue, which is the case for the conventional courtly lover-hero who yearns and suffers more than any other. The *ballade* is additionally devoid of any individual elevation or praise over, and in contrast to, a crowd of peers as is customary according to this convention in medieval epic poetry, and it instead situates the unremarkable hero-poet in an undistinguishable

⁸² Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, 208.

mass of fellow prisoners.⁸³ Charles's referential "I" is powerfully reduced and anonymously blended into a sea of countless other prisoners, disappearing to such an extent that it obfuscates any comprehension of his experience of imprisonment.⁸⁴ Charles's prison poetry reveals a highly individualistic nature in his efforts to grasp and (re)negotiate his condition. He interprets the personal, empirical conditions of his English captivity through the general and representative experience of an archetypal prisoner of war, and in the process forming what Galderisi calls an "autobiographical enterprise."⁸⁵ Both a necessity and a pastime, Charles's prison poetry exhibits what Galderisi also terms a "lyrical subjectivity," which demonstrates an awareness of his perspective and surroundings and all the emotions that accompany it, expressed through verse.⁸⁶ His "I" and "me" are seen here fractured into a multitude of first-person entities, subjective personifications, that slowly trickle through and allow the reader to perceive his everyday experience of captivity.⁸⁷ The interpretation of experience is thus highly individualized. Similar to his metonymic practice of subdividing his body parts (eyes, heart) into autonomous and conscious entities found in his poetry outside of prison, Charles splits the traditional first-person perspective of the poet into numerous third-person entities.

⁸³ Mühlethaler remarks the absence of "l'exaltation de l'individu par le dépassement des valeurs du groupe" in Charles's ballad, where the poet's *je*, "rabroué et rabaissé, se fond dans la foule anonyme des prisonniers." Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, 208; Evelyn Birge-Vitz, "Type et individu dans l'autobiographie médiévale," *Poétique* 24 (1975), 426-445.

⁸⁴ "La valeur référentielle du *je* s'estompe, et il paraît difficile d'accorder à la prison le statut d'expérience vécue ou de déceler, sous le voile du désir amoureux, la nostalgie de l'exilé politique." Mühlethaler, 198.

⁸⁵ Galderisi, "De la prison Dedalus," 106-107.

⁸⁶ Galderisi, 111.

⁸⁷ Galderisi, 111-112.

Charles processes his experience of imprisonment through a literary thematization, or the mental act or process of selecting particular topics as themes in discourse or words as themes in sentences. His poems additionally employ a kind of biographical thematization, both set in motion by and draws upon his lived experiences and the events of his English captivity. Charles handpicks themes of powerlessness, resignation, and abandonment, among others, from his ordeal of prison and clothes this “experience narrative” in allegorical narrative according to literary custom at the time. His use of allegory, while founded on experience, serves to communicate the events of the present and his memories of events in the past, becoming the language of a practice of “writing the self” (*écriture de soi*).⁸⁸ Similar to the spiritual act of meditation, Charles’s act of writing the self is a form of introspection and examination of his status, and ultimately, purpose in his environment or world. Charles enters an existential mode in which he struggles to define and make sense of both his own state as a captive and his experience of captivity. While poetry as introspection and poetry as experience may at times not be consistent, Charles is writing the self to interrogate his experiences, an exercise whereby he was able to process the memories of his imprisonment and subsequently codify them into poetic verse.

The lyric representation of Charles’s treatment and conditions during his English captivity was equally influenced by the chivalric ideals of the late Middle Ages. These ideals prescribed less barbaric fighting among knights and corresponded with the reduction in torture and killing of prisoners during war.⁸⁹ Medieval warriors eventually tried to limit the occurrence and mortality of serious combat by granting truces and respites, treating prisoners well, and

⁸⁸ Galderisi, “De la prison Dedalus,” 111.

⁸⁹ Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, 169.

ransoming rather than massacring them.⁹⁰ This last activity applied to Charles and the code of conduct of his jailers or keepers. In turn, the jailers or keepers can partake in the *largesse* of their monetary ransoms, which they can use in the construction of their castle-residences and in acts of chivalric generosity. In abrupt fashion, Worry and Care remark that Charles's heart is one such prisoner here now in England: "Don't es l'un presentement / Ou royaume d'Angleterre" (132, vv. 21-22). They tell the heart that its suffering in captivity is in fact (re)educating it in the noble code of warfare by delineating and defining *l'estat de prisonnier* and the state of their jailers and keepers, according to chivalric norms.

Pleasure (*plaisance lye*) and Melancholy (*merencolie*), emotions and faculties of the poet's mind, are personified into figures with whom he portrays himself passing comfortably, or miserably, the inconsolable hours of his captivity. Worry and Care insult the heart, telling it that "in place of merry Pleasure" when it "rises and takes its rest," it "will encounter Melancholy:" "En lieu de plaisance lye / Au lever et au couchier / Trouveras merencolie" (132, vv. 25-27). Both figures are strikingly female (as *dames*, ladies) or at least objects of desire, which the jailers reveal when continuing to tease the heart: "Souvent te fera veillier / La nuit et le jour songier" (132, vv. 28-29). Much of Charles's non-carceral poetry is figured on courtly images and themes of love toward a central female interest. The personified figures of Pleasure and Melancholy add an interesting dimension to Charles' autobiographical depiction of his own imprisonment through the allegorical figure of the heart. Charles enjoyed the fine company of "Lady" Pleasure, referring to his wife Bonne, his far-away *maistresse* and *dame*, the likely subject of his early

⁹⁰ *War and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of J.O. Prestwich*, eds. John Gillingham and James Clark Holt (Cambridge: Boydell, 1984); Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, cited by Kaeuper, 170.

prison poems, or the female companionship of free court life, but is now accompanied by a much more disruptive and villainous female figure, “Lady” Melancholy.

The Middle Ages witnessed a multiplication of theological commentaries, speculations, and variants on melancholy founded on this ancient medical doctrine. What is known as “melancholy” represents a specific set of psychological and physical symptoms in medieval humoral theory, in itself borrowing from theories from Antiquity. It has been richly represented in literature by authors, including Charles, who viewed themselves afflicted by it. As with all natural humors (substances or fluids) of the human body, melancholy could be found in excess and cause the primary symptoms of melancholic affection (fear and sadness) among a host of others.⁹¹ Its knowledge was often incomplete or indirect, but such humoral theories established a web of cosmological correspondences and analogies and reinforcing a universe of coherence and symmetry.⁹² Charles personifies his (self-perceived) symptoms and “state” of melancholy into a figure that (re)occurs on numerous instances in his prison poetry. Melancholy, like her cohorts Fortune and Reason, represent the specific rigor and trauma of insomnia for Charles while in prison. Her direct juxtaposition with the figure of Pleasure, who evokes his wife Bonne or as the archetypal desired lady in the medieval courtly lyric tradition, efficiently combines lovesickness

⁹¹ Jean Starobinski illustrates the ancient medical doctrine of the four humors of the body (black bile, yellow bile, blood, phlegm), their imbalances, and their symptoms, starting with the humor linked to melancholy, “[...] la *bile noire*, la substance épaisse, rongeante, ténébreuse que désigne le sens littéral de ‘mélancolie’ [...] Il en résultera diverses maladies: épilepsie, folie furieuse (manie), tristesse, lésions cutanées, etc. L’état que nous appelons aujourd’hui mélancolie n’est que l’une des multiples expressions du pouvoir pathogène de la bile noire, lorsque son excès ou son altération qualitative compromettent l’*isonomie* (c’est-à-dire l’équilibre harmonieux) des humeurs.” Starobinski importantly situates melancholy in its accepted, balanced association with the four qualities (dry, moist, hot, cold) and elements (water, air, earth, fire) of the natural world: “La mélancolie, par la vertu de l’analogie, allait se voir liée à la terre (qui est sèche et froide), à l’âge présénile, et à l’automne, saison dangereuse où l’atrabile exerce sa plus grande force.” Jean Starobinski, *L’Encre de la mélancolie* (Paris: Seuil, 2012), 21-22.

⁹² Starobinski, *L’Encre de la mélancolie*, 57-58.

with sleeplessness as the primary afflictions in Charles's fused allegorical and autobiographical depiction of his own imprisonment.

Like Pleasure and Melancholy, Charles's chains of Worry and Deep Thought (*fers de soussy et pensement*) are also faculties of his mind, but these are not actual chains, nor is melancholy separable from Charles. Though these two observations appear to work to contradictory ends, as the melancholy he actually feels is experiential unlike the allegorical chains. Charles's personal experience of imprisonment allows him to push out his understanding of it on an entirely allegorical plane. In this case, both his melancholy and chains are allegorical. Although "*fers*" no longer appear concrete and literal when allegorized through *soussy* and *pensement*, Charles still manages to communicate their feeling on prisoners' wrists while clothing it in allegory. The notion that Charles is deserving of his condition is here reinforced. This notion is also seen in the previous *ballade* ("Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d'enfance") where Charles acquiesces to the consequences of a young, foolish life under the tutelage of Folly which a sage Reason exacts upon him. While the effect of actual chains is physical pain or hinderance, Charles allegorizes abstractions (worry, deep thought) to communicate psychological pain and hinderance. The dungeons of the castles where he was held, such as Pontefract or Bolingbroke, undoubtedly contained chains for their less fortunate prisoners. While Charles was likely never chained during his English captivity, he is inspired by popularized and conventional images of imprisonment and the feelings these evoke. The culminating and climactic instance of ritualistic mockery upon Charles's heart is when the jailers Worry and Care dare him to (try to) take off his shackles.⁹³

⁹³ The imagery conveyed by the French verse "*si te deferre*" (132, v. 31) provides a better sense of the scope of the insult than Arn's and Fox's English translation of "free yourself," as the latter implies that the jailers are taunting Charles's heart to try to free itself from (or rather, undo) its chains, rather than free itself (of prison) in general. *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, 273.

In late medieval lyric poetry, the use of abstract allegorical imagery begins to wane, replaced by biographical imagery defined and determined by their literality, concreteness, particularity, tangibility, and physicality. This waning and replacement exemplify the shift in medieval courtly lyric poetry by the fifteenth century. Allegory still features in Charles's prison poetry; however, allegorical figures that should appear, such as Hope (*Espérance*), a staple of conventional courtly allegorical narratives in, for example, Guillaume de Lorris's beginning of the *Roman de la rose* or Alain Chartier's *Livre d'Espérance*, do not. As seen in the last *ballade* ("Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d'enfance"), Charles may not have experienced prison cell floors lined with straw or similarly harsh environments during his imprisonment. Yet, the straw is an entirely concrete and realistic observation of any prison environment. Charles's straw floor is a physical scenery and setting devoid of any allegorical weight or significance: he allegorizes other scenery in the same poem, such as the water of Happiness (*eaue de liesse*) or mold of Sadness (*moisy de tristesse*). The autobiographical aspect of Charles's poetry perhaps resides less in his evocation of concrete details but rather in the affective dimension of his experiences, a dimension that is still perceptible despite his recourse to allegory.

The *ballade* "Cueur, trop es plain de folie" strongly grasps the daily reality of prison, which Charles considers a place of suffering and melancholic withdrawal – where any paths towards the future and hopes of change appear to be suppressed.⁹⁴ The poem also merges chivalric *topoi* with referential markers that pave the way for a clear auto-biographical interpretation of not only the poem itself, but of Charles's greater corpus of prison poetry.⁹⁵ This

⁹⁴ Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, 206.

⁹⁵ Mühlethaler further demonstrates that the *ballade* "s'oppose à une récupération courtoise aussi bien par son registre d'expression que par l'importance des effets référentiels" by pointing out that "la guerre n'y est pas, comme dans d'autres ballades, la guerre amoureuse, mais bien le conflit qui oppose la France au 'royaume d'Angleterre' (refrain) et que l'adverbe 'presentement' ancre dans l'actualité historique." Mühlethaler, 208.

movement must be importantly put in parallel with the historical context and theme of the continuing war with the English. The textual presence of the adverb “presently” (*presentement*) and geographic marker “in England” (*ou royaume d’Angleterre*) serve to anchor the poem in real events. The *ballade* offers a unique perspective into Charles’s poetic progression. It both assumes a courtly thematic involving a personified “register” of the (poet’s) heart and its jailers and historically situates itself in the macro-conflict of the Hundred Years’ War between France and England, and more specifically in the micro-conflict between jailers and jailed.⁹⁶ Charles conceives and communicates his imprisonment through conventional literary imagery and devices, including people, such as the jailers Worry and Care, and items, such as the chains of Worry and Deep Thought and, as seen in the previous *ballade*, the straw floor (*feurre*) of a common criminal’s jail cell.

Ballade “Quant je suis couschié en mon lit”⁹⁷

Melancholy’s nefarious actions convey precisely the symptoms that fill Charles’s prison poetry. Charles complains about Melancholy, who prevents him from sleeping at night and preoccupies him with dreams during the daytime. The reoccurring theme of the deprivation of

⁹⁶ Mühlethaler questions whether the real, lived experience can be truly felt in Charles’s prison poetry: “le poids du vécu serait-il plus présent dans les ballades, françaises ou anglaises, de l’exil?” In speaking of the “weight” of the lived experience, he alludes to the form and nature of Charles’s medieval literature, stating that he was not a clerk, and therefore lived experience could impose itself in his writing to the detriment of critical distance, where such experience is duly interpreted and “sublimated.” Mühlethaler remarks that Charles’s literary interplay triumphs over memories of his captivity, observing that the poet produces countless metaphors of isolation and enclosure and remarking that prison is only an allegorical and internalized space among all the others Charles processes. However, he concedes that literal imagery may at times edge out metaphorical imagery: “Toutefois [...] le voile semble se déchirer à certains moments et, en passant d’une ballade à l’autre, le lecteur a parfois l’impression de voir le sens littéral l’emporter sur le sens métaphorique.” Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, 194-195.

⁹⁷ Champion, Arn and Fox, and Mühlethaler all number this *ballade* 8. See note 43 above.

Charles's sleep is also powerfully encapsulated through another rich arrangement of personified, allegorical figures in his *ballade* below:

Quant je suis couseüé en mon lit,
 Je ne puis en paix reposer;
 Car toute la nuit mon cueur lit
 Ou rommant de plaisant penser
 Et me prie de l'escouter.
 Si ne l'ose desobeir
 Pour doubte de le courroucer:
 Ainsi je laisse le dormir.

Ce livre si est tout escript
 Des fais de ma dame sans per.
 Souvent mon cueur de joye rit,
 Quant il les list ou oyt compter;
 Car certes tant sont a louer
 Qu'il y prent souverain Plaisir.
 Moy mesmes ne m'en puis lasser:
 Ainsi je laisse le dormir.

Se mes yeulx demandent respit
 Par sommeil qui les vient grever,
 Il les tense par grant despit
 Et si ne les peut surmonter.
 Il ne cesse de soupirer
 A part soy; j'ay lors, sans mentir,
 Grant paine de le rapaiser:
 Ainsi je laisse le dormir.

Amour, je ne puis gouverner
 Mon cueur, car tant vous vault server
 Qu'il ne scet jour ne nuit cesser:
 Ainsi je laisse le dormir (24-25, vv. 1-28).

The *ballade* returns to the familiar format of Charles's *ballades*: it is 28-lines long and has three huitains in the ABABBABA rhyme scheme, a four-line *envoi*, and the refrain "Ainsi je laisse le dormir." However, it contains a few variations, as it is composed in octosyllabic verse and its *envoi* features an irregular AAAB rhyme scheme. Its third strophe also contains a noticeable

caesura: “Il ne cesse de soupirer / A part soy; j’ay lors, sans mentir” (25, vv. 21-22). Charles is unable to peacefully rest or sleep while lying on his bed because the entire night his heart reads from the Book of Pleasant Thought (*rommant de plaisant penser*) and begs him to listen. Akin to the friendly company of Pleasure and Melancholy, Charles personifies his own heart into a sort of companion with whom he shares his bed chamber, and who resembles an irritating roommate whose late-night distractions disturb him from resting peacefully. Charles does not dare disobey his heart for fear of angering it, and therefore forgets about sleeping, conceding to his heart and relinquishing any possibility of sleep. It is significant that Charles not only wishes to not anger the figure of his heart, but also desires to obey it, perhaps due to the contents of this Book of Pleasant Thought which is full of “the deeds of his peerless lady,” or cherished memories of her. Charles recounts how his heart rejoices when it reads and hears his lady’s deeds recited aloud, but resents whenever his eyes ask for rest and sleep. Because his heart cannot compromise with his eyes’ demands, Charles must (unsuccessfully) comfort his moping heart which sighs ceaselessly when it is alone.

The poem (re)emphasizes the important role and imagery of the bed through Charles’s struggles to sleep or rest during his captivity. He paints the picture of a solitary figure whose physical and mental well-being depends on the happy presence of his lady, or on her unhappy absence.⁹⁸ Charles evokes his troubles sleeping or resting through a panoply of allegories, including the hard bed of Painful Thought in the *ballade* “Le beau souleil, le jour saint Valentin.” “[...] j’avoye toute la nuit dormy / Sur le dur lit d’Ennuieuse Pensee” (91, vv. 7-8). He again reverses the romanticized imagination of the bed and sleeping found in traditional

⁹⁸ “Le poète s’y présente seul, dormant ou essayant de dormir: insomnie amoureuse, agréable, comme c’est le cas dans cette ballade, ou douloureuse, quand la dame n’est plus.” Cerquiglini-Toulet, “Espèces d’espaces,” 12.

courtly and chivalric medieval poetry and its foundational works with the absence of a comforting or inspiring figure.⁹⁹ He instead only portrays his lone, recumbent body that spends its time crying into cushions and regretting his imprisoned condition: “Lors en moillant de larmes mon coessin / Je regrettay ma dure destinee” (92, vv. 17-18). In the *ballade* “Puis qu’ainsi est que loingtain de vous suis,” he shows himself clutching his pillow and calling out for his absent lady and love interest, but not before he depicts himself again in his bed with difficulty sleeping as he is “attacked” by Thought and Desire: (“Lors acolle mon oreillier et crie” (29, v. 13), “Quant en mon lit doy reposer de nuis, / Penser m’assault et Desir me guerrie” (29, vv. 9-10). Charles reappropriates imagery and symbolism of the bed and sleeping, which he associates with personified abstractions of his (human) emotions and also detaches from their courtly and chivalric connotations. Charles’s metonymic and autonomous body parts (heart and eyes) undergo friction and conflict. The figure of his heart plays a harmful role in preventing the prisoner-poet from much-needed rest because of its longing for his distant lady. Both keenly parallel the disruptive figure of Melancholy that he introduces in the previous *ballade*. Charles’s poetry features the theme of a war of love, or rather more broadly, tensions of love, which the *ballade* “Quant je suis couschié en mon lit” displays. Contrary to the belief that the presence of allegory eliminates the possibility of an autobiographical reading of his prison poetry, motifs such as a prisoner’s dialogue with his jailers or a depiction of his weeping personified heart instead allow for a greater biographical understanding.

⁹⁹ “Nulle figure debout ne se présente à son chevet pour l’admonester ou le consoler, telle Philosophie chez Boèce, ou Espérance chez Alain Chartier.” Cerquiglini-Toulet, “Espèces d’espaces,” 11.

IV. Captivity in England: Part 2 (1429-1436)

In December 1429, Charles's custody was transferred from Cumberworth to John Cornwall, Lord Fanhope, a famed jousting, a member of the Privy Council, and a wealthy soldier-magnate well-placed at the Lancastrian court.¹⁰⁰ Cornwall was by far the oldest of Charles's keepers, seeing as he may have been thirty years older. Cornwall knew Charles and his family well, and might have even met him before the battle of Agincourt.¹⁰¹ He had also long been Charles's brother Jean's keeper, and appeared largely interested in profiting, financially or otherwise, from watching over the Orléans brothers.¹⁰² A string of French prisoners passed through his keeping and his residence at Ampthill Castle in Bedfordshire since 1415.¹⁰³ As one of the wealthiest and most decorated soldier-magnates in England, Cornwall's affluence could have

¹⁰⁰ Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," 40.

¹⁰¹ Cornwall was a renowned athlete who was awarded prizes by the duke of Burgundy when he participated in a tournament in Paris with French king Charles VI in attendance, and had even played tennis with Charles's father Louis d'Orléans. After Cornwall beat Louis, the Dauphin (the future Charles VII) was said to have sent the "celebrated" tennis balls to Henry V. Cornwall also experienced imprisonment like Charles, as Henry IV locked him in the Tower of London in 1400 after his clandestine marriage with Henry's sister, Elizabeth. Champion notes Cornwall's illustrious military background, stating that "c'était un capitaine anglais, d'un renom considérable, cousin germain et compagnon de guerre de Henry de Lancastre" and interestingly adding that Cornwall and Henry were both cousins and also comrades in battle: McLeod refers to Cornwall as "that tough old campaigner." A distinguished soldier for Henry IV and V, after losing his son at Meaux in 1421 Cornwall left military service. Later, during his keeping of Charles and after, he became a royal councilor and resumed his activities as envoy. Askins, 41; Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 195; McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 177; A.C. Reeves, "Sir John Cornewaille, Lord Fanhope," *Lancastrian Englishmen* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 139-202.

¹⁰² Champion, 195.

¹⁰³ The first prisoner, diplomat and author Ghillebert de Lannoy (1386-1462), whom Cornwall personally captured at Agincourt, raised his ransom amount in less than a year and was freed. The second, Louis de Bourbon, count of Vendôme (1376-1446), whom Cornwall also personally captured at Agincourt and who was kept from around 1417-1426 (or around 1423-1425, according to Askins) also raised his ransom amount and was freed. The third was Guillaume d'Estouteville (or de Botiller), the fourth was "the lord Gaucourt" (most likely Raoul de Gaucourt) and finally, Charles. According to McLeod, Cornwall's motivations to take up Charles's custody may have been financial in order to assure that Charles finally raised and paid his ransom: "we are not told why Sir John had become the keeper of Charles, but from what we know of him it seems not unlikely that he had himself asked for the position, the better to keep an eye on the duke's finances, in order to extract the sums that were still owing to him." Askins, 40-41; McLeod, 177.

afforded Charles the opportunity to nurture his literary tastes. The evidence of Cornwall's activity in the book trade may have been beneficial to Charles,¹⁰⁴ allowing him to (continue to) participate in the manuscript culture among the English social and intellectual elite in exchanging and copying titles, similar to when he was with Cumberworth at Bolingbroke and with Waterton at Pontefract. Cornwall also could have cultivated Charles's sensitivity to courtly themes of love and romantic longing following his wife Elizabeth's death in 1425.¹⁰⁵ Cornwall and Charles were both widowers, as Charles's second wife Bonne is said to have died sometime between 1430-1435.¹⁰⁶

Charles's feelings of sadness and despair in mourning for his deceased wife Bonne are explicitly referenced in his prison poetry, importantly reflecting the specific moment he learned of her passing. Disheartening news of her worsening health and sickness in the years preceding her death is referenced in his *ballade* "Helas! helas! Qui a laissié entrer:" "Que sa Dame, la tresplaisant et belle / [...] Est a present en griefve maladie" (79, vv. 4-6). His reactions to the news of her death are found in a range of poems. In the *ballade* "Las! Mort, qui t'a fait si hardie," Charles exclaims "Puis que tu as prins ma maistresse [...] Las! je suy seul, sans compagnie! / Adieu ma Dame, ma lyesse!" (81-82, vv. 5, 19-20). Similar reactions are found in

¹⁰⁴ Cornwall was heavily involved with the English mercantile community and familiar with the London book trade, which a recently-discovered illuminated psalter belonging to him attests (Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.11.7). Arn also posits that the Harley manuscript of Charles's English poems eventually wound up in the hands of persons engaged in the wool trade, which may have been Charles's gift to Cornwall. Askins, 41-42; Reeves, "Sir John Cornewaille, Lord Fanhope," 154; Arn, *Fortunes Stablnes*, 116.

¹⁰⁵ Askins rejects the claim that "John [Cornwall] (who never remarried) was left without wife or child to admire or to share in his successes," stating instead the "reality" of his female companionship. Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," 41.

¹⁰⁶ Champion precises the exact date of Bonne's death in December 1435, when Charles had moved on from Cornwall's keeping and Amptill Castle, but it was known that she was in poor health for some time before this and nearing death. Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 271; *Ballades et rondeaux*. ed. Mühlethaler, 8.

his *ballade* “Je me souloye pourpenser:” “Car Mort l’a mise soubz la lame / Et l’a hors de ce monde ostee” (84, vv. 6-7). Charles also expresses his sadness in his *ballade* “J’ay fait l’obsequ de ma Dame:” “N’en parlons plus: mon cueur se pasme / Quant il oyt les fais vertueux / D’elle, qui estoit sans nul blasme” (95, vv. 23-25). Finally, his *ballade* “Puis que Mort a prins ma maistresse” shows such reactions: “[...] sur toutes amer souloye, / Mourir me convient en tristesse; / Certes plus vivre ne pourroye” (96, vv. 2-4). Although it was a biographical event that occurred during his captivity, the mention of Bonne’s death in Charles’s poetry is not representative of the actual experience and any constraints he encountered. Charles’ poetry during this period served as a vehicle to convey his grieving and distress over the loss of his wife Bonne. However, his poetry did not communicate any emotions or observations of his imprisonment. It remains difficult to make any connection between the constraints of his keeper Cornwall or prison at Amptill and his poetic creativity.

In August 1432, Charles was transferred into the care of William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk and also member of the King’s (Privy) Council.¹⁰⁷ Suffolk was only two years younger than Charles: he served in Henry V’s 1415 campaign but was wounded at the siege of Harfleur, where his own father died, and sent back to England. His elder brother, briefly third earl, was then killed at Agincourt, where Charles was also captured, which thrust him at a young age into one of England’s premier earldoms.¹⁰⁸ One of Suffolk’s political objectives was peace with

¹⁰⁷ Askins, “The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers,” 42.

¹⁰⁸ Suffolk returned to France in 1417 as “an energetic captain in Henry V’s wars,” serving under first Thomas Montague, earl of Salisbury, and was first captured by the French at the Battle of Baugé (1421). After Salisbury’s death in 1428, he served under John, duke of Bedford and regent in France. Pursuing the siege of Orléans, the nexus of Charles’s own lands, in 1429, the arrival of Joan of Arc’s forces raised the siege, and he was captured a second time by the French at the Battle of Jargeau (1429). Suffolk was a prisoner of Jean (“the Bastard”) de Dunois, Charles’s half-brother, with whom he seemed to have formed a friendship, before he was shortly ransomed and returned to England to pursue his political ambitions. Suffolk married the widowed countess of Salisbury, Alice, only daughter of Thomas Chaucer, “the speaker” of the House of Commons and granddaughter of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer. Derek Pearsall, “The Literary Milieu of Charles of Orléans and the Duke of Suffolk, and

France, which Charles may have swayed him towards when he assumed Charles's custody in 1432.¹⁰⁹ The circumstances surrounding Charles's transfer from Cornwall to Suffolk are unclear. Taking charge of Charles presented Suffolk with the opportunity to be among a man of like tastes and aims. Both had a love of (French) literature, especially poetry, and culture, and both wished to finally cement a peace between their kingdoms.¹¹⁰ Charles entered upon the happiest period of his captivity, and the advantage may have been mutual: Suffolk's power and influence with the crown and in England contributed to advancing his ransom and release efforts. Aside from the much-maligned reputation Shakespeare assigned him, perhaps based more on myth than facts,¹¹¹ Suffolk is known as one of the most prominent literary patrons in England at the time.¹¹²

the Authorship of the Fairfax Sequence," *Charles d'Orléans in England (1415-1440)*, ed. Arn, 145-146; Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 197.

¹⁰⁹ After becoming steward of the royal household in 1433, Suffolk brought Charles to his London residence to meet Hue de Lannoy, ambassador to Philippe le Bon, to discuss a possible peace plan. Negotiations progressed enough that in 1435 Charles was brought across the English Channel to Calais – a journey to which he alludes in his poems – to be called upon as a broker or counter-bargain should he be needed at the congress of Arras, where Suffolk was the English chief representative. However, the congress broke down and the plan failed, with the duke of Burgundy reconciling with French king Charles VII, and Bedford dying shortly afterward. Charles was regrettably brought back to England. Charles left Suffolk's custody and Suffolk was forced to follow Humphrey, duke of Gloucester's more hawkish counsel. As heir to the throne, Gloucester was keen to preserve Henry V's conquests in France. Pearsall, "The Literary Milieu," 146.

¹¹⁰ McLeod proposes that because Cornwall was made Baron Fanhope in July of that year, he wished to be released from his duties of guardianship with Charles, or that this change was officially decided for and mandated to him. Likewise, McLeod is unsure whether Suffolk himself asked to care for Charles or if he was chosen for the duty, but postulates that the former is more probable, and he requested Charles's custody, perhaps not only because of his fondness for the French, but also in light of the friendship he made with Charles's half-brother Dunois as this former's prisoner. McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 186.

¹¹¹ Pearsall quips that history and Shakespeare "often amount to the same thing." Pearsall, 147.

¹¹² Champion describes Suffolk as "cultivé et bon," and states that at both Wingfield and Ewelme, "on aime les livres dans cet intérieur." He paints a romantic picture of Suffolk's francophile tastes and passion for French lyric poetry, which inspired him to compose his own poetry expressing the torturous effects of love: "le comte William sait le français et pour se distraire, tandis qu'il était captif en France, il avait tourné des rondeaux en se lamentant, sur le mode convenu, des maux que fait souffrir Amour." McLeod stresses that other than Suffolk's talent and affinity for poetry, his other traits "distinguished him sharply from the majority of his other fellow English nobles. These included an "instinctive liking for the French, even while he was fighting them," and a "political sense" that led him to gradually realize "folly" of the Hundred Years' War that "had robbed him personally of a father and three brothers, and had reduced both kingdoms to a state of impoverishment." Champion, 198; McLeod, 187.

Suffolk was also, but perhaps in a lesser degree than Charles, a poet and lover of letters who composed poems himself during his brief captivity in France following the Battle of Jargeau (1429) that were destined for his absent lady and that more or less drew upon conventional themes of faithful love and the pains of absence.¹¹³ Suffolk owned a manor in the village of Ewelme, near Oxford, where the Chaucers were lords: the generous hospitality of Thomas Chaucer's household at Ewelme had been previously celebrated by poet and monk John Lydgate in his "Balade at the Departing of Thomas Chaucer."¹¹⁴ It is doubtful, however, that Charles met Lydgate at Wingfield, Ewelme, or Suffolk's house in London.¹¹⁵

At this stage of Charles's English captivity, it has been suggested that he enjoyed female company, namely based on two pieces of evidence.¹¹⁶ The first is in the work of René d'Anjou,

¹¹³ McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 187.

¹¹⁴ Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate: a Bio-bibliography* (Victoria: English Literary Studies, 1997), 20-21; Pearsall, 149.

¹¹⁵ McLeod believes that for Charles, entering this company "after so many comparatively solitary years" must have felt "like coming into the fresh air from a stuffy room." Charles would have been relieved to now find himself "frequently in the earl's company and went with him occasionally from his castle at Wingfield to his father-in-law's manor (Ewelme) in Oxfordshire." It is still unlikely that Charles endured such solitude during his captivity, as almost every keeper before Suffolk involved Charles in their personal lives by bringing him home to their country manors, to their literary and social gatherings, and even on travels for business or pleasure. Charles was indeed alone at times, but not nearly as long as McLeod assumes. It appears as if McLeod is again reverting to his stereotype that Charles, especially at locations such as Bolingbroke Castle, spent much of his time alone and was inspired by feelings of anxious, desperate loneliness in composing his prison poetry. There is little evidence of Charles's heavy surveillance by his keepers – McLeod supports his claim by referring to the salary they received for his keeping – but these funds could have been a reward for faithful service to the crown. McLeod, 187; Walter Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the Fifteenth Century*, trans. Ann E. Keep (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 166-170.

¹¹⁶ McLeod hypothesizes that Charles could "sometimes enjoy the pleasure of feminine company," of which he may well not have had much "since those far-off days when Robert Waterton used to take him from Pontefract to his own home at Methley, until Henry V put a stop to those occasional diversions." Charles's poetry "shows that he had a soft spot for lovers," which could be explained by having an "amorous adventure of his own" around the time he spent at Wingfield and Ewelme. His poems "definitely suggest that a young English woman had fallen in love with him and that he had responded, in so far as his condition as captive allowed." McLeod also comments that between Wingfield and Ewelme, Charles was "in a household where he was in close contact with civilized company" when "such a mutual attraction may have easily occurred." The identity of this "young woman" who had fallen in love with the "romantic prisoner" has "long remained a mystery and is still not definitively known." McLeod, 188, 208, 209, 213.

also a prince-poet and peer to Charles, the *Livre du cuer d'amours espris*, where he describes how Charles remained in England for such a while that he learnt the language and was acquainted with a beautiful and intelligent woman.¹¹⁷ The second is heavily contested in one of his seven famed English poems appearing in the manuscript BL MS. Harley 682, which may have been a gift to Cornwall and ended up in the hands of English merchants. This English poem appears to spell the name "Anne Molins" in acrostic, likely the young widow of Sir William Moleyns, killed in the French wars around 1428-1429, who was a first cousin of Alice Chaucer. She may have met Charles during his time at Wingfield with Suffolk's circles. These English poems are also not definitively Charles's own work, as he likely found a scribe to translate the poetry that he created, even if he knew English as René d'Anjou implied.¹¹⁸ Charles thus did not resemble a monk cloistered in nearly solitary confinement. He instead found himself in social circles of the English provincial gentry, and now among members of national literary fame in the Chaucer family. In these circles, he was able to exercise platonic forms of courtship, considered

¹¹⁷ "[...] tant y demouray qu'en aprins le langaige / Par lequel fus acoint de dame belle et saige." Pierre Champion, "La dame anglaise de Charles d'Orléans," *Romania* 49 (1923): 580-584; Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 209.

¹¹⁸ Champion expresses no view on the authorship of the seven English poems, including the one above, supporting the accepted notion that the primary female love interest in Charles's French poems was his (late) wife Bonne, and that he included these English poems "merely because he liked him." Others also believe that the English poems were included in the manuscript at Charles's request, noting that they were not written in Charles's own hand, and stipulating that Suffolk was their real author. This would make sense as Suffolk may have already knew Anne Molins via his wife for some time and courted her. Arn dismisses any connection between Charles's poetry (both French and English) and the "real" identities of the ladies of Charles's poetic world." She regrets how many have previously "given rein to their imaginations in providing Charles with feminine companionship during his years in England." Arn states that the "discovery of anagrammatical evidence for Charles's romantic encounters and other friendships has been generally dismissed by scholars." Besides Anne Molins, Suffolk's wife Alice, Waterton's wife Cecilia, and even "in a coy sort of way," Isabelle, duchess of Burgundy have all been suggested recipients of Charles's courtly love poetry. Champion, "La dame anglaise," 580-584; McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 379; Henry MacCracken, "An English Friend of Charles d'Orléans," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 26.1 (1911): 142-80; Arn, *Fortunes Stabilnes*, 19; *The English Poems of Charles d'Orléans*. ed. Steele, Robert. Early English Text Society 215 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), xxii-xxiv.

courteous and chivalric acts.¹¹⁹ This environment markedly differed from any sort of harsh(er) prison, in contrast with Bolingbroke, and Suffolk's literary and social circle provided Charles intellectual stimulation.

Charles's prison poetry is one of the first autobiographical narratives of imprisonment in verse in the Middle Ages.¹²⁰ Before Charles, prisoners including fellow royalty, English king Richard I (Lionheart), had begun to seek out the poetic medium to communicate their physical and psychological affectivity from their experiences of imprisonment.¹²¹ Contemporary works such as Scottish king James I's *Kingis Quair* (ca. 1423-1424), French bailiff of Auxerre Jean Regnier's *Livre de la prison* (1432-1433), and posterior ones, such as the anonymous prisoner of Loches castle's *Le prisonnier descomforté* (1488-1489) and Philippe de Vigneulles's poems

¹¹⁹ This "outlet" even may have taken the form of addressing and reciting poems to Waterton's wife as a way of expressing his gratitude to his keeper's hospitality by flattering her and her beauty through courtly, chivalric poetry. Pearsall proposes this exact idea in regards to Charles's attention to Alice, Suffolk's wife, as he perhaps also addressed poems to her and instead, agreeing with Champion's initial speculation, names Alice as the "dame belle et saige" whom René d'Anjou mentions in his book. Pearsall labels Charles's "falling in love" put forward by McLeod as "polite fiction" and "no more than an appropriate compliment to her and to her husband (and not a suggestion of any clandestine affair)." Pearsall, "The Literary Milieu," 149-150.

¹²⁰ While prison is referenced in the literature of medieval chronicles (*chansons de geste* and *romans de chevalerie*), such as King Louis IX's capture at Damiette during the Crusades, Planche explains that "au XIVe siècle, plusieurs *Dits* sont destinés à consoler d'illustres captifs. Ainsi *Le Confort d'Ami* de Guillaume de Machaut exhorte à la sagesse Charles II de Navarre, pris par Jean le Bon, et *La Fontaine Amoureuse* [...] destinée à Jean de Berry, fils du même Jean le Bon, emmené en Angleterre à la place de son père, après le traité de Brétigny (1360)." More importantly, "au XVe siècle, ce sont souvent les prisonniers qui disent leur malheur." Alice Planche, "Prison de prince, prison de vilain. Deux aspects de la prison au XVe siècle: Charles d'Orléans et Villon," in *Marginalité et littérature*, eds. Maurice Accarie, Jean-Guy Gouttebroze, and Eliane Kotler (Nice: Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis, ILF-CNRS, 2001), 293-294.

¹²¹ Richard (1157-1199) was first imprisoned by Leopold V of Austria at Durnstein Castle and then by the Holy Roman Emperor Henri VI for nearly 18 months from 1192-1194. There are striking similarities between Richard and Charles: Jean Favier describes how Richard passionately and personally participated in composing poetry both while sponsoring a vibrant literary circle at court and while in prison: "Il se fait une gloire de composer, et sur un ton très personnel, en langue d'oïl aussi bien que dans une langue d'oc que, comme duc d'Aquitaine, il se plait à pratiquer." The two extant *chansons* composed by Richard in captivity fascinatingly echo Charles's agonizing wait for ransom and liberation, and also his anxiety of abandonment and death the longer he is imprisoned: "Ce seivent bien mi homme et mi baron, / Englois, Normant, Poitevin et Gascons, / Que je n'avoie si povre compaignon / Cui je laissasse por avoir en prison." Jean Favier, *Les Plantagenêts. Origines et destin d'un empire, XIe-XIVe siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 464, 593-595; Régine Pernoud, *Richard Cœur de Lion* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 228, 232.

(1490-1491), continued to feel the allure of poetry to recount their ordeals.¹²² The inclusion of a greater number of autobiographical markers and referents is referenced in the chronological development of Charles's prison poetry towards the end of his English captivity.

V. Towards an Imagery of Desire: Later Prison Poetry

***Ballade "Nouvelles ont couru en France"*¹²³**

At this later stage of his English captivity, Charles' poetry acquired a more overt autobiographical tone, where the prince, the object of the *envoi*, is identified with the poet himself and author of the poem.¹²⁴ Promising peace talks between England and France, orchestrated by the Burgundians and duke Philippe le Bon, led to a meeting in Arras in July 1435. At English king Henry VI's request, Charles's keeper Suffolk was named a member of the English delegation to attend.¹²⁵ At the request of the Burgundian envoys repeatedly sent to England and received by Suffolk in 1433, Charles was also sent to help bolster the peace plans' success. Charles's poetry began to reflect hope and renewal in anticipation of not only a return to France after twenty years of captivity, but also of successful negotiations and payment of his ransom. Nonetheless, discussions broke down and peace plans fizzled out. Charles never arrived in Arras and was never released, and he instead returned to England and Suffolk's custody.

¹²² As previously mentioned, James was held in the Tower of England (whose stay from 1416-1418 coincided with that of Charles, from 1415-1417) then, like Charles, at Windsor and Pontefract Castle (although never at the same time and in the custody of the same noblemen), and at Nottingham and Kenilworth Castles. Jean Regnier was held at Beauvais, and Philippe de Vigneulles was held at Chavigny. *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, eds. Arn and Mooney, 7-8; Vincensini, "Espaces et pathétique," 157-158.

¹²³ *Ballade* numbered 82 by Champion, 122 by Arn and Fox, and 105 by Mühlethaler. See note 43 above.

¹²⁴ "Le poète s'est enfin identifié avec le Prince: l'auteur de la ballade, avec celui à qui s'adresse l'*envoi*." Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 332.

¹²⁵ Joycelyne Dickinson, *The Congress of Arras, 1435* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 12, 23, 42-43, 50-52; Champion, *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*, 272.

Charles's *ballade* below delivers a defiant, resolute message intended to push back against the weight of years of imprisonment and the encroachment of age (as Charles was now in his forties, considered the medieval threshold of old age):

Nouvelles ont couru en France
 Par mains lieux que j'estoye mort,
 Dont avoient peu desplaisance
 Aucuns qui me hayent a tort.
 Autres en ont eu desconfort,
 Qui m'ayment de loyal vouloir,
 Comme mes bons et vrais amis.
 Si fais a toutes gens savoir
 Qu'encore est vive la souris!

Je n'ay eu ne mal ne grievance,
 Dieu mercy, mais suis sain et fort
 Et passe temps en esperance
 Que paix, qui trop longuement dort,
 S'esveillera et par accort
 A tous fera liesse avoir.
 Pource de Dieu soient maudis
 Ceulx qui sont dolens de veoir
 Qu'encore est vive le souris!

Jeunesse sur moy a puissance,
 Mais Vieillesse fait son effort
 De m'avoir en sa gouvernance.
 A present faillera son sort:
 Je suis assez loing de son port,
 De pleurer vueil garder mon hoir.
 Loué soit Dieu de paradis
 Qui m'a donné force et povoir,
 Qu'encore est vive la souris! (132-133, vv. 1-28).

The *ballade* again shows a variation in Charles's style, containing three huitains in octosyllabic verse and no *envoi*, but featuring a familiar 28-line length, ABABBCDC rhyme scheme, and refrain "Qu'encore est vive la souris!" in ecphonesis form. Charles targets a potent force, rumors and the spread of news throughout France that he had died and was seeking to dispel them. His

juxtaposition of this false news with the act of dying is important, as Charles long metaphorically and allegorically associated his captivity with death (imagery of sleeping). Another juxtaposition is also worth noting, as Charles introduces for the first time the theme of enemies and allies. He contrasts how his alleged death hardly bothered those who unjustly despise him, but it distressed those who love him as true friends. Charles defiantly proclaims his vitality to both friends and foes using a common medieval proverb, “the mouse is still alive” (*encore est vive la souris*).¹²⁶ This *ballade* could be interpreted as the logical conclusion to the “triptych” of our first two *ballades* “Je fu en fleur ou temps passé enfance” and “Cueur, trop es plain de folie,” arranged accordingly as early as Antoine Vérard’s edition (1509). The *ballade* “Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d’enfance” recounts the past and the conditions surrounding Charles’s capture and imprisonment as a re-visitation of the initial causes of his captivity. The *ballade* “Cueur, trop es plain de folie” then grasps the everyday reality of his present imprisonment and physical space of prison: a *locus horribilis* whose misery shows no sign of alleviating.¹²⁷ The *ballade* “Nouvelles ont couru en France” finally appears to speculate upon the future by dispelling possibilities of any intrusive, sudden death across his poetic consciousness, and by validating hopeful and wishful possibilities of a life after prison through the refrain and exclamation “the mouse is still alive!”¹²⁸ Charles’s *je* is used by this refrain to not only compare the poet to a common house mouse, but also to evoke the same sympathy one would have for this rodent during the Middle

¹²⁶ Joseph Morawski, *Proverbes français antérieurs au XVe siècle*, CFMA 47 (Paris: Champion, 1925), no. 638; *Poetry of Charles d’Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Arn and Fox, trans. Palmer, 884.

¹²⁷ Mühlethaler characterizes the *ballade* “Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d’enfance” as “un regard jeté en arrière, sur les causes premières de la captivité,” then asserts that the *ballade* “Cueur, trop es plain de folie” “saisit la réalité quotidienne de la prison, lieu de la souffrance et du repli mélancolique, dans lequel s’abolit toute ouverture vers le futur, tout espoir de changement.” Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, 206.

¹²⁸ The *ballade* “nie cet espace de mort en revendiquant un avenir et un ailleurs possibles.” Mühlethaler, 206.

Ages.¹²⁹ These affective connections possibly dismantle any sense of melancholic isolation and imprisonment, as they promise happier days ahead. The *ballade* offers additional proof that Charles actively divorces his everyday experience of captivity from romantic emotions of love. The evocation of France in the very first line designates it as the country of friends (*bons et vrais amis*) and of those who have not forgotten the captive. However, the final juxtaposition of youth (*jeunesse*) with old age (*vieillesse*), and of maturity with foolishness,¹³⁰ profoundly marks the poem, which positions itself, like in the past-present-future triptych, in a succession of fellow poems that dwell upon the passage of time.

It is unsurprising that Charles falls back upon allegory and personification to create his juxtaposition between youth and old age. He describes how Youth has power over him, but Old Age makes an effort to keep him under her power. Youth and Old Age join Charles's long cast of feminine ("ladies," *dames*) personified abstractions, such as Folly and Reason in his *ballade* "Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d'enfance" and Pleasure and Melancholy in his *ballade* "Cueur, trop es plain de folie," who exert power upon him before and during his captivity. The defiance he communicates through the proverbial expression of the mouse that "is still alive" is helped by his preference of Youth's control over him and opposition to that of Old Age, which he expresses by exclaiming that at present, she has no chance. Charles describes how he is still youthful and not yet aged. He frequently explores the motif of distance and separation,¹³¹ which references his actual, physical distance from France during his English captivity and further

¹²⁹ Original term "le je-prisonnier." Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, 206.

¹³⁰ Original terms "l'âge mûr" and "l'âge de la folie." Mühlethaler, 206.

¹³¹ Planche points out this *topos* of distance and of being far away in a series of terms (*loin, lointain, éloigné*) that Charles uses to express the shock of his imprisonment: "cette intime brisure, ce manque impossible à combler." Planche, "Prison de prince, prison de vilain," 297.

supports an autobiographical interpretation of his prison poetry. Charles bemoans that he is far from an ambiguous “you” (*vous*) – a “you” that simultaneously stands for his desired lady (his wife Bonne or the conventional image) and home (France) in his *ballades* “Puisqu’ainsi est que loingtain de vous suis” and “A ma dame je ne sçay que je dye:” “Puisqu’ainsi est que de vous suis loingtains” (27, vv. 8, 16, 24). He also addresses his loved lady in his *ballade* “Loingtain de vous, ma tresbelle maistresse,” deploring how he “left his heart” with her along with the figures of “Bereavement” and “Sadness:” “Fors que de cuer que laissié je vous ay, / Acompaignié de Dueil et de Tristesse” (28, vv. 2-3). Finally, the poet combines references to physical distance with imprisonment in his *ballade* “Ma dame, vous povez savoir,” where again he laments that he is far from this same ambiguous “you” (*vous*) because “Danger” banished him: “Or m’en a fait Dangier banir, / Tant qu’il fault que loin de vous soye [...]” (34, vv. 13-14). The personified Danger, responsible for his exile, may straightforwardly represent the uncertainty and precarity of his captive state, or, by metonymy, England,¹³² Henry VI, or the English authorities, further emphasizing his separation from his wife and home in France.

While not literally in a ship, Charles employs metaphors such as a ship’s distance from port to communicate the passing of time as he ages and remains captive with his ransom still unresolved. Charles previously employed nautical metaphors to signal other lived experiences of separation from his wife and home. Depicting three personified figures and entities, in his

¹³² Planche speculates that in Charles’s poetry, “L’Angleterre y est représentée par Dangier, et la Dame est la métonymie de toutes les absences, tout en étant bien réelle.” However, Goodrich is less inclined and instead more convinced of the strong influence and Charles’s borrowing of Guillaume de Lorris’s Danger in the *Roman de la rose*: “When *Dangier* first appears in the Early Ballade Cycle of Orleans [...] the reader is only reminded of the Lorris work; *Dangier* is “crueux,” he has separated the poet from his loved one, and the poet has been banished far from her sight – all of which corresponds both by story and by text to *Le Roman de la rose*.” Goodrich waves away any connection between Danger and “any real person Orleans knew” such as Jean-sans-Peur, Duke of Burgundy (who had his father Louis assassinated) or his jailer Robert Waterton at Pontefract Castle, and concludes that “Therefore it seems that *Dangier* is an allegorical personage based on the personification in Guillaume de Lorris, an abstraction with possesses just enough historical or biographical coloring to tantalize historians.” Planche, “Prison de prince, prison de vilain,” 296; Goodrich, *A Study of Themes*, 77, 80.

ballade “En la nef de bonne nouvelle” Hope tasks Comfort to steer the ship of Good News towards Charles’s heart: “Espoir a chargé Reconfort / Pour l’amener, de par la belle / Vers mon cuer qui l’ayme si fort” (47, vv. 2-4). Charles symbolically loads his “galley” with the cargo of “diverse thoughts,” his emotions of hope and affection, under the control of Loyalty in his *ballade* “Dieu veuille sauver ma galee:” “Qu’ay chargée de marchandise / De mainte diverse pensée / En pris de Loyauté assise” (169, vv. 2-4). Charles’s prison poetry is unsurprisingly rich in allusions to the exercise of control and power over individuals, mostly identified as a captive or servant (of love), and to this latter’s bondage and servitude. Folly is referenced as Charles’s *maistresse* in the first *ballade* “Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d’enfance,” and the jailers Care and Worry use the verb *gouverner* to inform him that they will do no harm to him if they “treat” him (*se te gouvernons*) just as prisoners by custom are treated when taken in war in the second *ballade* “Cueur, trop es plain de folie.”

Charles again (re)asserts the possibility of a brighter future. He continues to deny any possibility of abrupt death by proclaiming that he intends to keep an heir from weeping, and that any future children will not mourn his passing in captivity in England. His recourse to allegory and personification to describe the struggle that youth and old age have on him is one of many combats both figurative (love) and literal (war between England and France) in his poetry. But Charles’s *ballade* “Nouvelles ont couru en France” remains noticeably autobiographical and communicates a much greater degree of lived experience than the allegorical or metaphorical pondering seen in *ballades* “Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d’enfance” and “Cueur, trop es plain de folie.” The *ballade* here addresses real situations, such as the false rumors of his death, and resolves them. Charles decides to incorporate a clear biographical and historical event that

directly deals with imprisonment himself, and not extraneous events such as his wife Bonne's sickness and death.

VI. Captivity in England: Part 3 (1436-1440)

Charles left his kindred Suffolk in May 1436 when his custody was transferred to Sir Reynold Cobham. Around fourteen years older than Charles, Cobham was the father-in-law of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester. Gloucester was a political figure who pushed for aggressive policies against France, who was already suspicious of Charles and his relationship with his former keeper (and political rival) Suffolk and of Suffolk's intentions of peace with France.¹³³ Little explanation is given for this change of hands among Charles's keepers, but Suffolk may have needed to ready his army and return to France for another English invasion after the failed Arras conference and was forced to relinquish his custody of Charles.¹³⁴ The Cobhams appear to have been a family of sage council, sumptuous hospitality, and prior distinguished military service.¹³⁵ However, like most Kentish families, the Cobhams were content with exercising an essentially local influence, possessing a more traditional rather than dynamic and upwardly mobile outlook on society that was embodied by Suffolk.¹³⁶ Charles's life began to rapidly

¹³³ Cobham (1381-1446) was "no soldier at all" according to Askins, and did not appear to participate in politics, as he was never called to Parliament. The Cobham family were originally lawyers, became local gentry before the mid-thirteenth century, and rose to the baronage by the mid-fourteenth century. Askins suggests however that he "may have been a person of some refinement," as he and his second wife Anne Clifford founded Lingfield College in 1431, to which they donated a "substantial library." Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," 42-43.

¹³⁴ McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 218-219; Askins, 42.

¹³⁵ John, third Lord Cobham, participated in English expeditions to France between 1359-1376, and sufficiently impressed the crown to be sent on at least three embassies.

¹³⁶ Charles could have equally profited from Cobham's keeping, a "man of some refinement," although likely not as extensively and deeply as he would previously have with Suffolk. He assuredly would have found

change as his efforts, those of his half-brother, Jean (“the Bastard”) de Dunois, and now by duke Jean de Bretagne to reach terms with the English to meet his ransom were finally materializing. Cobham was also lenient enough, or was given authorization by a more lenient royal government to allow heralds from France to speak with Charles. He brought Charles to London in October 1437 to attend the council convoked by Henry VI to discuss plans to receive his ransom and send him back to France. Charles moved around more frequently during his time with Cobham on account of these back-and-forth negotiations, and it is unlikely he spent much idle time at Cobham’s manor, Sterborough.

In July 1438, Charles’s custody was transferred to his final keeper, John, first Lord of Stourton, who was only a few years younger than him.¹³⁷ Stourton possessed a library, like most of Charles’s keepers, that was inherited rather than collected. While Stourton’s father seemed to have shown interest in religious and devotional works, other than donating land to the endowment of King’s College, Cambridge, as a lawyer, Stourton cared little for religion.¹³⁸ But Stourton’s capacities as a lawyer were useful to Charles to negotiate his ransom and release during these final years of English captivity.¹³⁹ Shortly after taking custody of Charles, Stourton brought him back to his residence at Stourton Manor, Wiltshire, where he was commissioned to

himself again among the “provincial gentry,” and if we follow McLeod’s assumptions, his life would have been quieter at Sterborough. McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 218-219.

¹³⁷ Born around 1399, John Stourton was the son of a prominent lawyer, William Stourton, and when this former died, he was placed in the care of his uncle, John, another lawyer, and William Hankford, sergeant-of-law and a contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer. After holding numerous local offices, he was knighted in 1432 and became a minor rather than influential member of the Privy Council after his appointment in 1437. Stourton’s rising career culminated in his appointment as treasurer of the royal household between 1446-1453, clearly a trusted friend of Henry VI and favored member of the royal circle. Askins, “The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers,” 44.

¹³⁸ Askins, 44.

¹³⁹ Askins, 44.

raise funds for the crown and where he finished his appointment as sheriff. Charles would have continued to find himself among circles of provincial gentry with similar intellectual and literary tastes and who participated in a vibrant manuscript culture, and with a keeper with strong favor from the crown.¹⁴⁰ In spring 1439, Stourton travelled to London with the funds and Charles, and then both sailed to Calais where Stourton served as ambassador between June and August, and where Charles frustratingly waited for a conclusive agreement. Stourton brought Charles back to his manor for the winter, only to return again to London in February 1440 where they remained until Charles's successful terms of release and return to France at end of the year in November.

This final sequence of historical and biographical events serves to bookend Charles's corpus of prison poetry composed during his English captivity. His final poems demonstrate the poet's departure from conventional courtly allegorical and didactic narratives, such as those in the *Roman de la rose*. These narratives had earlier influenced and shaped Charles' conceptualization and (self-)awareness of his own situation, feelings, and fate. These poems lean the most towards an (auto-)biographical narrative that associates its lyrical subject's *je* with the poet and historical figure of Charles, and its lyrical objects' "they" with real-life individuals involved in historical events: a tendency that became commonplace and accepted in modern poetry.

¹⁴⁰ Stourton's wife, Margery Wadham, was the daughter of John Wadham, a former colleague of Geoffrey Chaucer, but also of William Carent, who married Stourton's sister and whose family owned a copy of *The Canterbury Tales* (British Library Egerton MS 2863) and an illuminated copy of Lydgate's *The Siege of Troy* (Manchester, John Rylands Library MS Crawford 1). Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," 44; Manly and Rickert, *The Text of The Canterbury Tales*, 140-142, 614-615.

VII. From the Metaphorical to the Epistolary: Prison Poetry Shortly Before Liberation

Ballade “Des nouvelles d’Albion”¹⁴¹

During the final stages of his captivity, Charles moved to an entirely new and profoundly autobiographical and personal form of poetic composition: the epistolary ballad. Henry VI and his council, as a result of fresh diplomatic efforts initiated by the duchess of Burgundy, Isabella of Portugal, approved Charles’s crossing of the Channel again to return to France. He arrived in Calais in June 1439 for a new planned peace summit that was eventually held for the first time in July at Oye castle between Calais and Gravelines.¹⁴² The summit convened and reconvened, talks stalled over the conditions of Charles’s ransom and liberation, and the French and English traded proposals and counter-proposals over the amount of his ransom and offered short-term peace treaties in the meantime. Charles was watched by Stourton the entire time and remained in Calais, but was frequently consulted. Yet, with no conclusion in sight by October, Charles returned to England and instead diligently worked to present a clear plan of his liberation to Henry VI, who was receptive to receiving the last French ransom payment and ending Charles’s political exile. Requiring the extra aid of the Burgundians to seal this plan, he imaginatively fashioned his poems into letters that he (the prisoner-poet) addresses to his cousin Philippe le Bon. He pleads for Philippe’s help in further securing his release by asking him whether he would like to hear “news” from England, and tells him that he returned to a favorable reception by king Henry IV:

¹⁴¹ *Ballade* numbered 89 by Champion, 131 by Arn and Fox, and 112 by Mühlethaler. See note 43 above.

¹⁴² The English authorities may not have been, once again, genuinely interested in Charles’s situation (securing his ransom and freeing him) but rather simply used him as an “instrument” to obtain more favorable terms for the English from the French and king Charles VII, against whom they were fully prepared to renew hostilities. Champion, *La vie de Charles d’Orléans*, 286.

Des nouvelles d'Albion,
 S'il vous en plaist escouter,
 Mon frere et mon compaignon,
 Sachez qu'a mon retourner
 J'ay esté deça la mer
 Receu a joyeuse chiere,
 Et a fait le roy passer
 En bon termes ma matiere.

Je doy estre une saison
 Eslargi pour pourchasser
 La paix, aussi ma raençon.
 Se je puis seurté trouver
 Pour aler et retourner,
 Il fault qu'en haste la quiere,
 Se je veuil brief achever
 En bons termes ma matiere.

Or, gentil duc Bourgongnon,
 A ce cop vueilliez m'aydier,
 Comme mon entencion
 Est vous server et amer
 Tant que pourray durer.
 En vous ay fiance entire
 Que m'ayderez a finer
 En bon termes ma matiere

Mes amis fault esprouver
 S'ilz voudront, a ma priere,
 Me secourir pour mener
 En bon termes ma matiere (143, vv. 1-32).

The *ballade* follows the typical format of Charles's *ballades*: it contains three huitains (with an ABABBCDC rhyme scheme), an *envoi* (with an ABAB rhyme scheme), and a refrain ("En bon termes ma matiere"), and it is 32-lines long. However, it features a slight variation in its seven-syllable verses. It contains two anaphoras as expected in its epistolary form addressed to a clear and known recipient (Philippe): "Mon frere et mon compaignon" (143, v. 3), "gentil duc Bourgongnon" (143, v. 17). Much like "Ou royaume d'Angleterre" in the previous *ballade* "Cueur, trop es plain de folie," Albion (the archaic name for the island of Great Britain) is a

geographical indicator for England, where Charles is captive.¹⁴³ His poetry moves away from the theme of a combat of love involving figures such as the desired Lady, Pleasure, and his personified heart towards the actual combat of the Hundred Years' War. The *ballade* now overtly references his condition amongst the greater theater of this political conflict. Charles's poetry features explicit autobiographical and political details and no longer contains any borrowed conventional allegorical or personified forms. He asks if Philippe would like to hear news from England, directly acknowledging him as the recipient of his poem: "Des nouvelles d'Albion, / S'il vous en plaist escouter" (143, vv. 1-2), "Mon frere et mon compaignon" (143, v. 3). Charles's "my" (*mon*) not only identifies with the poet, but the "you" (*vous*) used to denote Philippe brings an added dimension of autobiographical perspective.

In his epistolary *ballades*, which are circumstantial in nature, Charles utilizes the theme of prison as both epistolary communication with Philippe and as a conduit to express a very human frustration.¹⁴⁴ France is never mentioned in this *ballade*, but it is understood as the destination of his poem and residence of his Burgundian cousin. The juxtaposition of Albion and France paradoxically favors a coming and going of multiple "I"s in what Galderisi terms a "bidirectional present" from both the English prison to France and from France to this Albion.¹⁴⁵ Charles is spatially situated in and moves between two real locations, England and France. The poet's *je* lives in a double present. That is, both presents are rooted in France, with his cousin the duke of Burgundy, and in England, where he is held captive. Charles's writing from the heart, under the guise of letters, is only possible through this return to the self, witnessed by what

¹⁴³ Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, 208.

¹⁴⁴ Original term: "le sillon de sa frustration humaine." Galderisi, *En regardant vers le país de France*, 45.

¹⁴⁵ Original term: "flux bidirectionnel des presents." Galderisi, 51.

Galderisi also terms as the “reader-witness.”¹⁴⁶ Charles continues to recount to Philippe that when he returned, he was received with much joy: “Sachez qu’a mon retourner / J’ay esté deça la mer / Receu a joyeuse chiere” (143, vv. 4-6). The mention of *deça la mer* (“on this side of the sea”) not only parallels Albion, but also represents one of the directions in this bidirectional present. The format, content, and feelings of Charles’s epistolary ballad appears to at times not resemble a poem but a personal letter updating his cousin on the specific terms of his release and the political conditions impacting it.

Charles depicts a commonplace discussion by unfolding the planned timeline of his liberation to Philippe. He is to be freed within one season and must work towards both achieving peace between England and France and accumulating his ransom money. He also must obtain letters of safe conduct to travel back to France to accomplish this: “Se je puis seurté trouver / Pour aler et retourner” (143, vv. 12-13).¹⁴⁷ The fleeting nature of time is a reoccurring obsession in Charles’s epistolary ballad, and he stresses to Philippe that his ransom must be quickly met if his long ordeal is to be brought to a happy conclusion: “Il fault qu’en haste la quiere” (143, vv. 14), “Se je veuil brief achiever / En bons termes ma matiere” (143, vv. 15-16). Charles’s prison poetry composed just before his liberation (1440) took the form of a personal correspondence between family members and peers, and it also represented a courtly activity or pastime between two men dictated by mid-fifteenth century chivalry. Charles’s practice of composing prison poetry echoes what Galderisi terms as “playing games of thought.”¹⁴⁸ It also constitutes a poetic

¹⁴⁶ Original term: “le lecteur-témoin.” Galderisi, *En regardant vers le país de France*, 51.

¹⁴⁷ Arn translates “seurté” as “a warrant.” *Poetry of Charles d’Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, 287.

¹⁴⁸ Original term: “passe-temps du jeu de la pensée.” Galderisi, “De la prison Dedalus,” 97.

actio (action), or a rhetorical term referring to the delivery of a speech, that he uses to effectively communicate, and therefore narrate and share, his hardship through this *ballade*.

Later after returning to France, his mature *rondeaux* staggered between 1450-1460 feature the allegorical and metaphorical imagery that once filled his earlier poetry. But his poetry by the end of his twenty-five-year captivity became highly autobiographical. It proved that it was more concerned with conveying his long, arduous personal experience of captivity rather than with constructing sets of ornamental allegories and casts of intricate personifications to convey his sadness and melancholy.¹⁴⁹ Charles was still influenced by the contemporary tradition of courtly allegorical narratives, as evidenced by his later poetry in France at his court in Blois. However, by this point at the end of his English captivity, he implemented an autobiographical perspective to his poetry. Literary forms such as his epistolary ballads, with very little trace or use of allegorical or figurative language, provide proof of a starting point of greater autobiographical presence in French prison poetry by the late Middle Ages.

VIII. Conclusion

Charles d'Orléans shifts from embellishing his poems with sets of allegories and casts of personified figures dictated by previous or conventional medieval lyric courtly norms to unique autobiographical and referential forms inspired by the conditions of his imprisonment. In its maturity, his poetry is increasingly separated from the allegories that poets notably used to illustrate their poems in the tradition of the *trouvères* or *Roman de la rose*. When Charles did implement allegory, however, he preferred to do so based upon ordinary observations and circumstances from his daily life – playing tennis or waking up in the morning – or from the

¹⁴⁹ Galderisi, "De la prison Dedalus," 110, 112.

chivalric world to which he was accustomed as a royal prince and duke – the hinderance of *largesse* and the practice of mockery in combat or taking prisoners. He featured allegory in such a way that the literal aspect prevails with the figurative aspect pushed to the side as an allusion. Or, Charles features allegory to focus on a specific topic.¹⁵⁰ Charles rather makes use of allegory for a decorative purpose which ceases to transport the poem's reader into the realm of imaginative fantasy through a detached narrative. His poetry always features the poet himself in some sort of capacity, and therefore he trades traditional allegory for straight-forward self-identification. The identification of the prince or duke with the author and person who addresses the *envoi* to the addressed serves to establish real authorship.

Charles's use of allegory and personification is not the same as directly referencing his prison conditions. His inclusion of personal subject pronouns *je* and *me* and allusion to biographical events (sickness and death of his wife Bonne, correspondence with his cousin and duke Philippe le Bon, and voyages to France) serve as autobiographical markers in his prison poetry.¹⁵¹ Charles's poetry is claimed to diverge from his life, or that it does not constitute a (re)telling of it, and that perceiving any lived continuity or logical coherence under the guise of allegory contradicts the purpose of his poetry. Finally, Charles's use of romantic, lyric modes allegedly moves his poetry beyond the subjective to an objective "love."¹⁵² Yet, the opposite

¹⁵⁰ Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 284-285.

¹⁵¹ Zumthor, 279.

¹⁵² Poiron insists that Charles's poetry "s'agit donc plutôt d'un schéma qui n'a d'unité que par référence à la pensée réflexive du poète: c'est l'aventure, mais dégagée de tout accident" and insists upon the singular influence of romantic, courtly modes of creation and composition on his poems: "L'amour seul compte, non celle qu'on aime, la souffrance, non sa cause. Ce n'est pas le récit d'une vie, ce n'est même pas un roman. Au point de vue de la composition, la divergence entre l'œuvre et la vie n'est pas seulement l'effet de la transposition romanesque, car le roman qui aussi aurait besoin d'une certaine continuité dans le devenir, d'une certaine permanence dans l'aventure." Finally, he contends that Charles constructs his own world based on what he wants it to be, instead of representing the real one in which he lives: "Le poète se construit et reconstruit le monde en écrivant. Et le poète courtois conçoit cette construction comme un dépassement, non comme une imitation. Dans cette perspective, l'homme se définit

holds true. There may even be evidence for a “harmonious parallel” between Charles’s life and poetic work.¹⁵³ The literal aspect of Charles’s use of allegory triumphs because he makes the unconventional choice to combine these allegories with autobiographical and real everyday situations, phenomena, feelings, and commonplace late medieval knowledge through a complex first-person voice, identified with the poet via his proper name or individual attributes. Along with his chivalric and military metaphors, he allegorizes aspects of nature, such as the tree of Pleasure (*arbre de Plaisance*), air of Generosity (*essor de Largesse*), water of Happiness (*eaue de Liesse*), and mold of Sadness (*moisy de Tristesse*). Charles also allegorizes aspects of his physical world, such as the chains of Worry and Deep Thought (*fers de Soussy et Pensement*) or the ship of Good News (*nef de Bonne Nouvelle*). At the same time, he also draws upon and is inspired by the conventional courtly medieval allegory to situate himself within his constructed imaginary realm peopled by mythic figures and personifications, such as Folly (*Folie*), Reason (*Raison*), Good Times (*Bon Temps*), the “jailers” Worry and Care (*Soing et Ennuy*), “merry” Pleasure (*Plaisance lye*), and Melancholy (*Merencolie*), not to mention those of his divided body, such as his heart (*cueur*) or eyes (*yeulx*), all with whom he interacts, converses, and shares the company. Charles is one of the first authors, let alone one of the first poets, to demonstrate the shift away from the practice of drawing upon dominant allegorical and metaphorical modes and traditions in literature. Rather, he initiates, or is at least among the first writers to propose, a fifteenth-century tendency towards substituting or supplanting this tradition with the poet’s identity, observations, activities, personal experiences, and everyday feelings.

autant par ce qu’il veut être que par ce qu’il fait réellement, dans sa vie privée.” Poiron, “Création poétique et composition romanesque,” 199, 210.

¹⁵³ Charles’s “suite des ballades paraît pourtant fondée sur un parallélisme harmonieux entre l’œuvre et la vie. Nous croyons lire quelque roman autobiographique.” Poiron, 189.

CHAPTER TWO. FRANÇOIS VILLON: THE REALISM OF AN AUTHORIAL SELF

I. Introduction

To a greater extent than Charles d'Orléans's poetry, François Villon's poetry can be read as an exercise of self-reflection and a heuristic exercise in self-awareness and discovery. His poetry enables the heuristic process of self-discovery and self-definition through its use in retelling the lived experience of himself as the impoverished youngster, the student, the thief, the gang member, the prisoner and, of course, the poet. In re-writing or narrating his lived experience of imprisonment through this process of self-consciousness and subjectivity, Villon's poems associate the poet not only with the prisoner along with the poor person, student, or low-life, but also with a certain moment (or moments) in time. And like Charles, Villon contributes to the nascent autobiographical tradition where the first person appears closer to the poet and author himself in the poem. The poetic function of speech that is more representative of the poet rather than of the surrounding world itself contributes to a particularization of the poetic *je*. Villon follows the autobiographical tendency started by Charles, however his approach to the carceral experience differed from that of the prince-poet. To communicate his experience of imprisonment, Villon critically yet creatively manipulated older, prior poetic forms and structures. His poetic conceptualization was more crucially determined by his perspective and by that of the social strata (his subjective observations and images of Parisians, of the judicial system, and even of brothel life) with whom he interacted and associated.¹ Charles's and Villon's

¹ Villon transmits these subjective observations of Parisian society through outsiders' eyes: his "texte posséderait plusieurs plans de signification: relativement aux Parisiens (vus par un Bourguignon), aux officiers de justice (vus par un clerc de la Basoche) et, moins figurément et par plaisanterie, relativement à quelques images érotiques." Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 425.

poetry demonstrate that their experience of decisive turns of fortune (being exiled or imprisoned, for example) are more likely to entail interpretations and further cogitation on the matter.

In comparison to Charles's writing, Villon's is less God-centered, religious,² unified, or broad, and more anthropocentric and "in-the-moment." In his renowned "Ballade des pendus," Villon addresses a group of hanged criminals. The narrative voice is plural, and it is not Villon's corpse we see, but anonymous ones. He asks those seeing his corpse to intercede with God in terms of his forgiveness. While elsewhere in his poetry he does at times address the Virgin Mary, the greater interceder on the part of sinners, he chooses however these random spokespeople purely on the basis of experience: they can see these prisoners' remains hanging and are asked to take pity.³ Villon's experience of imprisonment is inseparable from his poetry, with which it also forges a sort of chain of causality. The first event (prison) is the catalyst for the second event (composition of poetry) and inspires the widely studied and accepted themes of his poetry, such as emotions of abandonment and appeals to friends and the outside world.⁴ The previous chapter demonstrated that this period of the late Middle Ages contains a shift in which the empirical begins to interact more assertively with inherited forms, and that Charles is one of the first authors of the medieval period to directly claim ownership and relation to the works he produces. Villon demonstrates equal if not greater autobiographical identification in his poetry than

² Although, Charles's writing could additionally exhibit these qualities.

³ In addition to the help from my dissertation committee, former advisor, and co-advisors, I am deeply indebted and grateful to Professor Richard Goodkin from the Department of French and Italian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for patiently helping me flesh out this chapter's core problematic between experience, perspective, and cognition, and whose ideas and suggestions lent to the analysis above.

⁴ Gothot-Mersch characterizes Villon's *Regrets* as "la plainte d'un homme qui, en prison ou au sortir de prison, se croit et se sent abandonné du genre humain." Claudine Gothot-Mersch, "Sur l'unité du *Testament* de Villon," in *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune*. Vol 2 (Gembloux: Duculot, 1969), 1419.

Charles, identifying not only as “Je, François Villon [...]”⁵ and consequently the author of his poems, but also as “Ung povre petit escollier / Qui fut nommé François Villon” (243, vv. 1886-1887). This chapter therefore seeks to continue to elucidate the importance of lived experience and authorial identification through Villon’s imprisonment as a contemporary experience to pair with Charles d’Orléans’s captivity. It will examine his Huitains I (vv. 1-8) and XL (vv. 313-320) in his *Lais*, his Huitains I (vv. 1-8), II (vv. 9-16), XI (vv. 81-88), and LXXIII (vv. 737-744) in his *Testament*, and his “Épître à ses amis” in order to indicate both where and with what stylistic forms Villon puts into writing his experiences and shapes his autobiographical perspective in his prison poetry.

II. Charles d’Orléans, François Villon, and the Autobiographical Shift

Villon was not only a contemporary of Charles, but he was also a participant in the same literary and personal circles. The young Parisian student-turned-vagabond and truant likely first met Charles at his ducal residence at Blois, generally agreed sometime between the end of 1457 and beginning of 1458, during a poetry recitation that the duke, now in his sixties, hosted for his peers. However, the two prisoner-poets differed greatly on the nature and conditions of their experiences of imprisonment. In the previous chapter we emphasized that Charles’ own personal experience resembled being a royal guest, as his imprisonment was more lenient and less rigorous than the one experienced by the unfortunate common criminals of his day. Villon was in fact an example of such a common criminal who, as he aptly described and interpreted it,

⁵ François Villon, *Poésies complètes*, ed. Claude Thiry (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1991), 61, v. 2. All quotations from the works of Villon will be taken from Thiry’s edition cited here.

experienced “harsh prison” (*dure prison*).⁶ *Dure prison* encompassed several traditional imaginative characterizations that have come to be associated with a common criminal’s imprisonment, such as starving, a regime of dry bread and water, and being held deep underground.⁷ His background and his imprisonment vastly differed from those of Charles. Villon proclaims himself “De povre et de peticte extrasse” (113, v. 274), as opposed to the royal prince Charles. Villon also suffered as much in the flesh as in spirit whereas the duke seemingly only suffered the latter.⁸ Both men, however, chose the poetic form to convey their experiences of imprisonment. Villon’s poetic text reflects a lived experience similar to that of Charles’s English captivity and reveals a precise historical moment or a set of defined historical moments.

In this sense, Villon’s poetic text becomes a historical artifact of space and time, involving the textual transmission of the poet’s experience and bearing witness to his expressivity and affectivity. Alice Planche refutes claims that there exists nothing in common between the two poets’ relationships to prison, and instead emphasizes the common experience of imprisonment in the fifteenth century. While Charles often employs prison in an allegorical

⁶ Villon mentions this while explicitly referencing the time (1461) and place (the episcopal prison of Meung-sur-Loire) of his first experience of prison and of imprisonment in Huitain XI of his *Testament*: “Escript l’ay l’an soixante et ung, / Lors que le roy me delivra, / De la dure prison de Mehun [...]” (97, vv. 81-83). *Poésies complètes*, ed. Thiry.

⁷ In his “Épître à ses amis,” Villon ironically compares starving in prison to needing to “fast” on feast days Sundays and Tuesdays, hence eternally “fasting:” “Jeuner lui fault dimanches et merdiz [...]” As for his regime of bread and water, Villon narrates that “Après pain sec [...] en ses boyaulx verse eaue a groz bouillon [...]” Finally, he portrays this occurring “Bas en terre:” also possibly an illusion to a grave and to death (293, vv. 25, 27-29). *Poésies complètes*, ed. Thiry.

⁸ Alice Planche describes that “Leurs destins se ressemblent aussi peu que leur statut initial. Charles est ‘né au jardin semé de fleurs de lis,’ neveu de Charles V et cousin germain de Charles VI, un des principaux personnages du royaume, chargé, avant d’avoir vingt ans, de diriger les opérations militaires – au moins en principe – tandis que Villon ne cesse de se proclamer ‘vilain et très vilain.’” In contrast to Charles’s capture at Agincourt and 25-year English captivity, she explains that “le plus jeune, Villon, ne nous est connu, en dehors de son œuvre [...] qu’en mauvais garçon, récidiviste, mêlé à de sombres histoires.” She finally infers that “on se doute que leur sort en prison est bien différent,” as Villon “a souffert dans sa chair autant que dans son esprit.” Planche, “Prison de prince, prison de vilain,” 295.

sense both during and after his English captivity, Villon alludes to prison in multiple forms.⁹ These allusions are constructed, like his older counterpart, to express a troubled love, as an “amant martyr” for a “felonne et dure” woman (63, vv. 34, 47), but also to express a hatred for those who had him arrested and sentenced to prison: a hatred that is not evident in Charles’s prison poetry.¹⁰ While Villon’s allusions to prison may not have only been a conventional exercise, it is more apparent that for the young prisoner-poet, courtesy was an empty discursive form: the relic of a past tradition now mostly extinct in daily life and instead practiced in discourse.¹¹ This partial extinction of courtly and moralizing themes evident in Villon’s prison poetry can, with certainty, reference the shift from conventional and allegorical to autobiographical modes evoked during the examination of Charles’s prison poetry. Villon’s poems continue to signal how prison poetry frames the relationship which exists between constraint and literary creation.

Paul Zumthor attests to a significant reconfiguration in Western cultural history that transformed the second half of the fifteenth century. He emphasizes that this period, encompassing Villon’s poetry, only slowly transformed poetry and relied on an outdated tradition. This period retained, skillfully yet detrimentally, models that were inadequate to

⁹ “Est-ce à dire qu’il n’y ait rien de commun dans les rapports des deux poètes sur la prison au XVe siècle. Ce n’est pas tout à fait exact. D’abord, ce qu’on sait de leur vie confirme [...] la place de l’enfermement au XVe siècle. Si Charles d’Orléans utilise ce motif de façon allégorique, pendant et après sa captivité, Villon y fait allusion de façons multiples.” Planche, “Prison de prince, prison de vilain,” 309.

¹⁰ “Les allusions au monde de justice ne manquent pas dès le *Lais* [...] Une telle haine ne se manifeste pas chez Charles d’Orléans même s’il n’est pas tendre à l’égard des Anglais vaincus.” Planche, 309-310.

¹¹ “Il semble que pour Villon les thèmes de la courtoisie et de la conscience morale ne soient plus que des reliquats d’une tradition restée vivante dans le discours, entrés dans le langage, quasi morts dans la vie pratique.” Planche’s statement, however, that in the case of Villon’s prison allusions “[il] ne s’agit probablement que d’un exercice convenu” can be questioned: they may not have been entirely conventional and allegorical, and as this study insists, instead founded on his actual, lived experience of prison. Planche, 310.

transmit a new “content,” such as knowledge, but also emotions, self-consciousness, positionality, and spatiality, that fifteenth-century poets now felt:

Le deuxième tiers du XVe siècle, dont datent, en gros, les textes transmis sous le nom de Villon, est une époque de rénovation intense dans l’histoire culturelle de l’Occident [...] En poésie, les transformations sont plus lentes. Certains poètes s’accrochent à une tradition peut-être dépassée, maintiennent tant bien que mal les modèles hérités, inadéquats à transmettre les contenus nouveaux qui pèsent désormais sur eux.¹²

The poetry of Villon, too, continued the French medieval lyric tradition by valuing inherited forms. His poetry regroups and synthesizes an accumulation and also a continuation of earlier medieval themes. This included themes propagated by clerics and moralists (*la roue de Fortune*), by students (*la perfidie des femmes*), and by the courtly tradition of the high Middle Ages (*amant martyr*) to the more recent poetic forms of the fourteenth century (“*les danses macabres*” evoked at least twice in his *Testament*).¹³ Prison poetry remained ambiguous in itself and fit poorly into this landscape.¹⁴ Despite adhering to models from previous poetic texts, Zumthor stresses that Villon’s discourse reflects the shortcomings of the conventional lyric tradition to fully express his entire range of emotionality, such as his traumatic experience of prison, as well as the suffering caused by a life of poverty and truancy.

“Villon [...] adhère aux structures inhérentes des vieux textes, s’intéresse peu aux innovations de surface. Mais la parole qu’il émet ainsi dit l’insuffisance de ce discours. Il reste foncièrement un poète médiéval, et c’est un jeu trompeur que de le tirer du côté moderne. Sa poésie, comme toute la poésie d’où depuis les origines, repose sur l’intuition prédominante de la valeur des formes plutôt que de la conscience et de ses pouvoirs

¹² Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 420.

¹³ Zumthor, 421.

¹⁴ Planche, “Prison de prince, prison de vilain,” 310.

d'invention [...] Villon n'utilise que les formes de son temps les plus archaïques: le huitain d'octosyllabes, et la ballade."¹⁵

Villon remained faithful to what was increasingly considered an outdated genre by the mid-fourteenth century, obeying rules and employing poetic devices that were more and more antiquated. Yet, he was able to impose upon the genre his life and an element of humanity.¹⁶ Jean-Claude Mühlethaler comments that Villon, "l'*escollier* [...] se place en marge de la société et des traditions littéraires."¹⁷ David Mus minimizes the influence of Villon's reading of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*, "si les rapports du *Testament* entier avec la tradition ressortent beaucoup moins clairement, c'est que Villon a voulu s'insérer dans une tradition lyrique en langue vulgaire, et que la fusion de ces deux traditions devait se faire dans une forme qui lui fût propre."¹⁸ Mus posits that Villon never attempted to imitate the poet from Late Antiquity and write in Latin, nor had he attempted to imitate medieval lyric masters like Jean de Meung and his *Roman de la Rose*.

Villon's modes of autobiographical identification serve to reinforce Norma Goodrich's assertion that the poet's concurrent need and tendency to define himself even more intimately

¹⁵ Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 420-421.

¹⁶ Claudine Gothot-Mersch assesses the stylistics of Villon's poetic work "qui se réfère à un vieux genre, obéissant à des règles que nous ne connaissons plus, qui se complaît en des jeux maintenant périmés (acrostiches, anagrammes, antiphrases), qui multiplie les allusions à une actualité dont nous avons – bien sûr – perdu tout souvenir [...]." Here, "actualité" (events) is key: fifteenth-century events we have now forgotten, but which Villon retells from his lived experience. She finally adds that "si le *Testament* nous touche encore si directement, n'est-ce point dû, surtout, à son air de spontanéité? Le secret de Villon paraît bien être son naturel. Il rit, il s'indigne, il se lamente, il s'attendrit: toujours il semble suivre le mouvement même de sa pensée, qui l'entraîne, et nous entraîne, par les chemins les plus imprévus." Gothot-Mersch, "Sur l'unité du *Testament* de Villon," 1411.

¹⁷ Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, "Introduction," François Villon, *Lais, Testament, Poésies diverses, avec Ballades en jargon*, ed. Jean-Claude Mühlethaler and Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion, 2004), 16-17.

¹⁸ David Mus, *La poétique de François Villon* (Paris: Colin, 1967), 266.

was a current perceivable throughout the fifteenth century. This current was linked to a growing acceptance of the poet's inner self as a subject suitable to poetry. A poet's assertions of authorship and search for definition are ways in which they accepted responsibility for their creation, recognized the complexity of their own nature, and manifested their vitality and vulnerability.¹⁹ Nancy Regalado highlights the problem of the reception of a work that solicits a "process of imaginative construction" that results in a referential reading of that work.²⁰ Within Villon's works, Regalado distinguishes between *representation*, drawn from a reader's imaginative construction, and *reference*, describing the relation between representation and what exists in the historical world. To explain her distinction, she reuses Roland Barthes's term *l'effet de réel*, or "reality effect" which according to her has been at times transcribed as *l'effet du réel*, transforming it thus into the "impact of the real." While *l'effet de réel* demonstrates how our attention is drawn to the lifelike, convincing, plausible representation of objects, characters, actions, and emotions within texts, it also creates within our representation an impression of reference (Barthes's *l'illusion référentielle*), facilitating the reader's representation by drawing its elements from the familiar, easily imagined everyday world.²¹ *L'effet de réel* thus short-circuits the reader's awareness of the artful processes of representation by leading the reader to believe the text is referring directly to what is.²² However, what Regalado coins *l'effet du réel* brings into question the relationship between historical contexts and literary texts, or in other

¹⁹ Goodrich, *A Study of Themes*, 35-36, 43.

²⁰ Nancy Freeman Regalado, "Effet de réel, Effet du réel: Representation and Reference in Villon's Testament," *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986), 66.

²¹ Roland Barthes, "L'effet de réel," *Communications* 11 (1968), 84-89; Regalado, "Effet de réel, Effet du réel," 63.

²² Barthes, "L'effet de réel," 88; Regalado, 64.

words, the effect of historical events on a text and the author's polemical intent. In the process, *l'effet du réel* assumes reference and seeks to verify historical facts and experiences separate from the text and to analyze their expression in the text itself.²³

On account of the real proper names, dates, and places that flood his poems, Villon's *Testament* has often been regarded as a historical document (as is the case with many literary texts) and used to pin down historical facts and circumstances with a degree of certainty akin to legal records.²⁴ The strong, agglomerative pull of Villon's narrative representation conveys more an *effet du réel* and thus leads to a referential reading.²⁵ His poetic "I" retells in bursts of emotions and events a story of pain and wrongdoing at the hands of actual, historical figures like bishop Thibaut d'Aussigny. Yet, due to the combination of apparent referential allusion and incompleteness in the seemingly broken and discontinuous fabric of Villon's poems (filled with ellipses and *et ceteras* that frustratingly do not lead to further information), the language of the *Testament* orients readers strongly towards the pursuit of historical reference. Regalado insists that a historical, referential reading of the *Testament* is impossible due to the incompatibility of actual events, places, and dates. She suggests that it was also unintended by Villon, who was rather playfully juggling referential and historical elements within fixed literary patterns to achieve an *effet de réel* and create what C.S. Lewis refers to as "presentational realism."²⁶ She urges discarding the need to verify reference in history in order to see the essential poetic

²³ Regalado, "*Effet de réel, Effet du réel*," 64.

²⁴ Regalado, 64-65.

²⁵ Regalado, 67.

²⁶ C.S. Lewis, "On Realisms," *An Experiment in Criticism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 57-73, cited by Regalado, 73.

function served by the *effet de réel* in the *Testament*: “the characterization of the poetic ‘I’ that constitutes from first to last its true center and real subject.”²⁷ This poetic “I,” the voice that speaks in his poems, gives Villon’s *Testament* the coherence that is not to be found through historical reference. The all-important, insistent, and intrusive first-person singular pronoun, the autobiographical *je*, must be privileged in any analysis of Villon’s poetry as it holds the key to grasping and understanding his sincere self-expression, especially during his imprisonment at Meung.

Casting himself as the lowly prisoner and bishop Thibaud d’Aussigny as the cruel imprisoner, Villon seeks to communicate the emotion of his ordeal through the staging of real-life characters. These characters include himself, with whom he self-identifies as the *je*, according to Jean-Jacques Vincensini: “c’est ainsi que, au début du *Testament*, la mise en scène de l’évêque emprisonneur favoriserait la spécification immédiate de ce ‘Je’ poétique.”²⁸ Juxtaposing Charles’s and Villon’s own identifications with the “I” (*je*) and “me” in their poems, the particularization of the poetic *je* additionally pertains to the utilization of metaphor: the poet’s reflection on his work “éclaire [...] un rejet des modèles d’écriture anciens.”²⁹ His *Testament* features a considerable number of names of people and places from his Parisian world, and Villon innovates to combine the traditional form of a “testament,” in its religious and judicial

²⁷ Regalado, “*Effet de réel, Effet du réel*,” 75.

²⁸ Jean-Jacques Vincensini, “Prisons de Villon. Espaces et pathétique,” in “*Le loro prigioni*,” eds. Babbi and Zanon, 156.

²⁹ Vincensini, “Prisons de Villon,” 156.

sense from Antiquity until the Middle Ages,³⁰ with morsels of the reality of his everyday life.³¹ The introduction of the will in medieval Europe, originally a Roman legal institution created to dispose of property for the preservation of the family, evolved to have a dual function as instruments of “settling the estate” as well as “settling the soul.”³² Wills were also introduced, facilitated, and practiced by the Catholic Church as an instrument for the giving of alms.³³ While at the present day one thinks of a last will as a uniquely-written document, Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen suggest that “both in canon law and in everyday medieval thinking it could be seen rather as a statement of a person’s final wishes – oral, written, or both – a statement that could confirm, modify, or overrule previous written documents.”³⁴ With a legal and ecclesiastic training similar to that of a “clerk” (he had an arts training, but the formula was commonplace),

³⁰ Favier’s observation reinforces Villon’s adherence to archaic poetic forms like a testament despite the new content of the actual people and places in his world he wishes to communicate: “L’idée même d’organiser sa vue des hommes et des choses, comme sa gratitude ou sa vengeance, dans le cadre contraignant d’un testament traité en parodie n’a rien d’une idée originale.” Favier retraces the tradition of the testament in medieval literature, notably to a titanic influence on both Villon and on his princely counterpart Charles: “Le type est un héritage de la latinité tardive. Jean de Meung a fait son *Testament*, qu’a connu Villon au point de le confondre, quand il cite de mémoire, avec le *Roman de la Rose*: c’est là que Jean de Meung demande qu’on excuse la jeunesse quand elle est jeune, puisqu’on l’excusera quand elle sera passée.” Favier adds that “Rutebeuf, à son tour, a mis dans un *Testament par ébattement*, qui est un chef-d’œuvre de burlesque, ses ultimes rancœurs en formes de dernières dispositions,” and all appropriately, traces the testament through his fellow prisoner-poet: “Charles d’Orléans a repris le thème, dans le ton délicat des allégories courtoises.” Jean Favier, *François Villon* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), 280.

³¹ “Le *Testament* contient, surtout à propos des legs, un nombre considérable de noms propres grâce auxquels on a trop souvent tenté un décryptage historique précis, permettant de remonter du poème à quelque anecdote. Il est clair que Villon utilise le cadre traditionnel du ‘Testament,’ et certains éléments de ‘réalité’ d’une manière qui les fonctionnalise en vertu d’un dynamisme propre au poème.” Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 424.

³² Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen, “Introduction,” in *Planning for Death. Wills and Death-Related Property Arrangements in Europe, 1200-1600*, eds. Korpiola, Mia and Lahtinen, Anu (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 18; Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 33.

³³ Michael M. Sheehan, *The Will in Medieval England: From the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to the End of the Thirteenth Century* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1963), 303, cited by Korpiola and Lahtinen, *Planning for Death*, 18.

³⁴ Korpiola and Lahtinen, *Planning for Death*, 19.

Villon certainly knew the Church's formulas for creating wills, orally, written, or both, and manipulated these forms in his poetry to express his autobiographical perspective and emotionality. Conversely, Villon synthesizes the previous medieval allegorical lyric tradition with current bourgeois and clerical realism and literary traditions. He employs the Latin "*Item*" in his *Lais* to enumerate what he bequeaths to friends and foes alike from his social circle.³⁵ Villon's use of "*Item*" thus allows him to fashion caricatures of real people and places with authenticity.³⁶ On account of this combination or synthesis, it has been suggested that Villon's poetry is composed of fragments assembled with varied success, and edited in a chronological order based on his perceived psychological (and not biographical) evolution.³⁷ Instead, it has been rightly emphasized that Villon's work displays his realizations of the natural and physical world around him rather than constructing simple metaphors of it. The circular synonymy of the

³⁵ The latin "*Item*" is more than just a borrowing from Villon's education; it serves to stylistically (re)define his early *Lais*: "La ponctuation des '*Item* ...' scande la succession des legs et des volontés dernières. Le poète 'donne faculté,' il 'donne puissance.' Il veut et ordonne. Il institue. Il commet. Il remet." Favier, *François Villon*, 281.

³⁶ "Le *Testament* de Villon est une synthèse. Il procède du poème allusif, dans la tradition des allégories lyriques. Il tient aussi de toute une littérature bourgeoise et réaliste, et c'est ce réalisme que supporte la caricature des formes juridiques." Villon's training and probable work as a clerk factors heavily into the structure of his poems: "Que Villon ait plus ou moins longtemps gagné sa vie dans une Officine est assez vraisemblable. Il a en tête les formules grâce auxquelles l'œuvre sonne l'authentique. La synthèse trouve ici son deuxième nœud: c'est une caricature à visage d'authenticité." Favier, 280-281.

³⁷ The strongest authority positing this suggestion was philologist Italo Siciliano who "a voulu démontrer que le *Testament* est une œuvre composite, faite de pièces et de morceaux plus ou moins bien assemblés. Il suffirait d'en remplacer les différentes parties dans leur ordre chronologique pour voir s'y dessiner, au lieu du portrait traditionnel d'un Villon qui 'rit en pleurs,' l'évolution psychologique d'un 'bon follastre' repenti sur ses vieux jours." Zumthor too remarks that "l'œuvre entière est montage: d'une 'complainte' (les *Regrets*) et d'un 'testament'; mais aussi des noms, des phrases." Italo Siciliano, "Il Testamento di Francesco Villon," *Rassegna XXXVIII* (1930); *François Villon et les thèmes poétiques du moyen âge* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1934); "Sur le 'Testament' de François Villon," *Romania LXV* (1939), 39-90, cited by Gothot-Mersch, "Sur l'unité du *Testament* de Villon," 1411; Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 425.

grave (or “pit”) as prison, and then the prison as death, perhaps allows us to peer into his interpretation of his individual, experiential world.³⁸

The unfolding of Villon’s discourse convincingly presents traces of his existence by forming a past-present-future triptych of his life. Zumthor alludes to this evidence, but hesitates that “On n’est jamais certain de rien quoique le déroulement général du discours soit celui même d’une existence.”³⁹ Zumthor’s hesitation is revealing: what do we know with certainty about Villon’s lived experience? Despite this uncertainty, Villon’s inclusion of greater referential detail must be taken as proof of greater autobiographical perspective in late medieval poetry. Charles forms a similar triptych in his three *ballades* “Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d’enfance,” “Cueur, trop es plain de folie!,” and “Nouvelles ont couru en France,” discussed in the previous chapter.⁴⁰ Huitain XXXIX in Villon’s *Lais* feature verbs in the past tense: “Puis que mon sens *fut* à repos / [...] Je *cuiday* finer mon propos, / Mais mon ancrë *estoit* gelé / Et mon cierge *trouvay* soufflé [...]” (85, vv. 305-309). “Ballade des dames du temps jadis” in his *Testament* also contains verbs

³⁸ Zumthor underlines the fluidity of Villon’s poetry, stating “les lignes thématiques assurent la solidité et la cohérence de l’ensemble: Amour, Mort, prison, fosse ... qui ne sont pas des métaphores, mais des virtualités associatives aptes à toutes les actualisations, et qui simultanément renvoient les unes aux autres en une sorte de vaste synonymie; la fosse, c’est la prison, qui est la mort, qu’est finalement l’amour.” He also proposes that Villon’s poetry is a reflection of his worldview: “C’est en ce sens que l’on peut admettre [...] que le *Testament* fournit, de façon au moins virtuelle, une interprétation cosmologique du vécu.” Gothot-Mersch also stresses the fluidity of his poetry, but only goes as far to chalk it up to his artistic conscience, and not that of his lived experiences and world: “L’originalité et le charme du *Testament* doivent énormément à sa ligne souple, capricieuse, imprévue, à son apparente naïveté, à ses désarmantes sincérités successives [...] Villon, déjà, sait ce qu’il fait. Fantaisie de la ligne, choc des contrastes, émotion qui naît d’un changement de ton ... Le désordre, chez lui, n’est pas la conséquence d’un travail hâtif de rejointoyage; au contraire, c’est un effet de l’art.” Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 425; Gothot-Mersch, “Sur l’unité du *Testament* de Villon,” 1426.

³⁹ Zumthor, 425.

⁴⁰ Ballad LXXX recounts the past and the conditions surrounding Charles’s capture and imprisonment as a re-visitation of the initial causes of his captivity. Ballad LXXXI grasps the everyday reality of the present of both the ordeal of imprisonment and of the physical space of prison: a *locus horridus* whose misery shows no sign of alleviating. Finally, Ballad LXXXII logically appears to speculate upon the future in dispelling possibilities of any intrusive, sudden death across his poetic consciousness, and in validating hopeful and wishful possibilities of a life after prison through the refrain and exclamation “the mouse is still alive!” (*Encore est vive la souris!*). For this discussion, see Chapter One, p. 73-74.

in the past tense: “[...] Et Jehanne, la bonne Lorraine, / Qu’Engloys *brulerent* à Rouen [...]” (119, vv. 349-350). Huitain XIV in his *Testament* features verbs in the present tense: “Je *suis* pecheur, je le sçay bien. / Pourtant ne *vault* pas Dieu ma mort [...]” (99, vv. 105-106). “Ballade de la Grosse Margot” similarly displays verbs in the present tense: “Vente, gresle, gesle, j’*ay* mon pain cuyt. / Je *suis* paillart, la paillarde me *suyt*” (221, vv. 1621-1622). Finally, his *Testament* features verbs in the future tense, such as in Huitain CLXXVII: “Au moins *sera* de moy memoire / Telle qu’elle est d’un bon follastre” (241, vv. 1882-1883). There are also poems implying the future, such as his “Ballade pour prier Nostre Dame,” albeit through the *je* and *moi* of his mother and not Villon himself: “*Recevez* moy, vostre humble crestienne, / [...] *Pardonne* moy comme à l’Egipcienne, / [...] *Preservez* moy que ce face jamaiz ce(sse), / [...] En ceste foy *je veuil vivre et mourir*” (161, vv. 875, 885, 889, 892).⁴¹ The past-present-future triptych of his life, as referenced in this shift in tenses above, serves as proof that Villon was one of the earlier medieval poets to deliberately include in verse thoughtful and meaningful reflections on his life experiences and current events occurring around him.

As Zumthor remarks, Villon brings together a large quantity of brief images, deeds, and empirical observations which he refuses to filter through a greater artistic aesthetic or knowledge. He aptly portrays himself as not knowing anything, not being familiar with anything, and perceiving forms and movements in his world primarily at the level of lived experience.⁴²

⁴¹ Mary of Egypt was a Christian desert hermit saint who lived during Late Antiquity, whose life is primary described by the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronius in the 7th century. After living a “life of sin,” Mary traveled to Jerusalem and had a spiritual epiphany after praying to the Virgin Mary and encountering the True Cross (relic from Christ’s crucifixion). She crossed the Jordan River and lived in the desert wilderness in solitude and penance for forty-seven years. Bonnie B. Thurston, *Saint Mary of Egypt: a Modern Verse Life and Interpretation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2021), 9-10.

⁴² Zumthor emphasizes the importance of Villon’s portrayal of his physical world and lived experience, identifying in his poetry “un monde concret, d’objets et d’êtres affectés de marques syntaxiques ou sémantiques qui les particularisent.” He more crucially highlights Villon’s divergence from the medieval courtly lyric tradition and its practitioners, much like Charles: “Villon s’oppose fortement par-là aux derniers poètes courtois. Le premier peut-

Besides brief forays into allegory for the characters of the Virgin Mary and “les femmes du temps jadis,” Villon’s characters are real flesh-and-blood personalities with whom he interacted in his daily life. These include brothel workers like la Grosse Margot, his adopted father Guillaume de Villon, as well as his jailer and now perhaps sexual aggressor, bishop Thibaud d’Aussigny. Villon cultivates and expands the shift set in motion by Charles away from allegorical and metaphorical modes of courtly expression and towards substituting or supplanting this tradition with commonplace and everyday lived experiences of the poet, whose identity is now associated with the author of the poem. Charles interprets the world of his English captivity around him by first embellishing his poems with sets of allegories and casts of personified figures dictated by previous, conventional medieval lyric and courtly norms, or through unique autobiographical and referential forms created by the conditions of his imprisonment. Whereas Charles describes the coming of old age through the metaphor of playing a game of tennis or chess against the personified figure of Age, Villon presents the world as it was, for him, and as he experienced it. And while both Villon and Charles follow conventions to varying degrees, these conventions are of a different kind and provenance for the two. Charles’s interpretation of age in his poems is idealistic, an idealization, while Villon’s is anti-idealistic, a mockery. Villon writes from a satirical and iconoclastic viewpoint and from a deflationist perspective, both which return to the realistic depths of life, are down-to-earth, and are far from the idealized heights of allegory: “a Charles d’Orléans may treat love in romantic fashion, with many a delicate conceit and many a dainty allegory, but Villon, poet of the city, not of the court, reveals all the

être en cela des poètes médiévaux, il pose, mais n’interprète pas. Il organise une grande quantité de menues images, de faits, de données empiriques, qu’il refuse de filtrer à l’aide d’un ars impliquant une connaissance préalable de l’objet même. Lui ne sait rien, ne se connaît pas, perçoit les formes et les mouvements de monde au niveau de l’expérience vécue.” Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 426.

coarseness of the street and tavern in his remarks.”⁴³ Villon’s presentation of the world has no room for allegory or personification, which he outright abandons and which cease to function except in a few poems, such as his Ballad XI, “Débat du cuer et du corps de Villon.”⁴⁴ In place of allegory and personification, Zumthor notes that Villon instead tends to insert a never-ending series of loose analogies, “attachées à n’importe quel trait formel, un son, une ressemblance syllabique, ou un quiproquo,” accompanied by countless proverbs and colloquialisms.⁴⁵ While Zumthor asserts that these analogies have no deeper or ultimate meaning other than that of any human’s perception of the world and of any human’s emotions in reacting to that world, they represent more than just “les vicissitudes d’une perception et peut-être d’une émotivité.”⁴⁶ Villon’s analogies are indeed deep and rich in meaning and inspired by his lived experiences. They straightforwardly communicate his authorial, first-person perspective and emotionality rather than just the “trials and tribulations” that give off a feeling of perspective or emotion.

Villon presents a gallery of things, places, and people in all their differences and particularities, and not in a relational way that makes them fit into a single semantic system. He strolls past, like in a military review, the singers, performers, dancers, and denizens of his taverns, brothels, and where it concerns this study, the clerks and jailers of his prisons. Similarly, Villon is not simply stringing together paradoxes and plays on words for their own sake. He instead records his feelings in face of the contrasting forces of life, its intermingling joys and

⁴³ John Fox, *The Poetry of Villon* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 118.

⁴⁴ Zumthor is keen to perceive this and comments on “l’absence de métaphores, que remplace l’équivoque” in Villon’s poetry, as well as how “la relation allégorique ne fonctionne plus [...] À la seule exception du ‘Débat de Cœur et du Corps,’ de caractère étroitement traditionnel, jamais Villon ne s’analyse au moyen de personnifications. Cela seul compte, qui signifie son rapport ambigu avec le monde.” Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 428.

⁴⁵ Zumthor, 428.

⁴⁶ Zumthor, 428.

sorrows, and puts into words the contradictions he finds in life and in himself.⁴⁷ While it is true that Villon helps himself to prior medieval poetic conventions, they do not drain or cloud the sense of his poetry communicated through the contrasts and contradictions of his lived experience of prison. On the other hand, Charles's poetry still boldly demonstrated the shift from the medieval lyric allegorical courtly tradition to autobiographical references from everyday life to record the emotionality of his lived experiences of imprisonment. He nonetheless still employed allegory and personification to construct idealized dreamscapes. Villon largely rejected romantic dreaming in favor of a straightforward realistic attitude to life based on his observations and experiences, which became characteristic of his poetry.⁴⁸ Although the identification of Villon with the author and the actual person who lived, breathed, and moved in and out of Parisian taverns and brothels establishes real authorship; as with Charles's case, it is not the same as the elements of his poems reflecting prison conditions.

III. A Biographical Sketch of François Villon Before His Imprisonment

François de Montcorbier, such was his original name, was born in Paris in 1431 in extremely obscure circumstances to unknown parents and during unsettling conditions.⁴⁹ It has

⁴⁷ Fox, *The Poetry of Villon*, 115; *Charles d'Orléans. Poésies I*, ed. Champion, 156, v. 1.

⁴⁸ Fox, 126.

⁴⁹ Jean Favier suggests that Villon's parents were two provincial immigrants who came to Paris, as was common following the capital's depletion from ongoing war and sickness: "fils d'un provincial venu à Paris entre tant d'autres." His mother must have always been impoverished, illiterate, yet a dedicated churchgoer, based on her seeming portrayal in old age in one of Villon's poems ("Ballade pour prier Nostre Dame") where she prays to the Virgin Mary: "Femme que je suis, pauvrete et ancienne, / Qui riens ne sçay, oncques lettres ne leuz / Au moustier voy, dont suis parroissienne" (163, vv. 893-865). He also portrays her as dying in *Testament* Huitain XXXVIII: "J'entens que ma mere mourra / – El le scet bien, la povre femme! –" (115, vv. 302-303). By the time of her son's crimes and imprisonment, "c'est une vieille femme [...] en priant la Vierge et en pleurant les frasques de son fils, elle attend la mort. Elle doit avoir la cinquantaine ... Comme tant d'autres, la mère de François Villon délaisse sa paroisse." Favier describes this old woman as probably a widow, since Villon only refers to his father's death in the past tense, such as again in Huitain XXXVIII – "Mon pere est mort, Dieu en ait l'ame! / Quant est du corps, il gist

been suggested that Villon lived an unhappy childhood during one of the French capital's most wretched periods.⁵⁰ Its denizens suffered famine, epidemics, and pestilence in the aftermath of long years of war and English occupation, despite the latter's lessening grip on the city and nation, and French king Charles VII's joyous re-entry to the capital.⁵¹ He was nonetheless taken under the wing by the chaplain of Saint-Benoît-le-Bétourné, Guillaume de Villon,⁵² whose name he took, and received one of the finest educations of his time and became a *maistre-ès-arts* in 1452, preparing him without a doubt for a successful career in the Church or as a lawyer.⁵³ However, Villon stagnated, unable to find his place in the workforce and society either because he struggled to find a post given the surplus of graduates, or because he judged life too short to spend further years on required schooling for coveted and rewarding posts in law or medicine.⁵⁴

soubz lame" (115, vv. 300-301) – and to his poverty, such as in the *Testament's* Huitain XXXV: "Mon pere n'eust oncq grant richesse, / Ne son ayeul nommé Orrace" (113, vv. 275-276). Favier, *François Villon*, 35, 37.

⁵⁰ Favier reinforces his mother's poverty and Fox's hypothesis of his "unhappy" upbringing, as Villon also references her in the huitain (LXXXIX) preceding this ballad: "[...] ma povre mere, / [...] Qui pour moy ot douleur amere, / Dieu le scet, et mainte tritresse [...]" (161, vv. 865, 867-868). He comments on "la foi que prête à sa mère le chenapan qui lui causa si souvent." Favier, 54-55; Fox, *The Poetry of Villon*, xii.

⁵¹ Fox, xii-xiii.

⁵² Villon professed a profound love for his caring, adopted "father:" "Par fortune, le chapelain Guillaume de Villon est le meilleur des hommes. Entré chez lui à un âge bien tendre, vers six ou sept ans, François en gardera à l'âge adulte le souvenir d'un père adoptif." His "fidélité attendrie" for Guillaume is evidenced in his *Testament's* Huitain LXXXVII: "[...] mon plus que pere / Maistre Guillaume de Villon, / Qui esté m'a plus doulx que mere / Enfant eslevé de maillon [...]" (159, vv. 849-852). Favier, 86.

⁵³ Favier explains that *maistre-ès-arts* refers to "arts libéraux," and surmises that "il lui ouvre les portes des facultés, dites supérieures, de théologie, droit ou médecine [...] qui fait bon effet mais ne nourrit pas son homme, ce Parisien de courte lignée est seul de son espèce." Favier, 34; Fox, xiii.

⁵⁴ Claude Thiry reiterates the reality of the surplus of graduates and its consequence on these unemployed young men: "En ce Paris des années 1450, les diplômés universitaires étaient nombreux, trop nombreux pour trouver tous, rapidement, leur insertion dans la vie sociale et professionnelle: inactifs, désargentés, certains ne tardent pas à tourner mal, selon un processus de marginalisation progressive [...] Villon, apparemment, fut de ceux-là. Ses textes conservent l'écho de chahuts estudiantins auxquels il a sans doute participé [...]" On the other hand, a post in law or medicine "suppose encore des années d'études, et le futur Villon est impatient. Douze à quatorze ans de théologie, six à huit ans de droit, c'est beaucoup en un temps où l'homme de vingt et un ans qui vient de recevoir le bonnet ès arts n'a plus qu'une espérance de vie de dix ans. Le pari est hasardeux." Upon completing his studies in 1452, "Maître François de Montcorbier est un médiocre écolier. En trois ans, aucun titre universitaire n'est venu s'ajouter à la maîtrise ès arts libéraux qui sanctionne ses études secondaires. C'est un clerc sans emploi, sans

By 1455, however, Villon was implicated in his first crime. Involved in a violent discussion with a priest named Philippe Sermoise, he was injured and killed the latter in a hasty self-defense, or so he pleaded. Worried, he then had his wounds attended by a “barber” under a false name and subsequently fled into the provinces.⁵⁵ But in January 1456, Villon was granted letters of pardon acquitting him for Sermoise’s death, justified as he had no previous infraction with the law, but it was not to be his only lucky break.⁵⁶ Still then, by Christmas of the same year, Villon committed his first known theft, along with four accomplices, of five hundred gold *écus* from the Collège de Navarre.⁵⁷ His following escape gave way to his celebrated first meeting with Charles at Blois at the end of 1457 or early 1458 and perhaps also to meetings with the duc de Bourbon and king René d’Anjou. He may have even been first briefly imprisoned in Orléans in 1460, as he wrote a poem in honor of Charles’s young daughter Marie (“Épître à Marie d’Orléans” or “Le Dit de la naissance de Marie d’Orléans”), who made a ceremonial entry into the city in that year, although these all remain unproven.⁵⁸ Marie’s birth three years earlier, greatly feted as the sixty-year-old

beaucoup d’ambition. Un garçon paisible, en tout cas, et dont tout le vice tient à un peu de polissonnerie.” Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 7; Favier, *François Villon*, 141, 163.

⁵⁵ Planche, “Prison de prince, prison de vilain,” 304; Thiry, 7; Fox, *The Poetry of Villon*, xiii.

⁵⁶ Planche hypothesizes that Villon’s letters of pardon were due to the intervention of his adopted father and chaplain Guillaume de Villon, which he references in the same Huitain LXXXVII he dedicates to Guillaume: “Degeté m’a de maint bouillon [...]” (159, v. 853). Planche, 304.

⁵⁷ John Fox highlights that Villon was part of a gang that robbed the Collège de Navarre, as one of its members, a certain Guy Tabarie, “the least important, but also the least discreet member [...] had talked too freely in the congenial atmosphere of the taverns, and the whole story of Villon’s part in the robbery became known to the authorities.” Planche speculates that Tabarie was interrogated instead and revealed in detail the robbery and made Villon to be the head of the group, who left to Angers to rob another religious institution. As for which gang, she finally notes that Villon may have belonged to the Coquillards, which Pierre Champion hypothesizes, as attested by his famous and puzzling “Ballade en jargon.” Fox, xiii-xiv; Planche, 304.

⁵⁸ Planche alludes to Villon’s meetings (although she has no date for that with Charles) and brief imprisonment: “[...] nous ignorons à quel moment il est passé à la cour de Charles d’Orléans – ce qui est cependant certain –, à celle du Duc de Bourbon et à celle du roi René – ce qui n’est pas prouvé. Peut-être a-t-il un temps été incarcéré à Orléans: en 1460, Marie, fille tardive de Charles, fait à trois ans son entrée dans la ville. À cette occasion, Villon lui consacre un *Dit* flatteur qui n’est pas un chef d’œuvre.” She justifies her mention of his possible incarceration in Orléans with this Ballad, which states that Marie was “A tres grande joye receue” and implores

prince- and former prisoner-poet had been married to his third wife Marie de Clèves for 17 years with no issue, possibly led Charles to declare a general amnesty. Villon likely benefitted from such amnesty and avoided a death sentence during his fleeing. One can certainly envision Villon spending the four years 1457-1461 “in the provinces” as a pure and simple vagabond, as he failed to gain anything in passing by these various dukes, and lived in a mediocrity and marginalization that eventually caused his first major imprisonment at Meung-sur-Loire. It is unlikely, however, to consider Villon a highway bandit of the greatest degree.⁵⁹ He first left for Angers in early 1457, hoping to join René d’Anjou’s famed literary court, all while finishing his *Lais* sometime during the winter of that year 1456-1457.⁶⁰

Like Charles, Villon makes an intentional, authorial decision to insert autobiographical and referential perspective in his *Lais* and *Testament*. Villon’s prison poetry is in this sense inseparable from his reality and existence. Charles’ prison poetry undergoes a shift from conventional courtly allegorical modes towards autobiographical identification. Villon on the contrary never leaves his tangible, material world for an artificial, allegorical one. Rather, the feelings and language in which his poetry is rooted are living forces drawn directly from his life. The following prison poems reveal how Villon’s experiences further contribute, as a

“[...] aux encloz donner yssue, / Leurs lians et fers deslier!” (283, vv. 31-32). While it will be shown further in this chapter that Villon had the habit of appealing to lords, it is not sure whether he is appealing for himself or for other prisoners. Planche, “Prison de prince, prison de vilain,” 304-305.

⁵⁹ Such is Favier’s stipulation on Villon’s livelihood while on the run during these years: “Que le Villon des années 1457-1461 soit un pur et simple vagabond n’est pas douteux. Son passage chez les princes [...] est un échec. Ses moyens d’existence sont inavouables, ce qui ne signifie pas qu’ils soient tous dénués d’honnêteté. Villon vit en médiocre, et en marginal. Cela le mène en prison.” He also stipulates that Villon was nothing close to a big-time thief: “Vivant d’expédients, peu scrupuleux dans le recours à la tricherie, au chapardage ou à l’escalade nocturne, il n’a cependant rien du bandit de grand chemin. Exploiteur occasionnel d’une fille plus que proxénète organisé, porteur de chandelle mais protecteur fragile, il n’est pas un ruffian. Petit voleur, certes, il n’est pas un ‘caïman’.” Favier, *François Villon*, 349-350.

⁶⁰ “Le poète songe à monnayer son talent. La cour de René d’Anjou est brillante, et le duc-roi poète, peintre et musicien est aussi un mécène éclairé autant que généreux [...] A Angers comme à Tarascon, sa cour passe pour le modèle de l’assemblée fastueuse de beaux esprits agréablement occupés à tuer le temps.” Favier, 357.

chronological continuation, to tracing and locating how prisoner poets exhibited a common expressivity and emotionality in imprisonment despite their multitude of differing situations.

IV. Nuanced Depictions of the Poetic Self: Les Lais

Huitain I (vv. 1-8)

While Villon's *Lais* do not consist of poems that directly reference his lived experience of prison with an amount of certainty, its beginning and ending huitains serve an important purpose in introducing the nascent but soon stalwart theme of freedom in his literature. Also designated under the title "*Petit*" *Testament*, the *Lais* distinguish themselves from his later "*Grand*" *Testament* in the way in which they begin to grapple with and attempt to make sense of binary themes of freedom and constraint, fleeing and immobility, free will and consequences, and life and death. Both huitains reference and anchor with a date the psychological factors and existential musings behind Villon's decision to flee Paris:

L'an (mil) quatre cens cinquante six,
 Je, François Villon, escollier,
 Considerant, de sens rassis,
 Le frain aux dens, franc au collier,
 Qu'on doit ses euvres conseillier,
 Comme Vegece le racompte,
 Saige Rommain, grant conseillier,
 Ou autrement on se mescompte ... (61, vv. 1-8).

Villon's autobiographical identification is immediately observable as he proclaims his status as a scholar or student (*escollier*), referring to his title as *maistre-ès-arts*. At that point, his status still gave him hope for a brighter future beyond theft and vagabondage, as it bestowed upon him

judicial advantages and could still allow him to obtain ecclesiastic benefits.⁶¹ The manner in which Villon names himself and his profession, however, parodies real judicial and religious testaments. It sets up the genre of the poem and of his *Lais* which he soon fills instead with very different “addressees” (*considéran*t)s of his reflections modeled after bequeathals from real testaments.⁶² He continues to parody actual testaments, and all legal documents for that matter, by stating that he is of sound body and mind in his deliberations: “Considerant, de sens rassis” (61, v. 1).⁶³ He also adds innovative and unconventional proverbial imagery (for a legal document) in portraying himself as a straightforward (*franc au collier*) horse in a harness chomping at the bit (*le frain aux dents*).⁶⁴ The expression *prendre le frein aux dents* can signify to bolt (away) in any sort of capacity,⁶⁵ “to follow one’s own course,” or “to go with one’s own project, whatsoever advice or command be given on the contrary.”⁶⁶ It can equally have contradicting meanings to also imply “to come over with a great impetus or desire” or “to

⁶¹ Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 60.

⁶² Villon’s manner in which he names himself, his status, and formulates his wishes follows a long-held testament format: “In nomine sancta et individue Trinitatis, Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, amen. Je, Jehan de Nuilly Saint Front, licenciez en droit civil et canon ..., considerans qu’il n’est plus certain de la mort...” *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*. t. II. *Commentaire*. eds. Jean Rychner and Albert Henry (Geneva: Droz, 1977), 6.

⁶³ Both Rychner and Henry and Thiry interpret “*de sens rassis*” as “la raison bien ferme.” Thiry adds that Villon “s’est dit sain d’esprit: il se présente aussi comme sain de corps, ne rechignant pas devant l’effort.” *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*. eds. Rychner and Henry, 6; Thiry, 60.

⁶⁴ Rychner and Henry note that the first proverbial expression “*le frain aux dents*” “se disait d’un cheval qui, serrant le mors entre ses dents, bande tous ses muscles pour l’effort; d’où, au sens figuré: ‘rassembler ses énergies, serrer les dents’.” Both then note that the second proverbial expression “*franc au collier*” signifie “se donnant généreusement à l’effort.” Thiry equally comments that both are “expressions imagées relatives aux chevaux, de sens voisin (‘serrant bien le mors entre les dents, et tirant avec énergie’), déjà associées, en 1422, dans le *Quadrilogue invectif* d’Alain Chartier;” this latter is also attested by Rychner and Henry. *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*, 6; *The Poems of François Villon*. ed. Galway Kinnell (University Press of New England: Hanover and London, 1982), 3.

⁶⁵ “S’emporter dans toute sorte de licence.” *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin*. t. III (Paris, La Compagnie des Libraires Associés, 1752), 1875.

⁶⁶ Randle, Cotgrave and Howell, James. *A French-English Dictionary* (London: W.H., 1650).

strongly apply one's self to one's study or profession,"⁶⁷ and additionally "to take the bit between the teeth" or "to resist authority."⁶⁸ This latter definition of a strong motivation to push through constraint seems the best adapted to Villon's original intent, given that the expression ultimately signifies an impatience or desire for liberty.

Vladimir Rossman identified the importance of the association of *collier* (collar) with the neck and throat to affirm Villon's obsession with the binaries of death and confinement and life and freedom. Not only does the throat emit voice, essential in validating an individual's consent in a legal testament, but it ensures life-giving breathing. The neck and throat also figure into Villon's fixation on his punishment of death by hanging, the typical non-noble capital punishment, seen most famously in his "Ballade des pendus." The neck and throat are simultaneously the sites of death and life. After his death, Villon is denied both the noble, dignified ability to record his legal consent in a testament and the ability to breathe to continue living. Paradoxically, if the authorities pardon him a death by hanging, his freedom guarantees that his legal will is recorded and that he can continue breathing to remain alive: "La gorge, d'où sortent les paroles et par laquelle on respire, assure la vérité du testament aussi bien que la sincérité, la noblesse et la puissance de respirer du testateur. Pour Villon, qui a failli être pendu, le cou marque la liberté de vivre, garantie par les autorités civiles."⁶⁹ Rossman points to the specific imagery of *franc au collier* as a metaphor for freedom from the hangman's noose. The expression *frain aux dents* instead signals to Villon the constraint of death, as clemency for his

⁶⁷ "On le dit aussi dans un sens contraire, et en bonne part, pour dire, 'Revenir d'un grand emportement, et s'appliquer fortement à l'étude, à sa profession'." *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin*, 1875.

⁶⁸ Cotgrave and Howell, *A French-English Dictionary*.

⁶⁹ Vladimir Rossman, *François Villon: les concepts médiévaux du testament* (Paris: Delarge, 1976), 59.

sentence is denied and he remains tied in his harness and “chomping at the bit.”⁷⁰ All three expressions stylistically converge due to their semantic meanings in this parody of a legal process and document (a testament). The expressions cause a shift from reproducing actual legal terms (*sens rassis*) to transposing everyday fifteenth-century commonplace proverbs, such as those about horses (*le frain aux dens*), into such a legal formula in order to express his renewed spirit, determination, and his decision to set out on a new adventure.

Villon’s emphasis on *sens rassis* mimics a legal formula and procedure where the party concerned affirms that it is fully cognizant of the deliberations before it. It also serves to validate his poetic project of a “testament” by downplaying his irrationality and emotionality and by highlighting his serenity and rationality: “Dès les premiers vers du *Lais*, le ‘sens’ – la sagesse ou la raison – est sollicité non seulement pour garantir, bien sûr, le discernement du testateur, mais pour certifier la lucidité du prisonnier, la claire conscience de son sort, le socle raisonnable de son aigreur et de son fiel.”⁷¹ In his references to imprisonment in his poetry, Villon will fall back upon the same juxtaposition between despair and composure, and between vulnerability and security in order to describe prison as a space of reclusion that is spatially double. This double prison is a detestable and harmful space of injustice and suffering in which the innocent Villon is oppressed and smothered, contrary to the normally-conceived space of (recuperative) human reclusion, the warm and welcoming home (a “maison-foyer”).⁷² Villon explains that his next moves in this new adventure must be scrutinized and thought out carefully (“Qu’on doit ses

⁷⁰ Rossman, *Les concepts médiévaux*, 59-60.

⁷¹ Vincensini, “Prisons de Villon. Espaces et pathétique,” 163.

⁷² Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, cit. p. 427; Vincensini, 163.

euvres conseiller”),⁷³ much like a military leader or strategist such as the wise Ancient Roman general and great counselor Vegetius would advise, to whom he makes an allusion: “Comme Vegece le racompte, / Saige Rommain, grant conseiller” (61, vv. 6-7).⁷⁴ Once again in irony and parody, Villon exaggerates the grave and serious nature of his next actions in his adventure by comparing them to the life-or-death maneuvers of an esteemed general like Vegetius on the battlefield.⁷⁵ Villon finally warns both the reader, but also himself through a sort of moment of self-consciousness, that one must think through such actions to avoid the risk of miscalculating: “Ou autrement on se mescompte” (61, v. 8).⁷⁶ The rupture at the end of this first huitain which opens his *Lais* signals Villon’s abandonment of his official (yet parodic) first-person testament, as evidenced by “*Je, François Villon, [...]*,” in favor of a more general reflection on a specific situation. His poem begins with a seemingly-authentic first-person “I” (*je*) adapted to what Villon intends to say. However, it transitions and ends with a third-person “one” (*on*).⁷⁷ Villon’s

⁷³ Rychner and Henry interpret “*conseiller*” as “traiter avec régime de chose: ‘soumettre à la réflexion’,” as does Thiry, who adds “d’où: qu’on doit bien peser ses actes.” Rychner and Henry unpack the proverbial expression “*ses euvres conseiller*” similarly as “peser ses actes, méditer ses décisions.” *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*, eds. Rychner and Henry, 6; Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 60.

⁷⁴ The aphorism to Vegetius, according to Rychner and Henry, “correspond assez bien à l’essentiel de plusieurs chapitres du *De re militari* où Flavius Vegetius Renatus (vers 400 p. C.N.) insiste sur la prévoyance et la réflexion nécessaires au chef de guerre.” *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*, 6.

⁷⁵ Thiry makes this important distinction, positing that “l’autorité de Végèce, fortement soulignée, cautionne ironiquement le sérieux du discours et présente Villon comme un chef de guerre dressant ses plans de campagne.” Rychner and Henry on the contrary only allude that “Végèce étant au Moyen Âge le grand classique de l’art militaire, la seule invocation de son autorité suggérerait des plans de campagnes à dresser.” Thiry, 60; *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*, 7.

⁷⁶ Rychner and Henry interpret “*se mescompter*” as “se tromper dans ses calculs,” as does Thiry. *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*, 7; Thiry, 6.

⁷⁷ Thiry and Pinkernell hypothesize that such a “miscalculation” possibly alludes to his theft at the Collège de Navarre, the crime and main cause spurring his flight from Paris. Rychner and Henry however state “nous ne saurions partager l’opinion” of Pinkernell (and also of Thiry) “qui voit dans le premier huitain une allusion au coup du Collège de Navarre.” *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*, 7; Thiry, 60; Gert Pinkernell, “Villon und Vegetius,” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 90 (1974): 487-493.

anacoluthon, or shift in his unfinished sentence from one syntactic construction to another, is equally mirrored more violently and affectively in the beginning huitain of his *Testament*.

Huitain XL (vv. 313-320)

The final huitain (XL) in Villon's *Lais* continues to depict a self-reflection and self-examination of his past and future actions. His decision to flee Paris and embark on his adventure demonstrates the strongly autobiographical content and nature of his earliest poetry:

Fait au temps de ladite datte
 Par le bon renommé Villon,
 Qui ne mengue figue ne datte,
 Sec et noir comme (ung) escouvillon:
 Il n'a tente ne pavillon
 Qu'il n'ait lessié à ses amis,
 Et n'a mais q'un peu de billon
 Qui sera tantost à fin mis (87, vv. 1-8).

Huitain XL insists it was done on the aforesaid date: "Fait au temps de ladite datte" (87, v. 1).

That is, it was done in 1456, according to his first Huitain (I), but near Christmas 1456 according to his second (II): "En ce temps que j'ay dit devant, / Sur le Noël, morte saison" (61, vv. 1-2).

This suggests that his *Lais* may have been inspired by a stream-of-consciousness and composed in one or closely-congruous sittings.⁷⁸ In addition to "François Villon, escollier," Villon provides another epithet, "le bon renommé Villon," in a growing list of first-person identifications which are crucial in establishing not only authorship, but also lived authorial perspective and perception. Referring to himself as the "very renowned Villon" is itself ironic, but likely references the terminology of the letters of pardon he received in early 1456 clearing

⁷⁸ Such is Thiry's position, who speculates "la date précisée au début du *Lais*: Noël 1456, comme si le texte avait été écrit tout d'une traite." Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 86.

(thus, the emphasis) his name for the murder of the priest Philippe Sermoise.⁷⁹ But, in employing contrast, this “very renowned Villon” eats neither figs nor dates, using a clever play on words with the latter *datte* (as “date” the time and “date” the fruit): “Qui ne mengue figue ne datte” (87, v. 3). He implies that he is poor because he gave everything away (the testament he formulates in his *Lais*, and items he bequeaths to friends and enemies alike) and now cannot afford such expensive exotic fruit.⁸⁰ As a result of losing all his resources, Villon likens himself to a dry and black furnace or oven mop, and that he has neither tent nor pavilion that has not been left to a friend: “Sec et noir comme (ung) escouvillon” (87, v. 4), “Il n’a tente ne pavillon / Qu’il n’ait lessié à ses amis” (87, vv. 5-6).⁸¹ He also manages to provide two further plays on words that not only rhyme with his name “Villon,” but contain it through this furnace mop (*escouvillon*) and the pavilion (*pavillon*).⁸² Villon’s first huitain in his *Lais*, despite not featuring any content that directly references his lived experience of prison, demonstrates the extent to which his earliest poetry explored and employed autobiographical representations of his real-life deliberations and thought processes. It equally demonstrates the extent of his creative manipulation of perspective,

⁷⁹ Rychner and Henry as well as Thiry correct “le bon renommé” to signify “le bien renommé,” which the former describe as a “formule habituelle exprimant l’honorabilité” and the latter as “formule plus courante, de sens analogue.” Thiry continues to observe that in one of these letters of pardon “Charles VII ordonne que lui soient restituées *ses bone fame et renommee* et, dans l’autre, Villon est dit *home de bonne vie, renommee et honneste conversation*,” and labels it as perhaps ironic. *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*. eds. Rychner and Henry, 46; Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 86.

⁸⁰ Thiry, 86.

⁸¹ Thiry elaborates Villon’s own comparison to a furnace or oven mop, describing that “ces privations l’ont déjà desséché, comme le bâton servant au nettoyage des fours de boulangers (*escouvillon*),” and locating the importance of the color black (*noir*) in Villon’s imagery of his premature ageing, such as in his *Testament Huitain XXIII*, where he describes himself as blacker than a mulberry (*mûre*) – “Triste, pally, plus noir que meure” (105, v. 179) – which in itself is a play on words with the adjective “mature,” *mûr(e)*. Thiry, 86.

⁸² Rychner and Henry translate the expression *avoir ... pavillon* (pavilion) as to not have any “meubles” (furniture). Thiry signals that it is a repetition of a theme earlier in his *Lais IX*, where he bequeaths his “*tentes*” and “*pavillon*” to his dear adopted “*plus que pere*,” “*Maistre Guillaume Villon*.” *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*, 46; Thiry, 86.

from an intimate first-person stance to a general third-person contemplation (which is another instance of a hermeneutic exercise) of his past and future actions.

Villon did not succeed in securing any opportunities at René's court in Angers, whether on account of its organization and strict etiquette or the poet's fickle disposition. He perhaps viewed the courtier life as a comfortable cage, but a cage nonetheless.⁸³ Villon moved on to Blois, where he now hoped to join Charles's court, his senior counterpart as a (soon-to-be) prisoner-poet. Charles was also a prince-poet counterpart and peer to René, where his famed encounter with the duke of Orléans occurred. While the extent of the interaction between Charles and Villon remains unclear, during his time at Blois Villon nonetheless produced his notable "Ballade des contradictions" or "du concours de Blois," replicating Charles' famous *ballade* "Je meurs de soif en couste de la fontaine".

V. Fashioning a Victimized Self: Le Testament

Huitain XI (vv. 81-88)

Villon's errant life in the provinces came to a close in 1461 when he experienced *dure prison* for the first attested time at Meung-sur-Loire at the order of the bishop of Orléans, Thibaud d'Assigny. Little is known of Villon's infraction nor of the entire summer during which he was incarcerated except for what he himself expresses in Huitains II and XI of his *Testament*:

Et escript l'an soixante et ung,
Lors que le roy me delivra
De la dure prison de Mehun
Et que vië me recoversa,
Dont suis, tant que mon cuer vivra,
Tenu ve[r]s luy m'usmilier,
Ce que feray jusqu(es)' il mou[r]ra:

⁸³ Favier, *François Villon*, 369.

Bienfait ne se doit oublier (97, vv. 81-88).

Huitain XI begins with yet another legal formula, “escript l’an ...,” once more demonstrating Villon’s clerical background and formally opening his *Testament*. While Villon situates his *Testament* in this huitain with the date of his liberation from “la dure prison de Mehun,” he brusquely digresses and begins to laud his liberator, French king Louis XI, who freed prisoners like Villon during his passage through Meung-sur-Loire: “Lors que le roy me delivra” (97, v. 82).⁸⁴ Villon’s entire huitain juxtaposes his harsh imprisonment with the life-saving qualities of Louis XI’s act to free him: “la dure prison de Mehun” (97, v. 83), “que vië me recouvra” (97, v. 84). Villon paints himself as a humbled, prostrate figure towards the king for as long as he (metonymically represented by his heart) will live: “dont suis [...] / tenu ve[r]s luy m’usmilier” (97, vv. 85-86), “tant que mon cuer vivra [...] Ce que feray jusqu(es)’ il mou[r]ra” (97, vv. 85-87). He thanks the latter for a good deed which will not be forgotten: “Bienfait ne se doit oublier” (97, v. 88).⁸⁵ In arguably his first clear-cut reference to imprisonment along with vv. 12-15 in Huitain II, Villon sets the tone and constructs the *ego* for his corpus of prison poetry: that of *le povre Villon*. The “poor” and lamentable Villon on the margins of medieval society is portrayed as a simple being who asks and is thankful for pity after suffering the cruel winds of fate and fortune.

Vincensini admits to the obscurity of references to prison (the physical sites) and imprisonment (the condition) in Villon’s poetry, and doubts whether Villon’s experiences were lived or purely fictional. He appears to question the truthfulness of Villon’s retelling of his actual

⁸⁴ Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 96.

⁸⁵ Thiry, 96.

lived imprisonment by remarking that “cette poésie tend à profiler une vision pathétique du sujet qu’elle met en scène.”⁸⁶ Villon’s “poésie de pathétique” can indeed be realistic and give “prison” a definable and concrete sense, contrary to Vincensini’s belief that this duality is unconvincing; he cites that many have deemed Villon’s poetry either as an autobiographical confession or a work of parody. An autobiographical confession is more likely, however, given the concrete details of Villon’s life that he inserts in his poetry. While concrete references to prison and imprisonment may be few and far between in Villon’s case, and almost non-existent in Charles d’Orléans’s case, he nonetheless names “la dure prison de Mehun.” Vincensini himself is concerned with how Villon’s poetry presents his “space” and “place” of incarceration, and similarly asks “qu’est-ce qu’une prison dans les poèmes de François Villon?”⁸⁷ Despite the obfuscation swirling around the validity of Villon’s experiences and place of incarceration, the textual indication of “la dure prison de Mehun” can be considered direct evidence of his personal experience. If we are to trace a continuation in the emergence of the autobiographical from Charles d’Orléans’s more cryptic references to “Albion” and the “royaume d’Angleterre,” then Villon’s references must be deemed clearer and more concrete, representative of the greater authorial desire to depict lived encounters.

“Épître à ses amis”

While Charles d’Orléans’s prison poetry offers an affective (or rather, emotional) perspective in its “pathétique,” Villon’s prison poetry offers significantly even more. He fleshes out the groveling and desperation for help or rescue that one would normally associate with a

⁸⁶ Vincensini, “Prisons de Villon,” 149.

⁸⁷ Vincensini, 149.

prisoner languishing in a dungeon. The asking for and receiving pity effectively anchors Villon's longer, more developed prison poems inspired by his same imprisonment at Meung-sur-Loire, such as his "Épître à ses amis." In between its ample amounts of irony and humor, Villon's *ballade* displays a marked anxiety in his calls for help. It relays his skepticism of and bitterness towards his "friends" who do not heed his calls and instead abandon him:

Aiez pitié, aiez pitié de moy,
 A tout le moins, s'i vous plaist, mes amis!
 En fosse giz (non pas soubz houz ne may)
 En cest exil ouquel je suis transmis
 Par fortune, comme Dieu l'a permis.
 Filles amans jeunes gens et nouveaulx,
 Danceurs, sauteurs, faisans les piez de veaux,
 Vifs comme dars, aguz comme aguillon,
 Gousiers tintans clers comme gastaveaux,
 Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?

Chantres chantans à plaisances, sans loy,
 Galans rians, plaisans en faiz et diz,
 Coureux alans, francs de faulx or, d'aloy,
 Gens d'esperit, ung petit estourdiz,
 Trop demourez, car il meurt entandiz.
 Faiseurs de laiz, de motés et de rondeaux,
 Quant mort sera, vous lui ferez chaudesaux!
 Où gist, il n'entre n'escler ne tourbillon:
 De murs espoix on lui a fait bandesaux.
 Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?

Venez le voir en ce pitieux arroy,
 Nobles hommes, francs de quars et de dix,
 Qui ne tenez d'empereur ne de roy,
 Mais seulement de Dieu de Paradiz.
 Jeuner lui fault dimenches et merdiz,
 Dont les dens a plus longues que ratteaux;
 Après pain sec (non pas après gasteaux)
 En ses boyaulx verse eaue à groz boullon
 Bas en terre – table n'a ne trestesaux.
 Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?

Princes nommez, anciens, jovenciaulx,
 Impetrez moy graces et royaulx seaulx

Et me montez en quelque corbillon.
 Ainsi le font l'un à l'autre pourceaux,
 Car où l'un brait, ilz fuyent à monceaux.
 Le lesserez là, le povre Villon? (293-295, vv. 1-36).

Pity plays a central role in shaping the expressivity of Villon's prison experience in the *ballade*.

In his lamentable appeal, "Aiez pictié, aiez pictié de moy" (293, v. 1), Villon infers that his friends, "mes amis" (293, v. 2), of a similar, certain (lower) social status who live on the margins of medieval society are only capable of granting him mercy instead of freedom, as those with political power might have done, like Charles, duke of Orléans or French king Louis XI. So too does his ironic refrain ("Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?") also plead for their mercy, but also reaffirms the pitiful "I" or "me" and character that Villon assumes. As a result, he taps into the primal human emotion of having or taking pity and being thankful for it, connecting this *ballade* to the "Ballade des pendus." While "friends" of a higher, noble social status, such as Villon's fellow prisoner-poet and almost-patron Charles, possess a social dignity to respond to social and moral obligations like Villon's calls for help from prison, his marginalized "friends" possess no social dignity but are simply connected by a sort of brotherhood or bond of humanity.

It appears true that Villon took a more practical stance in addressing his "Épître à ses amis" to those with direct power or influence over him, such as his jailers and judges, including the hated Thibaut d'Assigny. However, Villon likely never intended to address his poem to this community of vagabonds and precarious individuals of mid-fifteenth-century Paris, as Pinkernell hypothesizes: "force est de conclure que l'auteur ne peut guère avoir visé réellement les *filles*, les *danceurs*, les *saulteurs* etc. qu'il fait semblant d'implorer."⁸⁸ These individuals lacked the means and access to legal channels to free the imprisoned poet. Rather, Villon, in his pursuit of pity or

⁸⁸ Pinkernell, *François Villon et Charles d'Orléans*, 114.

out of sheer exasperation, was simply soliciting a “process of imaginative construction,” to return to Regalado, with his “amis,” the “filles, danseurs, sauteurs, chantres.” Villon accomplishes this imaginative reconstruction through the visceral retelling of his experience of prison in verses such as “en fosse giz” (293, v. 3) that depict Villon lying in a pit or ditch (metaphor for a prison cell, or for a grave and by association, death),⁸⁹ or “en cest exil ouquel je suis transmis” (293, v. 4) that portray a fellow prisoner languishing in prison.⁹⁰ This evocation of a whole parade of types of characters (“filles, danseurs, sauteurs, chantres”) inhabiting the urban world is typical and occurs frequently in Villon’s *Testament*, and can be considered proof of the greater presence of the autobiographical mode among prisoner-poets. Such a parade does not exist to the same extent in Charles’s prison poetry, who instead sporadically refers to real, historical personalities such as his cousin, the duke of Burgundy Philippe le Bon, whom he addresses in his later epistolary ballads.

The image of the *fosse* (pit, ditch), and the “polysémie carcérale” it implies,⁹¹ becomes a *locus* that is frequently privileged and invoked by Villon and that is essential in establishing a concrete and definable prison space in his poetry. For Villon, the *fosse*, or the prison cell (“cachot”), represents both a space of reclusion and of death (i.e., a grave). The image of the *fosse* as a figure for death seems to be mostly justified by Villon’s verse “Quant mort sera [...]” (293, v. 17) and by the verb *gesir* (to lie down) in the next one, which can also designate a dead

⁸⁹ The *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch (FEW)* defines “*fosse*” as “creux en terre naturel ou pratiqué par l’homme,” “trou creusé en terre où l’on met les morts,” “fosse tombale,” and “cachot.” Walter von Wartburg, *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch: eine Darstellung des galloromanischen Sprachschatzes* III (Bonn: F. Klopp, 1928), 738b, 739b, 1200-15. jh, 1226.

⁹⁰ It has been known that in the Middle Ages one of the meanings of “*exil*” included “*prison*”. Villon additionally uses it in line 1899 of his *Testament*, “Rigueur le transmist en exil.” André Burger, “La dure prison de Meung,” *Studi in onore di Italo Siciliano* (Florence: 1966), 152.

⁹¹ Term is Vincensini’s. Vincensini, “Prisons de Villon,” 175.

person lying down: “Où gist, il n’entre n’escler ne tourbillon” (293, v. 18). The symbolism of *fosse* as death is also evident through *bandeaux*, a funeral cloth or shroud that is formed by the thick prison walls surrounding him: “De murs espoix on lui a fait bandeaux” (293, v. 19). When Villon proclaims that he is freed from prison in Huitain XI of his *Testament*, he also proclaims that he is freed from death and has regained life: “Lors que le roy me delivra / De la dure prison de Mehun / Et que vië me recoversa” (97, vv. 82-84).⁹² While still implying death (a grave), the *locus* of the “*fosse*” can take on meanings other than prison. Villon employs it as a space for remembrance and also as a mimicry of a book, in describing how his grave is to be lined with inscriptions in Huitain CLXXVII his *Testament*: “Item, vueil qu’autour de ma fosse / Ce qui s’ensuit sans autre histoire, / Soit escript en lectre assez grosse [...]” (241, vv. 1876-1878). Vincensini therefore separates *fosse* as space of remembrance with the *basse fosse* of prison, a space of constraint “qui, jamais ne sera pour lui un lieu de mémoire, mais celui qu’il faut fuir et oublier.”⁹³

His utilization of *fosse*, in its interpretation as a grave and subsequently a space for death and reclusion, is yet another metaphor for prison as death that Villon employs to communicate the trauma of imprisonment. His friends’ inaction towards or dismissal of his calls for pity and help have caused Villon to “remain too long” (“trop demourez [...]”) in prison to the point that he has died: “[...] car il meurt entandiz” (293, v. 15). Villon further punctuates his affirmation that prison is death by ironically retorting that his friends will simply offer him hot drinks after he is dead: “Quant mort sera, vous lui ferez chaudes!” (293, v. 17). Villon mockingly calls out for a hot drink after he is dead to appeal to the audience’s and reader’s pity by creating an ironic

⁹² “Être libéré de la prison de Mehun veut dire être *délivré de la mort*, dans tous les sens du mot.” Mus, *La poésie de François Villon*, 230-231.

⁹³ Vincensini, “Prisons de Villon,” 176.

distance between his conditions and even the audience. Villon additionally rekindles the traditional *topos* of *dure prison* through commonly-held popular imagery such as living on “bread and water,” where he ironically claims he is not fed cake but dry bread, followed by large gulps of water poured into his intestines: “Après pain sec (non après gâteaux) / En ses boyaulx verse eaue à gros bouillon” (293, vv. 27-28). This latter is a strong indication of a torture procedure where the prisoner is forced to swallow large amounts of water.

The role of others’ or outsiders’ help perhaps best channels Villon’s affective reaction to his imprisonment. Villon seeks not only noble assistance, but also royal intervention: “Princes nommez, anciens, jouvenciaulx” (295, v. 31). He hopes one day that the process of royal pardons could work in his favor and he could be liberated and whisked away in a royal carriage: “Impetrez moy graces et royaux seaulx / Et me montez en quelque corbillon” (295, vv. 32-33). The ballad passes in review all categories of “friends,” both of lower and higher social status. Villon’s lingering irony and anxiety is founded on the fact that his “friends” will leave him in prison, unable to act or not having any power or influence to help him. By referencing and appealing to these outside friends, Villon’s Ballad creates a time warp in which he is separated from this normal life which keeps going around him. These “friends” are more of a depiction of the grotesque dance of groups at society’s margins, while Villon becomes a practically-dead object: the more he withers away in prison, the more these people outside carry on with their “normal life.” These characters are described as active, living, and in movement, setting up an interesting contrast with the subvert inertia caused by the repeated insistence of “povre Villon.”

Huitains I and II (vv. 1-16)

There is more stark evidence for the representation of lived experience in Villon's depiction of people who played a part in his ordeal. He employs another anacoluthon to convey a seething anger towards Bishop Thibaud d'Aussigny, who was responsible for his first imprisonment at the episcopal prison at Meung-sur-Loire, in his *Testament*'s first huitain:

En l'an de mon trentiesme aage,
Que toutes mes hontes j'euz beues,
Ne du tout fol, ne du tout saige,
Non obstant maintes peines eues,
Lesquelles j'ay toutes receues
Soubz la main Thibault d'Aucigny ...
S'esvesque il est, signant les rues,
Qu'il soit le mien, je le regny! (91, vv. 1-8).

Similar to his *Lais*'s first huitain, Rychner and Henry assert that "ici comme là, Villon va s'en prendre à une personne qu'il accable de malédictions pour des souffrances subies, mais les tourments de Meung susciteront des strophes incomparablement plus denses que les peines d'amour de 1456."⁹⁴ Both the *Lais* and now *Testament* portray Villon as an *amant martyr* victimized by his *felonnie et dure* lady who provoked his flight from Paris. Thiry equally comments that his anacoluthon in this first huitain of his *Testament* is "également motivée par un sentiment de rancune" and that "l'anacoluthie provoquée par l'irruption du nom et du personnage [...] sert de déclencheur à toute la première partie du *Testament*."⁹⁵ As for the bishop Thibaud d'Aussigny himself, Villon's imprisonment (his supposed crimes) and his character were inexplicably intertwined. Apart from d'Aussigny's classic depiction as a cruel jailer, a personal

⁹⁴ *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés*. eds. Rychner and Henry, 7.

⁹⁵ Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 60, 90.

offense and relationship also could have played a part in Villon's sentence, which may have only amounted to petty crimes:

Qu'est-ce qui avait conduit le poète dans la prison de l'évêque? Le *Testament* n'en dit rien, Villon s'y bornant à contester, à cor et à cris, la compétence judiciaire de Thibaud, pestant contre lui et "sa vile puissance," le faisant apparaître comme geôlier mesquin et tortionnaire, voire comme pédéraste sadique. Il semble pourtant [...] qu'en dépit de sa légalité éventuellement douteuse, la sévérité de l'évêque n'était pas injustifiée, frappant, sinon un délit spécifique et prouvé, du moins l'appartenance soupçonnée de Villon à une association criminelle, voire à la mafia légendaire des Coquillards [...]⁹⁶

Pinkernell's labelling of d'Aussigny as a "pédéraste sadique" could find a trace in the following Huitain II of the Testament, which is yet again punctuated by an emotional anacoluthon:

Mon seigneur n'est ne mon evesque.
Soubz luy ne tiens s'il n'est en friche,
Foy ne luy doy n'ommaige avecque:
Je ne suis sont serf ... ne sa biche!
Peu m'a d'une petite miche
Et de froide eaue tout ung esté;
Large ou estroit, moult me fut chiche:
Tel luy soit Dieu qu'il m'a esté! (91, vv. 9-16).

The animal terminology for deer of *cerf* (stag) and *biche* (doe), according to Pinkernell, "semble bel et bien prétendre que Villon a fait en personne l'expérience de l'homosexualité qu'il impute à Thibaud."⁹⁷ Similarly, Thiry points out the pun between *serf*, where Villon suggests he need no longer serve d'Aussigny as his bishop, and *cerf*, which sets up the contrast with *biche*, a minion or male lover. But Pinkernell fails to assert one way or the other, stating that "ce dernier vers est de ceux qui ont lancé le débat sur la présence de l'homosexualité dans l'œuvre de Villon."⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Pinkernell, *François Villon et Charles d'Orléans*, 108-109.

⁹⁷ Pinkernell, 108.

⁹⁸ Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 90.

Jean Dufournet advances two reasons for Villon's use of *biche*. The first is to imply a strong or particular attachment through the traditional sense of the term *serf*. The second is achieved through a homophonous play on words of this term with *cerf*, which can be coupled with *biche* as "un moyen de glisser une nouvelle accusation contre l'évêque qui aurait des mœurs particulières et aimerait la compagnie des mignons."⁹⁹ Villon never explicitly mentions the infraction that caused his imprisonment and suggests that no party had a grievance with him. As a result, Dufournet declares that Villon alludes to being the target of d'Aussigny's homoerotic desires, and it was the refusal of such advances that caused his harsh imprisonment and treatment (including torture) that he infers by the terms *dure prison*:

Bien plus, il insinue qu'il a été la victime de l'évêque pour ne pas avoir accepté de se plier à ses caprices plus ou moins immoraux. En effet, considérons les vers 12-14. Le poète nous dit, d'un côté, qu'il n'est pas la *biche* de Thibaud, de l'autre, qu'il a subi une dure captivité au pain et à l'eau. Que ressort-il de cette juxtaposition? Que Villon a subi ce châtement parce qu'il n'était pas le mignon, ou qu'il n'a pas voulu être le 'petit ami' du prélat; que, s'il avait eu, de ce point de vue, des mœurs douteuses, s'il avait été beau garçon non pas *sec et noir comme escouvillon* (*Lais*, vers 316), il eût sans doute échappé à la prison, même coupable.¹⁰⁰

Dufournet puts forward a more definite claim that Villon's severe incarceration was a form of retaliation on the part of d'Aussigny for having denied his licentious advances. Nevertheless, he remains "au stade d'hypothèse" concerning the exact crime that Villon committed as well as the reason for which the bishop imprisoned him. Dufournet's extrapolates from the "juxtaposition" in Villon's poem and ponders the "what if" of his imprisonment: if Villon had accepted

⁹⁹ Jean Dufournet, *Recherches sur le "Testament" de François Villon*. vol. 1. 2nd ed. (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1971), 151-152.

¹⁰⁰ Dufournet, *Recherches sur le "Testament,"* 153.

d'Aussigny's advances and had been more handsome to retain the bishop's interests, he would not have been imprisoned or accused of any crime.

Villon's autobiographical description of *dure prison* is formed through his scathing criticism of the severity of his treatment at d'Aussigny's orders. Villon above all attacks d'Aussigny for not treating him with compassion or clemency, and for not softening his stance on his incarceration. Two verses in Huitain II, described by Pinkernell as "très dépouillés, mais d'une intensité particulière, obtenue par le recours à des adjectifs simples et à un mot très précis," outline his regimen of (little) bread and water for an entire summer: "Peu m'a d'une petite miché / Et de froide eaue tout ung esté" (91, vv. 13-14). Pinkernell speculates then that "Ce fut une *dure prison* qui se prolongea *tout ung esté*, au pain et à l'eau, le tout agrémenté de tortures. Villon y revient à plusieurs reprises."¹⁰¹ In Huitains I and II, Villon offers compelling evidence of his intimate relationship with bishop d'Aussigny, strengthening the claim that his prison poetry was inspired by lived events and thus realistic, rather than metaphorical in nature.

Huitain LXXIII (vv. 737-744)

Subsequently, as the result of d'Aussigny's frustrations or as punishment for his "crime," Villon demonstrates a more poignant, direct autobiographical perspective with his intentional yet masked references to the torture and treatment he received in the Meung prison:

Dieu mercy ... et Tacque Thibault,
 Qui tant d'eaue froide m'a fait boire
 En ung bas – non pas en ung hault –,
 Menger d'angoisse mainte poire,
 Ensréré ... Quant j'en ay memoire,
 Je prie pour luy *et relicqua*

¹⁰¹ Dufournet, *Recherches sur le "Testament,"* 146.

Que Dieu lui doint, et voire, voire!
Ce que je pense ... *et cetera* (149, vv. 737-744).

In one of the most emotionally-charged huitains encountered thus far, Villon takes a final swing at d'Aussigny for his indecent homosexual desires by referring to him as "Tacque Thibault." One can sense Villon trembling and choking with hate though the anacoluthons evidenced by [...] and [–] (although inserted by later editing). The homonym is as convenient as it is insulting: Jacques Thibault was a hosiery-maker who became both famous and hated as the extravagantly pampered favorite of Jean, duc de Berry (1340-1416).¹⁰² The consonance also powerfully communicates Villon's hatred "like a hammer" through onomatopoeia: "Le nom, au surplus, avec ses deux T initiaux, reproduit le martèlement et l'acharnement de la haine."¹⁰³ Not only does the assimilation of Jacques Thibault to "Tacque Thibault" strongly reference d'Aussigny's homosexuality as a "mignon," but it also references his likeness to an unqualified hosiery-maker, thus making him undeserving of the status and influence he obtained as bishop of Orléans:

En effet, il n'était pas flatteur pour le prélat d'être comparé au favori du duc de Berry dont Froissart a parlé dans sa *Chronique* pour dire qu'à l'origine valet et chaussetier, Tacque Thibault s'appropriä une puissance qu'il ne méritait d'aucune manière; qu'il n'avait aucune qualité; qu'il était le mignon du duc de Berry; qu'il s'enrichit honteusement, amassant de l'or, de l'argent, des bijoux d'une valeur de 200.000 francs, levés sur les malheureux habitants d'Auvergne et de Languedoc.¹⁰⁴

Villon speaks of the large quantities of water d'Aussigny made him drink: "[...] Tacque Thibault / Qui tant d'eaue froide m'a fait boire (149, vv. 737-738). He recounts it in a manner that echoes

¹⁰² *Poems. François Villon*. ed. Georgi, David (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 240.

¹⁰³ Dufournet, *Recherches sur le "Testament"*, 169.

¹⁰⁴ Dufournet, 169-170.

Huitain II, “Peu m’a d’une petite miche / Et de froide eaue tout ung esté” (91, vv. 13-14). This water can indicate the strict prison regimen he endured: “bread and water,” but possibly even exempting bread. But as Dufournet remarks, “cette eau est non seulement celle que le malheureux prisonnier avait comme boisson unique, mais aussi ce qu’il absorbait pendant la question (ce qui nous laisse supposer qu’il a été torturé plus d’une fois) et, enfin, l’eau de tristesse.”¹⁰⁵ It is an allegory for the water from his crying and tears, and also for the water from his interrogation and torture.

More curious, and obscure, is Villon’s mention of being force-fed many “Angoisse” pears in Huitain LXXIII above: “Menger d’angoisse mainte poire” (149, v. 740). His reference to such a “fruit” can be speculated in three ways. First, it can refer to the pears originating from the village of Angoisse in the Limousin region (present-day department of Dordogne) that, because of the play on words with “anxiety” or “worry,” came to designate a bitter or unpleasant fruit in many popular medieval fabliaux and tales.¹⁰⁶ It is unlikely, however, that Villon mentions eating bitter fruit while in prison, even if used metaphorically. Second, it can refer to the expression “pears of pain,” which became a metaphor in medieval literature and beyond for emotional hardship. Charles himself employs “pears of pain” to portray his heart in the Prison of Discomfort.¹⁰⁷ His heart only has Angoisse pears to eat for breakfast, which make it cold and weaker to the point that it cannot fully heal: “[...] il n’a que poires d’angoisse / Au matin, pour se desjeuner / Qui tant le refroidist et froisse / Qu’il ne peut santé recouvrir.”¹⁰⁸ Third and finally,

¹⁰⁵ Dufournet, *Recherches sur le “Testament,”* 146.

¹⁰⁶ Dufournet, 147.

¹⁰⁷ The “pear of pain” is coined by David Georgi, who remarks that it “may be metaphorical ‘bitter fruit’ – a poetic way to refer to suffering and anguish.” Georgi, *Poems. François Villon*, 240.

¹⁰⁸ *Charles d’Orléans. Poésies I*, ed. Champion, 262, vv. 33-36.

it can allude to an instrument of torture that was placed in the mouth in order to widen the jaw as much as possible,¹⁰⁹ and with a more sinister variant, a piece of pear-shaped lead with spikes designed to tear the throat of the tortured, which is strikingly evidenced in Villon's "Ballade de jargon:" "d'ung plombeïs a coing, / Qui griffe au gart le duc" (327, vv. 21-22).¹¹⁰ "Angoisse" also entertains one last fascinating and highly relevant speculation in regards to its etymology. Derived from the Latin *angustia*, which signifies a confined, tight feeling or place (like a prison), its meaning was still present in Old French and even until Villon's Middle French to signify a "sensation de resserrement, d'oppression"¹¹¹ or "étroitesse (d'un lieu ou d'un chemin)" and a "lieu (re)serré."¹¹² Villon's self-portrayal of eating "confined" or "narrow" pears may then be a textual mechanism to express his imprisoned condition. Torture, briefly introduced above, becomes an integral part of Villon's lived experience of imprisonment, referring to his own torture in his poetry through a deliberate, authorial decision.

From the late Middle Ages throughout the *ancien régime*, torture was part of ordinary criminal procedure and regularly employed to investigate and prosecute routine crime before the ordinary courts.¹¹³ John Langbein stresses that this procedure of "judicial torture" (which he also terms judicial investigation), or the use of physical coercion by officers of the state in order to gather evidence for judicial proceedings, must be distinguished from the various painful modes

¹⁰⁹ "The expandable pear-shaped iron implement was forced into the mouth or other orifice, and then cranked open." Georgi, *Poems*, 240.

¹¹⁰ Dufournet, *Recherches sur le "Testament,"* 147.

¹¹¹ *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF)*, s.v. "angoisse," last modified July 31, 2019. Accessed May 16, 2019 <http://www2.atilf.fr/dmf/>.

¹¹² von Wartburg, *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch (FEW)* XXIV, 573a.

¹¹³ John Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof. Europe and England in the Ancien Régime* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 3.

of punishment used as sanctions against those who were already convicted and condemned.¹¹⁴ No punishment, no matter how gruesome, should be called torture. Such sanctions encompassed “penal” or “punitive” imprisonment, that is, confinement as a mode of punishment, which first appeared in the Middle Ages in the legal system of the Church.¹¹⁵ Ecclesiastic courts did not exact capital punishment (“blood sanctions,” according to Langbein), and instead handed such criminals over to secular authorities. The Church did possess the elementary administrative capacity to construct and maintain places of confinement and to care for those incarcerated.¹¹⁶ As a result, Church authorities likely also possessed the capacity to carry out judicial investigations and punishments through torture, as evidenced by the episcopal jail at Meung.

While the exact crime that Villon committed in the eyes of the bishop of Orléans is unclear, it can be ascertained through his poetry that Villon was subjugated to torture during interrogation and punishment sessions. Dufournet again cannot prove his crime or what information his jailers sought to gain with certainty, but he offers two hypotheses: the first is that Villon sinned by showing false piety, such as in impersonating clergy, to gain favors and protection from the community of Saint Benoît while hiding in the provinces. Or, he committed sacrilege by stealing from a church in the village of Baccon, near Montpipeau, a locality that is referenced in his poetry. Finally, Villon is perhaps evoking or recalling a bad memory by alluding to the slang expression “*aller à Montpipeau*” (327, v. 1671) signifying to steal by

¹¹⁴ Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof*, 3.

¹¹⁵ Ralph B. Pugh, *Imprisonment in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Annik Porteau-Bitker, “L’emprisonnement dans le droit laïque du Moyen Âge,” *Revue historique du droit français et étranger* 46: 211 (1968); Gotthold Böhne, *Die Freiheitsstrafe in den italienischen Stadtrechten des 12.-16. Jahrhunderts*. I-II (Leipzig: T. Weicher, 1922, 1925), cited by Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof*, 29.

¹¹⁶ Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1888); Pugh, *Imprisonment in Medieval England*; Porteau-Bitker, “L’emprisonnement dans le droit laïque du Moyen Âge,” Böhne, *Die Freiheitsstrafe in den italienischen Stadtrechten des 12.-16. Jahrhunderts*, cited by Langbein.

deceiving.¹¹⁷ In this sense, torture as investigation and as punishment is very likely an integral part of Villon's lived experience of imprisonment. This new angle of carceral reality for prisoners, unthinkable in Charles's poetry due to his higher social status, is cemented by Villon's more apparent autobiographical retelling of his experiences, all conducted through the "lightning rod" of his hatred toward the bishop Thibaud d'Aussigny. Villon's implication of d'Aussigny in his heavy-handed jailing due to more intimate circumstances may be waived off as embellished fantasy. Yet, his naming of a fifteenth-century figure, bishop Thibaut d'Aussigny, and his naming of a geographical place, the prison at Meung-sur-Loire, can be regarded as more solid textual referential evidence that Villon also embodied this greater autobiographical presence and shift in late medieval poetry alongside Charles.

VI. Conclusion

Villon's "Épître à ses amis" represents both a culmination and also a synthesis of Villon's allusions of imprisonment and his poetic craft in an outright first-person autobiographical perspective. He does not undertake any greater allegory or metaphorical symbolism to communicate his experience of prison other than the simple metonymy of his heart (*cueur*) representing his whole. On the contrary, within the medieval context, one might expect to come across a cast of personified characters, such as the constant dialog between the poet (or yet another personified body part, such as his heart or eyes) and Fortune, Death, or Melancholy, following a tradition spanning back to thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts such as the *Roman de la Rose* and others from even earlier. Portrayed through poems such as his "Épître à ses amis," Villon's interpretation of his prison experience provides insight into why prisoners such

¹¹⁷ Dufournet, *Recherches sur le "Testament,"* 155-156; Thiry, *Poésies complètes*, 327.

as himself sought out the poetic medium to convey their physical ordeal and psychological affectivity. However, Villon's stark realism in his observations and vicissitudes on his imprisonment and existence perhaps more powerfully highlight the overarching dynamic between constraint and creation, or in these prisoner-poets' cases, between physical constraint and literary fruition. Yet in Villon's case, the writing of his poetry is believed to have occurred after prison, not in prison, and therefore it can represent mainly an act of revenge and contempt toward, for instance, bishop Thibaud d'Aussigny. But in his "Épître à ses amis," written in prison, it appears rather to be an ironic plea for pity. In both examples, Villon's poetry exhibits an intentional, authorial decision to reference and retell real-life events and conditions, whether in prison or after it, and devoid of any prior didactic allegorical or courtly models. Villon conveys his lived experiences through the tones and stylistic procedures he uses, such as anger, irony, and plays on words. This chapter sought to underline the intensification of the autobiographical dimension as a general trend towards the second half of the fifteenth century through Villon's prison poetry. However, this autobiographical stance expressed principally a rebellious and iconoclastic subjectivity: Villon was imprisoned and in prison, yet he liberated himself in and through writing. His desire to find freedom in and through writing resonates with the quest of the prisoner-poets in the following chapters, where it will similarly become essential to examine the forms that this desire takes, including nostalgia, melancholy, subversion, and protest.

CHAPTER THREE. CLÉMENT MAROT: THE POET-MARTYR ON DISPLAY

I. Introduction

The referential dimension of Villon's prison poetry, which solicits a process of imaginative construction and is devoid of any prior didactic allegorical or courtly model, found its continuation and echo during the Renaissance. Courtesy continued to prove an outdated discursive form, and the partial extinction of courtly and moralizing themes evident in Villon's prison poetry symbolized the shift from conventional and allegorical to autobiographical modes. However, political and religious upheaval during the first half of the sixteenth century (e.g., the Reformation) drastically molded and shaped the implementation of autobiography, reference, and representation in carceral poetic works. King François I's *valet de chambre* and court poet Clément Marot, first imprisoned in 1526 by religious authorities for supposedly violating the Lenten obligation to fast, both looked back upon and took inspiration from medieval courtly and allegorical sources. Marot's experiences were the impetus of his prison poetry, which he recounts through his own perspective. The nature of experience must also be problematized: can experience be typified? If so, does each type of experience imply the same interpretations and understandings? The word "experience" may encompass a wide range of situations and subjective states, and might lead to varied reactions and interpretations. Our goal will be to review Marot's depiction of his carceral experiences in all its nuances and complexities.

Autobiography and autoportrait can both be used to adjudge the expression of the author's self – the "me" – and the expression of a lived experience or experiences in prison poetry in whichever differing forms it or they may take. Marot's experience is different from that of Charles in England. While the duke was a prisoner of war for twenty-five years in (relatively) leisured surroundings, Marot was the target of a heretical inquisition and subjected to a short but

grim imprisonment in the dungeon-like Paris Châtelet prison. While he shares the same experience of *dure prison* as Villon, the background of his incarceration is undoubtedly different from that of Villon.

The trends that emerge in prison literature written in the sixteenth century are noticeably distinct from the examples from the Middle Ages or from other obvious medieval models for writing,¹ especially those that were religious in nature in which the prisoner perceives himself as a martyr. Martyr literature was a staple of Christian prison and exile writing since the Church's inception. The influence of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century prison works has been consistently emphasized by medieval scholarship, and the introspective dialogue at its heart is generally accepted to have inspired a series of religious prison writings that were concerned both with self-presentation and self-justification.² While this medieval model of "meditative inwardness" of didactic allegorical dream works such as Christine de Pizan's *Livre du chemin de longue étude* or Guillaume de Lorris's beginning of the *Roman de la Rose* may have fallen out of favor by Renaissance writers, metaphorical symbolism was nonetheless still valued and privileged by Renaissance prisoner-poets to communicate their experience of imprisonment. Marot was one of these prisoner-poets who repurposed and re-appropriated the use of metaphor and allegory. As opposed to the medieval context, where one anticipated the poet interacting with a cast of personified characters (e.g., Fortune, Death, and Melancholy), or with metonymically personified body parts (e.g., the poet's heart or eyes), Marot

¹ Literate Tudor statesmen and political prisoners Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, Edward Seymour, and John Dudley had powerful motivations to write first-person prose to not only vindicate themselves and maintain their reputation, but also to elicit support from important parties. Catholic prisoners' writings reflected private devotions and prayers, while those of Protestants encouraged and gave spiritual counsel to their co-religionists outside the prison walls. Others such as Italian prisoner-poet Torquato Tasso opted for an inward meditation on their own mental or physical afflictions. Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature*, 3.

² Ahnert, 3-4; Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 22-23.

resorted to classical mythology to express the emotional cost and consequence of his imprisonment. Marot, like Villon, drew upon traditional imaginative characterizations that have come to be associated with a common criminal's imprisonment. Marot's prison poetry reflects how the Renaissance period continued to slowly transform poetry and distance itself from models of courtly allegory which proved inadequate to transmit new content of emotions, self-consciousness, and awareness of one's (socio-political) situation and physical space(s).

This chapter explores the referential dimension of Marot's prison poetry, demonstrating how his prison poetry transmits emotivity through multiple literary and rhetorical strategies, such as satire and mockery. His prison poetry also voraciously and vociferously defends his innocence after his incarceration in 1526 in the Paris Châtelet prison after having been accused of being a Protestant sympathizer and "eating meat" during Lent. This ordeal inspired Marot to compose his long poem *L'Enfer*, in which he compared his incarceration to a descent into Hell. The poem provides an example of the trial narrative which, as discussed above, became a hallmark of sixteenth-century Protestant prison writing. However, Marot is caught between the typical objectives of this trial narrative literature. He is not necessarily ministering actively to his fellow Protestant communities outside of prison, but he is composing poetry in his own self-defense, that is, in his own self-presentation and self-justification. Conversely, his "Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart Docteur en Théologie" reveals how Marot interpreted his accusations of heresy and "Lutheranism." The *épître* not only features a response and rebuttal to his prosecutor in a sort of partial trial narrative, but it also dwells upon and develops these same references to the legal and judicial vocabulary of incarceration and allusion to torture. Similarly, in his *épître* "à son amy Lyon," Marot transposes his persecution for heresy for "manger le lard" during Lent onto a fable portraying a "Lion" (a play on words on the etymology of the name Léon) who saved a "Rat"

(Marot) from a rat-trap (prison).³ Jacques Berchtold asserts that the analogy and parody of the fable is just one of the new forms that prisoners like Marot employed behind which he could seek refuge as a survival or coping mechanism. Powerless after having been arrested and incarcerated, and the target of aggressive accusations of heresy by the Sorbonne's Faculty of Theology, his fable dialogue became a site of resistance and resilience.⁴ Finally, his *rondeau* "À ses Amys, ausquelz on rapporta qu'il estoit prisonnier" strikingly mirrors Charles d'Orléans's *ballade* "Nouvelles ont couru en France" in which Marot actively seeks to redress rumors about his incarceration. Marot was familiar with Charles's poems (as he was with those of François Villon, which he even edited), and he drew inspiration from them to model his own poetry.⁵ Much like Charles's use of the medieval proverb "encore est vive le souris" to affirm that he is still alive and healthy during his English captivity, Marot dismisses rumors that he was ever imprisoned, and rather boasts that he can sing, compose poetry, and walk freely outside.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate that Marot's prison poetry embodied the Renaissance's gradual transformation of poetry and separation from the courtly allegorical tradition, which could not quite accurately communicate new content: emotions, self-consciousness, and recognition of one's condition and physical surroundings. Prior medieval courtly allegorical conventions had become insufficient to engage with new socio-political and religious

³ This poem is also arranged as a plea and parody: Marot's use of a fable is a clever technique that transposes Marot's cruel experience in prison at the Châtelet in 1526 with the animal universe of fables. He assumes the position of the storyteller, and by identifying with the "Rat" character, is able to express his victimization both physically in his jail cell and morally against his charges of heresy, but also slip away like a rat.

⁴ Jacques Berchtold, "Le poète-rat: Villon, Érasme ou les secrètes alliances de la prison dans l'Épître 'À son amy Lyon' de Clément Marot," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 50.1 (1988): 61.

⁵ Defaux comments on Marot's literary influences and habits, noting that "[...] soit qu'il a utilisé la tradition littéraire à sa disposition, qu'il a pillé F. Villon, Charles d'Orléans ou Jean Lemaire de Belges, retirant du même coup toute valeur documentaire à son témoignage, soit que, tout bien considéré, il parlait pour quelqu'un d'autre." Gérard Defaux, "Introduction. La vie et l'œuvre d'un 'Poète de Roy': Tityre et Melibée," Clément Marot, *Œuvres poétique complètes*, t. 1 (Paris: Garnier, 2014), xix.

movements. While he did not have a political agenda or actively ministered to and evangelized communities outside of prison, Marot rejected medieval forms of meditative inwardness for new forms that better suited his intention.

II. The Advent of Sixteenth-Century (Protestant) Prison Writing

As we have seen in Charles d'Orléans's and François Villon's poetry, there is an essential relationship between constraint and literary creation. Ahnert signals that "prisoners under the strictest of surveillance still found a way to write" and "periods of prolonged or excessive persecution often result in bodies of new literature."⁶ Literary resistance and dissent represent forms of productivity and creation, and prisons have a role in "forcing" such phenomena, similar to a crucible: a vessel used for melting that requires a high degree of heat, or figuratively, a place or situation in which concentrated forces interact to cause or influence change or development.⁷

Two concepts can assist us in an initial understanding of Marot's prison writing amidst the autobiographical and empirical shift in authorial perspective in the sixteenth century. The prison constituted an "oppositional site" and "counter-public sphere"⁸ for Marot: an outlet, a site of resistance, and an arena for hearing proscribed voices, expressing proscribed ideas, and entertaining alternatives to the existing order.⁹ Marot, a prisoner of the Sorbonne's Faculty of

⁶ Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature*, 1-2.

⁷ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Crucible," last modified July 7, 2020. Accessed July 16, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crucible>.

⁸ The notion of the "public sphere" and of "counterpublics" is originally linked with Jürgen Habermas, notably through his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). But while Habermas refers to phenomena that arose in the modern era beginning in the 18th century, Ahnert, as with Nancy Fraser below, applied his term to the Early Modern period and the context of the 16th century and Reformation.

⁹ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig J. Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 109-42, cited by Ahnert, 6.

Theology and the Paris *prévôt*, composed poetry not only as a reaffirmation of his self in the face of his heretical accusations, but additionally to show his readers that he stood firm in the face of cross-examinations by religious authorities. Marot's prison also constituted an "antipanopticon," a term opposing the centralized and corrective "panopticon" prison of the contemporary era analyzed by Michel Foucault.¹⁰ Inconsistencies and shortcomings of the administration of antipanopticon prisons in the Early Modern period made it almost impossible for authorities to oversee them,¹¹ which in turn afforded prisoners the freedom and ability to engage in what Ahnert terms as "counter-public behaviors."¹² Prisoners could record their situation in writing, diffuse it in the outside world, and communicate with other prisoners in an effort to collaborate on strategies of resistance. Just like the "blind spots" in the dark shadows or corners of a prison cell, and just like the "openings" in crumbling prison walls, the antipanopticon prison was "an institution that was riddled [...] with cracks and hidden spaces:" it had a porosity and permeability that permitted the flow of not only ideas and communication, but also people, objects, and writing.¹³ Early Modern antipanopticon prisoners like Marot could achieve a range of goals from the artistic to the mundane: disseminating their narrative to an outside audience, receiving visitors, acquiring writing materials, or making their stay comfortable by paying for

¹⁰ Molly Murray, "Measured Sentences: Forming Literature in the Early Modern Prison," "Prison Writings in Early Modern England," eds. William H. Sherman and William J. Sheils, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72 (2009), 152, cited by Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature*, 10-11.

¹¹ Ahnert, 10-11.

¹² Ahnert, 22.

¹³ Brad Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 25; Guy Geltner, *The Medieval Prison: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 74; Murray, "Measured Sentences," 152-153; Thomas D. Freeman, "Publish and Perish: The Scribal Culture of the Marian Martyrs," in *The Uses of Script and Print*, eds. Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 236, cited by Ahnert, 22.

furnishings or food and drink. It was not the case for all prisoners, as some were in more confined circumstances and had less or no money at all. Such circumstances allowed Marot to produce poetry that met his needs of self-preservation and self-defense. He addressed his poems to benefactors beyond his prison walls to appeal for help, on one hand, and address a sympathetic audience to communicate his resilience, on the other.

Given the realities above, Marot very likely composed his prison poems, in particular his two *épîtres* “à Monseigneur Bouchart Docteur en Théologie” and “à son amy Lyon,” during his incarceration. In contrast to a sort of humorous recollection of his experiences that Marot had edited and modified, given their later publication date (1534), or a purely anecdotal storytelling inspired by the true event of his imprisonment but remaining a thin veneer on top of his *épîtres*’ allegorical and didactic bulk, his prison poetry was a direct result of his incarceration.¹⁴ Marot very plausibly wrote these *épîtres* in prison after acquiring the necessary materials and while maintaining contact with the outside world to spread word of his ordeal, gain support for his resistance, and possibly evangelize others of his reformed beliefs through his example. For instance, Marot wrote his “Épître à son amy Lyon” to secure the help of his benefactor Léon

¹⁴ Pierre Villey comments that for Marot’s “Épître à son amy Lyon,” “on est tenté de se demander si elle n’a pas été composée après coup, par une sorte de retour amusé que fit Marot sur son aventure. Il n’est aucunement sûr qu’elle soit de la prison, et écrite dans le dessein de gagner réellement Lyon Jamet à la cause du prisonnier.” Claude Mayer similarly states that “il peut paraître surprenant que le régime des prisons, si terrible à cette époque, ait permis aux prisonniers d’écrire des lettres, de communiquer avec leurs amis pour leur demander secours [...] et il aurait pu y écrire deux épîtres?” Gérard Defaux admits that is it “plausible” that Marot’s “Épître à son amy Lyon” was composed during his imprisonment, yet writes “je préfère cependant croire, après Villey, que ces poèmes sont de composition nettement postérieure à l’événement qui leur sert de cadre.” Defaux adds that “l’intérêt [...] me semble résider ailleurs que dans leur dimension référentielle, anecdotique et narrative; c’est que, sans doute pour la première fois dans l’œuvre de Marot, cette dimension référentielle se double d’une dimension non seulement allégorique, mais encore réflexive.” Pierre Villey, *Recherches sur la chronologie des oeuvres de Marot* (Paris: Leclerc, 1921), 27; Claude Mayer, *Clément Marot* (Paris: Nizet, 1972), 93, 96; Gérard Defaux, “Rhétorique, silence et liberté dans l’œuvre de Marot: essai d’explication d’un style,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 46.2 (1984), 300-301.

Jamet: an attempt that succeeded and that was made possible by the fluid nature and spaces of Early Modern antipanopticon prisons such as the Châtelet.

Marot's poetry reveals how he made use of the Early Modern antipanopticon prison's hidden spaces, cracks, and openings to engage in subversive behaviors. Writing to feel as if one still belongs to a social group beyond the prison walls – and to insinuate oneself back into the public realm – was not new to prisoners in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁵ In his “*Epître à ses amis*,” Villon writes as if he is still part of his social group (“*amis*”) of marginalized Parisian “*filles, danseurs, sauteurs, chantres*.”¹⁶ Calling out for mercy and pity from inside the prison, Villon desperately wishes to rejoin life outside the prison. Charles d’Orléans’s epistolary *ballades* are also addressed to his cousin, Burgundian duke Philippe le Bon, and they bring up the subject of his ransom and release. I will illustrate that Marot’s prison poetry is a hybrid and mixture of both. Having been accused of religious heresy (eating meat during Lent), he actively participates in discourses continuing outside the prison and addresses his poetry to individuals involved in his fate through the emergence of literary forms such as the trial narrative.¹⁷ Yet Marot also withdraws in a meditative contemplation in the medieval tradition to make sense of his present pain and suffering, and he even employs medieval metaphors and allegory to express his emotivity and ruminations on his misfortune.

¹⁵ Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature*, 25.

¹⁶ *François Villon. Poésies complètes*, ed. Thiry, 293, v. 7.

¹⁷ Ahnert describes trial narratives as “new and conditioned forms” that “emerged [...] as a direct response to the custodial and coercive functions of the prison in the early modern period” and that “found particular popularity with evangelical and Protestant prisoners following the publication of the early fifteenth-century accounts of John Oldcastle and William Thorpe’s heresy trials in 1530.” Ahnert, 5, 25.

III. Life Before Imprisonment

Clément Marot's was born in 1496 in Cahors¹⁸ in the historical province of Quercy (present-day department of Lot) in southern France. His father, Jean Marot, was a renowned court poet and historiographer of kings Louis XII and François I. Jean was able to secure the protection of a lettered noblewoman, Michelle de Saubonne, baronne de Soubise, who found him a place at the royal court in the service of French queen Anne de Bretagne as a *valet de la garde-robe*. Taking Clément with him, Jean left Cahors around 1506.¹⁹ Clément fondly looked back upon his childhood and considered the idyllic countryside of Cahors a maternal paradise abounding with sweetness and happiness and devoid of fear or constraints, as referenced in his "Eglogue au Roy" from 1539. He also viewed his relocation to the north as a forced abandonment of this gentle paradise and as a sudden uprooting that disturbed the rest of his life. Contrary to the notion that Jean was a mediocre court poet, whose works were often discredited along with those of the Rhétoriqueur²⁰ circle with which he was associated, Jean both naturally and skillfully composed verse.²¹ Marot and his father spent several years at the royal castles on the Loire in Anne de Bretagne's court. Clément deemed his education poor and lacking and

¹⁸ Defaux, "'Poète de Roy,'" xxi.

¹⁹ Defaux, xxvii.

²⁰ The Rhétoriciens included poets such as Jean Meschinot, Jean Robertet, Jean Molinet, Jean Lemaire de Belges, Guillaume Cretin, André de La Vigne, and Octavien de Saint-Gelays. Paul Zumthor defines them as "un 'nombre' très flottant d'auteurs de la seconde moitié du XVe siècle et de la première du XVIe," who were "tous cauteleux brasseurs de sophisme, topique, *déclique* (bavardage) et rhétorique, c'est-à-dire, semble-t-il, les gens de justice." Zumthor observes that "Ils insistent peu [...] sur leur parenté avec les poètes de langue latine [...] Du moins, ce qu'ils vantent, en se réclamant de ces émules, sinon de ces ancêtres, c'est un certain ton pathétique, orné de métaphores longuement filées, truffé de citations, de renvois allusifs [...]. Paul Zumthor, *Le masque et la lumière. La poétique des Grands Rhétoriciens* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), 9, 11, 16.

²¹ Defaux, xxvi-xxvii.

almost nothing is known about his childhood studies²² except that he had an insufficient knowledge of the letters (his Latin was famously poor and he knew no Greek) and sciences that never put him on par with the illustrious poets of the Pléiade.²³ The time period in which he came of age (ca. 1506-1516) is often considered a less lettered and savant transitory period between the late medieval forms and themes of Rhétoriqueur court poetry and the better-known humanism of the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Marot paved the way, in a sense, for the development of sixteenth-century poetry by serving as a bridge between these two periods and by pushing past a Rhétoriqueur style soon regarded as too pedantic and laborious.²⁴

Following the death of king Louis XII and the accession of François I, Clément entered as a page into the service of Nicolas de Neufville, lord of Villeroy, the king's finance secretary, lieutenant general of the Île-de-France region, and *prévôt des marchands* of Paris.²⁵ Marot dedicated a preface to de Neufville for his 1538 poem "Le Temple de Cupido" composed during his youth when he was in de Neufville's service.²⁶ From clues in his poems such as his "Ballade de soy mesme, du temps qu'il apprenoit à escrire au Palais de Paris" and his 1528 "Épître au Chancelier Duprat," Marot was a law clerk at the Paris Chancellerie and worked under head prosecutor Jean Grisson. These poems also hint that he belonged to the "Enfants sans souci," a brotherhood of law clerks at the Palais that was dedicated to the performance of farces and comic

²² Defaux, "Poète de Roy," xxviii.

²³ Defaux, xxix-xxx.

²⁴ Defaux, xxx.

²⁵ Defaux, xxxi.

²⁶ *L'Adolescence clémentine*, ed. Frank Lestringant (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 56; Defaux, xxxi.

skits.²⁷ Marot's first translations of Virgil's first Eclogue and his "Jugement de Minos" date no earlier than 1511-1512. His Rhétoriqueur father Jean likely introduced him to the poetic arts from a young age, but Marot also mentions in his Preface to his *Adolescence Clémentine* that he benefitted from the advice of another Rhétoriqueur, Jean Lemaire de Belges. After entering Anne de Bretagne's service, Lemaire de Belges was present at the French royal court during the spring of 1512.

Towards the end of this period, Marot produced his first two important poems, "Temple de Cupido" and "Épître de Maguelonne." "Temple de Cupido" draws heavily upon prior models and themes found in Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meung's *Le Roman de la Rose*, Martial d'Auvergne's *Arrêts d'amour*, the *Hôpital d'Amour* attributed to Alain Chartier, Guillaume Coquillart's *Droitz nouveaulx*, Jean Molinet's *Temple de Mars*, Jean Lemaire de Belges's *Temple de Vénus* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Ars amatorial*.²⁸ His "Épître de Maguelonne" was also inspired by Ovid's *Heroides* and their popular translations in French towards the end of the fifteenth century by Octavien de Saint-Gelais and André de la Vigne. Ovid's poems emulated letters sent by mythological heroines to their absent lovers or husbands, and Marot innovated upon them by composing a similar poem with a medieval rather than a mythological heroine: Maguelonne, from the medieval prose work *Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne*.

Little is known of the period of Marot's life between 1521 and 1526. He seems to have divided his time between the royal court and Paris, and it seems to have been a very fruitful time for his poetry as he composed most, if not all, of the poems in the edition of his *Adolescence Clémentine* during this period or immediately after it. Judging by the poems he wrote that

²⁷ Defaux, "'Poète de Roy,'" xxxi-xxxii.

²⁸ Defaux, xxxii-xxxiii.

address residents of both towns, such as his *rondeau* “À la fille d’ung painctre d’Orléans, belle entre les autres” and his *rondeau* “À ma Dame Jehanne Gaillarde, de Lyon, femme de bon sçavoir,” he may have also traveled or spent time in Orléans and Lyon.²⁹ Marot’s poetry from this period shows his continuation of models and themes practiced by the Rhétoriciens in the *complainte* and *chant royal* genres. Marot’s obscure years between 1521-1526 were in fact the most fruitful periods of his life. He defined and situated himself through his poetry while not completely abandoning or altering prior Rhétoricien traditions and French literary heritage. Marot developed a more expressive and liberated style of French poetry, a fusion that not only borrowed from his Rhétoricien forebears and older medieval forms, but also incorporated the humanistic Renaissance principles he would acquire in the company of Marguerite d’Angoulême’s lettered entourage.

“Rondeau à ses Amys, ausquelz on rapporta qu’il estoit prisonnier”

Marot’s life and activities become clearer from 1526 onward when his name begins to appear in civil and ecclesiastic authorities’ files for brushes with the law. He was already considered a heretic and publicly suspected and accused of being a “Lutheran” in 1526.³⁰ Through the intermediary of Marguerite d’Angoulême, Marot also entered into contact with intellectuals and Christians whose faith, demands, and actions were, at least at the beginning, very close to those of the German reformer.³¹ These included Guillaume Briçonnet, who had assembled around him humanists and theologians such as Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples, Guillaume

²⁹ *L’Adolescence clémentine*, ed. Lestringant, 186, 209.

³⁰ Defaux, “Poète de Roy,” lxiii.

³¹ Defaux, lxvi.

Farel, François Vatable, Gérard Roussel, Pierre Caroli and others, and who believed the sympathetic Marguerite could grant them protection, even as far as that of her brother, the king.³² She even personally intervened on several occasions with the Sorbonne and Parlement de Paris to cease investigations against Lefèvre, Briçonnet, and importantly, Marot.³³

As for Marot's own participation in diffusing "Lutheranism" in France, the years in which he was in the service of Marguerite were truly decisive: years of slow and discreet maturation whose importance is found in his translations and poetry after his imprisonment in 1526, and even those from that same period, such as his *Enfer*, which were not immediately published due to the risk of heretical persecution.³⁴ However, significant portions of them were strongly influenced by evangelical works: the exchange between the author and the character of Mort Évangélique in his *Déploration de Florimond Robertet* can be traced to the beginning of Marguerite's *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*. Marot also translated several of Erasmus's writings on the superiority of Christian marriage over priestly celibacy, *La vierge mesprisant mariage* and *La vierge repentie*, and Marot would use passages of Erasmus's *Proci et puellae* that had been censured by the Theology Faculty of the Sorbonne in his "Chant nuptial du

³² Defaux, "'Poète de Roy,'" lxix.

³³ While the meaning and importance of Marguerite's personal involvement in propagating "Lutheranism" in France must not be exaggerated, she nonetheless had two of Luther's works translated into French beginning in 1524, his *De preparatione mortis* and *De votis monasticis*, and she also published the text of an extended translation in verse of the final portion of the exposition of Luther's *Pater noster* in 1527. Marguerite's poems from this period, notably her *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* composed around 1524-1525, clearly convey the essence of Luther's ideas on faith and works, on prayer and the "cult of saints," and on death, sin, and mercy. Will Grayburn Moore, *La réforme allemande et la littérature française. Recherches sur la notoriété de Luther en France* (Strasbourg: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 1930), cited by Defaux, lxx-lxxi.

³⁴ Defaux, lxxii.

mariage de Madame Renée Fille de France.”³⁵ Marot thus very likely collaborated in the most active, efficient, and original way to promote this large-scale evangelical movement.³⁶

However, Marot makes no mention in his poetry if the reasons for his scrutiny by the authorities and if his infractions were religious in nature. He does allude to the rumors of his troubles with the law and seeks to deny that he has been persecuted, arrested, and imprisoned:

Il n'en est rien, de ce qu'on vous revele,
Ceulx qui l'on dit, ont faulte de cervelle,
Car en mon cas il n'y a mesprison,
Et par dedans ne vy jamais prison:
Doncques Amys l'ennuy qu'avez, ostez le.

Et vous Causeurs pleins d'envie immortelle,
Qui voudriez bien que la chose fust telle,
Crevez de dueil, de despit, ou poison:
Il n'en est rien.

Je rys, je chante en joye solennelle,
Je sers ma Dame, & me consolle en elle,
Je rime en Prose (& peult estre en raison),
Je sors dehors, je rentre en la maison:
Ne croyez pas doncques l'aulte nouvelle,
Il n'en est rien.³⁷

His poem contains striking similarities to Charles d'Orléans's *ballade* “Nouvelles ont couru en France” in which the duke seeks to extinguish the rumors that spread throughout France that he was dead, defiantly proclaiming his vitality to both friends and foes alike using a the medieval

³⁵ Paulette Leblanc, “Les sources humanistes du *Chant nuptial de Renée de France*,” *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 100 (1954), 64-74, cited by Defaux, ““Poète de Roy,”” lxxiii-lxiv.

³⁶ Defaux, lxxvii.

³⁷ *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Gérard Defaux. t. i (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014), 145-146, vv. 1-15. All quotations from the works of Marot will be taken from this edition.

proverb, “the mouse is still alive” (*encore est vive la souris*).³⁸ Marot likewise seeks to extinguish the rumors that he was ever in trouble with the law and authorities: “en mon cas il n’y a mesprison” (145, v. 3). He employs a repeated rebuttal, the first hemistich in the first verse which then becomes the poem’s refrain, “that is not the case” (“Il n’en est rien”). And similarly, Marot addresses an audience that he divides between friends and enemies. While Charles states that the false news that he was dead gave but little displeasure to some who unjustly despise him, the jealous gossipers would like nothing better than for the rumors of Marot’s imprisonment to be true: Marot’s “Et vous Causeurs pleins d’envie immortelle, / Qui voudriez bien que la chose fust telle” (146, vv. 6-7) echoes Charles’s “[...] avoient peu desplaisance / Aucuns qui me hayent a tort” (132, vv. 3-4). Both Charles and Marot go on the offensive to condemn their enemies in the wake of this phony rumor. But while Charles asks God to curse those who are pained to see that “the mouse is still alive,” Marot adds more acid to his words and tells his enemies to keel over and die from grief, bitterness, or poison. In this sense, his “Crevez de deuil, de despit, ou poison” (146, v. 8) mirrors Charles’s “Pource de Dieu soient maudis / Ceulx qui sont dolens de veoir / Qu’encore est vive le souris!” (132-133, vv. 16-17). Finally, while Charles’s focus is on the fact that he is still alive and Marot’s focus is on the fact that he is free (and not jailed), both poets equally and defiantly proclaim their vitality from different angles. While Charles’s vitality is straightforward in treating the concreteness of life-death (he is not dead, he is alive), Marot’s vitality concerns more his ability to live his daily life unfettered. Using a quadruple anaphora in the structure *je* + present-tense verb, Marot boasts that he laughs, sings, serves his Lady (an allusion to Marguerite d’Angoulême), rhymes, goes outside, and can return home. Marot’s poem

³⁸ Joseph Morawski, *Proverbes français antérieurs au XVe siècle*, CFMA 47 (Paris: Champion, 1925), no. 638; *Poetry of Charles d’Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer, 884. All quotations from the works of Charles d’Orléans will be taken from Arn’s and Fox’s edition cited here.

nonetheless reveals that he was conscious and anxious of his status with the law and authorities, and that cracks were opening up in his public *persona*, and inevitably led to his first real accusation, arrest, and imprisonment at the Châtelet prison in Paris in 1526.

IV. Prison Poetry from the Châtelet

Marot's "carceral cycle" – in a sense – of poems whose poetic structures and forms, as well as inspiration are derived from his experience of imprisonment are seemingly linked to one another by a need and desire to resist and fight against feelings of immobility, fixedness, injustice, and oppression.³⁹ His carceral cycle of poems provide us with a richness and contrast not previously seen in his earlier poems listed in the section above, when he began to experiment and innovate in mixing Rhétoriqueur styles with Petrarchan Italianisms and humanist realism.⁴⁰ His experience as a prisoner is an overlooked and underappreciated part of his poetry that contributed to his richest and most emotive "rhetoric of misfortune," but it deserves to be considered alongside his other well-known and accepted poetry of exile and pilgrimage.⁴¹ Finally, Marot's carceral cycle must be credited with contributing, in building upon Villon's own

³⁹ The term "carceral cycle" is inspired by Raymond C. La Charité's "cycle carcéral de Marot." Raymond C. La Charité, "*Courage et invention: Marot et le cycle carcéral*," in *Clément Marot, "Prince des poètes français" 1496-1996. Actes du Colloque international de Cahors en Quercy 21-25 mai 1996.*, eds. Gérard Defaux and Michel Simonin (Paris: Champion, 1997), 250.

⁴⁰ Petrarchan Italianisms refer to efforts in sixteenth-century France to replicate the motifs and forms of medieval Italian poet Petrarch, notably the sonnet and *canzone*, along with the Italian lexicon that accompanied Petrarch's verse. Clément Marot himself, to curry favor with Francis I in 1539, published translations of six sonnets from Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Humanist realism follows a pragmatic middle ground between the view that nothing changes (which would be debilitating and lead to despair) and the view that everything is possible (which would be utopian). William J. Kennedy, "Iberian, French, and English Petrarchisms," in *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 213; Emanuel Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: the Epistemic Foundations of International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 86-87.

⁴¹ The term "rhetoric of misfortune" is inspired by La Charité's "rhétorique du malheur." La Charité, "*Courage et invention*," 250.

carceral cycle derived from his imprisonment, and even to an extent Charles d'Orléans's "captivity" cycle, to a "poetization" and reconfiguration of the prison space.⁴²

Marot was imprisoned three times. His first and most significant imprisonment was between the end of February and March 1st 1526 at the Parisian Châtelet prison, and then at an inn in the town of Chartres where he was transferred under house arrest until his release on May 1st. His second imprisonment was between mid-October until early November 1527 at the Paris Conciergerie, and his third imprisonment was only for several days in 1532.⁴³ Apart from his incarcerations, later in his life Marot suffered further instances of persecution, distress, and trauma. Following the "Affair of the Placards"⁴⁴ in 1534, authorities seized his residence in Paris and confiscated many of his unpublished works and forbidden books. In order to avoid any danger, Marot fled, and the authorities issued a warrant for his arrest. He managed to find temporary refuge in the south of France in the town of Nérac with his long-time protector and patron, Marguerite (now de Navarre), and although he was arrested and questioned (which did not preclude torture) in Bordeaux, he managed to escape or was released. Marot was sentenced, with others, *in absentia* to be banned from France, to have his possessions confiscated, and to be burnt alive, which prompted him to flee the country and live in exile in Italy, in Ferrara and in

⁴² The term "poetization of the prison space" is inspired by La Charité's "la poétisation de la prison." La Charité, 250.

⁴³ La Charité, "*Courage et invention*," 251; *L'Adolescence clementine*, ed. Lestringant, 324; Pauline Smith, *Clément Marot. Poet of the French Renaissance* (London: Athlone, 1970), 7; Mayer, *Clément Marot*, 84, 267-269.

⁴⁴ The Affaire des Placards was a public display of anti-Catholic posters that appeared in Paris, Blois, Rouen, Tours, and Orléans during the night of October 17, 1534. One was even found on the door of king François I's bedchamber at Amboise, to which he reacted with great indignation. The posters highlighted the Catholic Church's "abuse" of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in its transformation during mass. Their appearance led to the end of François's policy of conciliation toward the Protestant movement. Stuart D. B. Picken, *Historical Dictionary of Calvinism* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth: Scarecrow, 2012). 28.

Venice, before regaining favor with king François I and his court and returning to France in 1537.⁴⁵

Marot makes two clear references to his first imprisonment at the Parisian Châtelet prison in his poetry. Current scholarship insists that Marot's references to prison in his poetry are vague, abstractly "poetic," and constitute a vehicle to communicate the emotions provoked by his ordeal.⁴⁶ However, biographical facts confirm that his poetry does refer concretely to his run-ins with the law. Marot references his first prison by its name in his long poem *L'Enfer*: "[...] grand chagrin, & recueil ord, & laid / Que je trouvay dedans le Chastellet" (t. II, 19, vv. 11-12) and by metonymy by referring to it by the city where it is located in his "Rondeau parfaict à ses Amys apres sa deliverance:" "J'eus à Paris prison fort inhumaine [...]" (t. I, 178, v. 17).

"Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart Docteur en Théologie"

The circumstances behind Marot's first imprisonment at the Châtelet have become a relatively well-known legend or tale, thanks to a narrative sequence that many critics such as Claude Mayer have for so long taken as fact. Marot had a lover named Isabeau who left the poet, and after he composed a *rondeau* denouncing her fickleness, she sought revenge by reporting to religious authorities that he had eaten meat (*manger le lard*) and broke the Lenten obligation to

⁴⁵ La Charité, "*Courage et invention*," 251.

⁴⁶ Raymond La Charité insists that in the seven poems of Marot's "carceral cycle," "Marot ne fournit aucune précision sur sa prison. Celle-ci reste poétique." La Charité adds that "Par conséquent, sa prison poétique ne s'appuie pas sur un cadre concret; les poèmes n'apportent pas de configuration à un espace reconnaissable. Plutôt, la prison est un repère, dont les principales composantes thématiques – accusation, arrestation, déposition, document, témoignage, défense, appel – tracent une lutte entre l'incarcération et la mise en liberté, entre l'accusé et les forces répressives et corrompues du système politique." While Marot certainly embellishes upon these "thematic parts" using prison as a focal point, it is hard to see Marot only making prison an abstract concept, given the biographical evidence and fact that Marot was imprisoned several times, and it is hard to deny that he was directly and personally inspired by it. La Charité, 254.

fast. Marot was jailed by a Sorbonne theologian, a certain Docteur Bouchart, and in response, to protest his innocence, Marot addressed Bouchart in his “*Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart Docteur en Théologie*.” When his *épître* did not succeed in convincing Bouchart and obtaining his release, Marot then addressed another “*Épître à son ami Lion*” to his friend Lyon Jamet, or to François I (an allusion drawn from popular imagination that the lion is the “king” of the animals) to plead for his rescue. This time, Marot’s missive was successful, and with Jamet’s, or the king’s, assistance and influence, the cardinal of Chartres, Louis Guillard, intervened to transfer Marot to the same city under his surveillance. Here, he was placed under house arrest in a local inn but was freed within two months. Much of this narrative sequence is likely pure fiction, as the only two events known with certainty is that Marot was arrested and imprisoned, and that Bishop Guillard’s intervention allowed him to leave the Châtelet and seek refuge in Chartres. Otherwise, Marot may have exploited, “avec quel brio,” the trope of lover’s quarrel and betrayal used before him by, of all people, fellow prisoner-poet François Villon.⁴⁷ His accusation of “eating meat” should also not be taken in its literal sense of violating the Lenten obligation to fast (as imprisonment is a severe punishment for this), but in its figurative sense of breaking or not complying with the law.⁴⁸

His “*Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart*” does not reveal whether Marot actually committed the heresy of eating Meat during the Lenten fasting period. At first glance, the poem appears to simply and straightforwardly protest the author’s innocence, and three main conclusions are drawn – that Marot was accused of being a “Lutheran,” that he defends himself of accusation, and that he holds Bouchart responsible for his imprisonment:

⁴⁷ Defaux, ““Poète de Roy,”” lxii.

⁴⁸ Defaux, lxii-lxiii.

Donne response à mon present affaire,
 Docte docteur. Qui t'a induict à faire
 Emprisonner depuis six jours en ça,
 Ung tien amy, qui onc ne t'offensa?
 Et vouloir mettre en luy crainte, & terreur
 D'aigre justice, en disant que l'erreur
 Tiens de Luther ? Point ne suis Lutheriste
 Ne Zvinglien, & moins Anabatiste:
 Sinon de Dieu par son filz Jesuchrist je suis.
 Je suis celluy, qui ay faict mainst escript,
 Dont ung seul vers on n'en sçauroit extraire,
 Qui à la Loy divine soit contraire.
 Je suis celuy, qui prends plaisir, & peine
 A louer Christ, & sa Mere tant pleine
 De grâce infuse: & pour bien l'esprouver,
 On le pourra par mes escriptz trouver.

Brief, celluy suis, qui croit, honnore, & prise
 La sainte, vraie, & catholique Eglise.
 Aultre doctrine en moy ne veulx bouter:
 Ma Loy est bonne. Et si ne fault doubter,
 Qu'à mon pouvoir ne la prise, & exaulce,
 Veu qu'ung Payen prise la sienne faulse.
 Que quiers tu donc, ô Docteur catholique?
 Que quiers tu donc? As tu aulcune picque
 Encontre moy ? ou si tu prends saveur
 A me trister dessoubz aultruy faveur?

Je croy que non: mais quelcque faulx entendre
 T'a faict sur moy telle rigueur estendre.
 Doncques refrains de ton couraige l'ire.
 Que pleust à Dieu, qu'ores tu peusses lire
 Dedans ce corps de franchise interdit:
 Le cueur verrais aultre qu'on ne t'a dit.

A tant me tais, cher Seigneur nostre Maistre,
 Te suppliant, à ce coup amy m'estre.
 Et si pour moy à raison tu n'es mis,
 Fais quelcque chose au moins pour mes amys,
 En me rendant par une horsboutée
 La liberté, laquelle m'as ostée (91-92, vv. 1-38).

The accusation of being a Lutheran, “a label applied to anyone who was unruly in matters of religion, was in no way harmless.”⁴⁹ Likewise, the term could be used as a reference to anyone “who took too much interest in religious matters, was too curious and too knowledgeable about them and therefore capable of taking on churchmen on their own ground.”⁵⁰ The term Lutheran “was, from at least the 1520s, given a wide sense,” and that “Lutheriste” (direct from the German *Lutherisch*) was “often vaguely or irresponsibly applied to partisans of religious ideas who were held by the accuser to be heretical and so worthy of the stake. They were hurled against followers of Zwingli⁵¹ and Calvin, and even of Erasmus and Lefèvre d’Etaples, as well as against followers of Luther. In that sense it was eventually almost superseded by *Huguenot*.”⁵² In retrospect, while Marot’s sentence of imprisonment for eating meat during Lent was a severe punishment, being accused of or charged with being a Lutheran was no minor issue in the French sixteenth-century religious context.⁵³ Perhaps the only reason Marot could be accused, charged,

⁴⁹ Dick Wursten, “Dear Doctor Bouchart, I am no Lutheran: a reassessment of Clément Marot’s Epistle to Monsieur Bouchart,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 70.3 (2008): 567.

⁵⁰ David Nicholls, “Heresy and Protestantism, 1520-1542: Questions of Perception and Communication,” *French History* 10.2 (1996): 182-205.

⁵¹ Zwinglians were followers of Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), a Reformation leader from Zurich who disagreed with Martin Luther on the question of the Communion and Eucharist during the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. Anabaptists were followers of a German sect formed in the Saxe region around 1521 around the figure of Thomas Muntzer which to an extent believed in millenarianism, the belief that an earthly Kingdom of God, a “World-to-Come,” was soon arriving prior to the Last Judgement. Luther condemned the Anabaptists, and Muntzer was executed in 1525 in the Hesse region. Marot had originally written “*encore moins Papiste*” instead of “*Anabaptiste*” in his edition of 1534, which was much more dangerous, before revising it to the current form. *L’Adolescence clementine*, ed. Lestringant, 358.

⁵² Michael A. Screech, *Clément Marot: a Renaissance Poet Discovers the Gospel. Lutheranism, Fabianism, and Calvinism in the Royal Courts of France and of Navarre and in the Ducal Court of Ferrara* (Brill: Leiden, 1994), 9.

⁵³ Pauline Smith notes that Marot was conscious of the act’s significance, but curiously insists that he did it to show his solidarity with the new thoughts of the Reformation and with his sympathetic colleagues and protector: “it cannot seriously be argued that Marot, in his capacity of secretary to Marguerite d’Alençon whose sympathies for the new ideas were manifestly shared by many of her entourage, was either ignorant of the implications of his act, or that he intended it to be seen as anything but an act of commitment, perhaps more emotional than intellectual, but an act of commitment nonetheless, to the new ideas.” Smith, *Poet of the French Renaissance*, 11.

and ultimately imprisoned is that king François I, who himself was held captive in Spain following his army's defeat to the Holy Roman Empire's forces at Pavia, was not present to protect him.⁵⁴ François I's absence (February 1525 -March 1526) provoked a serious crisis of the monarchy, which the Paris Parliament sought to exploit by extending its sphere and influence, aided by the fundamentalist faction of the Sorbonne's Faculty of Theology – including Marot's accuser and prosecutor, a certain Nicolas Bouchart –,⁵⁵ by crushing any religious reformative experiments across France.⁵⁶ As opposed to the imagery and themes he conjures in his other poems in his carceral cycle, in Marot's "Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart," "there [are] no mysterious phrases and mystifying images," but "a clear reference to his captivity on the accusation of Lutheranism."⁵⁷ The three main, straightforward conclusions listed above are easy to locate in the text. We read Marot's accusation of being a "Lutheran:" "l'erreur / Tiens de Luther?" (91, vv. 6-7). We also read his insistence that this accusation is false and that it was only caused by rumors: "Point ne suis Lutheriste" (91, v. 7), "quelque faulx entendre" (92, v.

⁵⁴ *L'Adolescence clementine*, ed. Lestringant, 358.

⁵⁵ Nicolas Bouchart, also spelled Bochart, Bochard, and Bouchard, was a theological doctor at the Paris Faculty of Theology since 1518. Wursten points out the "half a century of fiery discussion among Marot scholars, in which Jean Bouchart, Nicolas Bouchart and Geoffrey Boussart have all been nominated and, to add to the chaos, been mixed up" as the Bouchart indicated in Marot's poem. He asserts that the third, Geoffrey Boussart, proposed by Michael Screech, must be disregarded since orthographic liberties allowed a variation in writing 'Bouchart' (with *ou* or *o*, with *t* or *d*), but not with *ss*. And he also suggests that the first, Jean Bouchart, proposed by Claude Mayer, should also be disregarded as Jean, a lawyer both active at the Faculty of Theology and the *Parlement*, has been often confused with his brother, Nicolas, theological doctor and a canon in Tournai and then in Chartres. J.K. Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology, 1500-1536* (Toronto: 1980), 47-49; Screech, *Clément Marot: a Renaissance Poet Discovers the Gospel*, 27; *Marot évangélique* (Geneva: Droz, 1967); Claude Mayer, "L'avocat du roi d'Espagne, Jean Bouchard, le Parlement de Paris, Guillaume Briçonnet et Clément Marot," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 137 (1991), 7-24; *La religion de Marot* (Geneva: Droz, 1960), 14, cited by Wursten, "Dear Doctor Bouchart," 572.

⁵⁶ This crisis of the monarchy was so dire that François I only reclaimed his authority over and against the *Parlement* in 1527 following a formal hearing (*lit de justice*). Robert J. Knecht, *Un prince de la Renaissance: François I^{er} et son royaume*. trans. Patrick Hersant (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 263-266, cited by Wursten, 567-568; Lestringant, *L'Adolescence clementine*, 358.

⁵⁷ Wursten, 570.

27). Finally, we see his plea to Bouchard to drop the charge and set him free: “Fais quelque chose [...] / En me rendant [...] / La liberté” (92, vv. 36-38).⁵⁸

Luther urged his followers to heed the words of Saint Paul the Apostle in Corinthians 1:10-13.⁵⁹ Here, he suggests confessing oneself a Christian is sufficient, no adjective required, and urges withdrawing oneself in Christ while rejecting allegiance to any religious factions. Such counsel was typical of and adherent to the evangelical reform movement and also strongly echoes Erasmus’s attitude in his *Epistola* 1041, published in 1519.⁶⁰ “Lutherans” in the sixteenth century and during the Reformation only identified as Christians, just like Marot precisely does in his poem, where he proclaims that he takes pleasure and hardship in praising Christ, that he believes in, honors, and esteems the holy, true, and “catholic” Church, and that one will not find any other beliefs but this in him. Of course, in this last example, Marot is not strictly referring to the Catholic Church. Even during the nascent Reformation, there was still only one Christian Church, and he is rather using the term “catholique” in its Greek sense, “universal,” to proclaim that he is above all Christian. However, it will be of interest to see whether Marot also uses the term “catholique” to describe himself while he addresses his interlocutor Bouchard as such, this time in the register of opposition.

Marot’s “Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart” also reveals further about the curious interplay between constraint and human psychology. Marot’s poetic appeals often serve as a case against

⁵⁸ Wursten, “Dear Doctor Bouchart,” 571-572.

⁵⁹ Lestringeant states that in Saint Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:12-13), “l’apôtre stigmatise les divisions apparues dans l’Église en ces termes: ‘[...] Chacun de vous parle ainsi: Moi, je suis Paul! et moi, d’Apollon! – et moi, de Céphas! – et moi, de Christ! – Christ est-il divisé? Paul a-t-il été crucifié pour vous, ou est-ce au nom de Paul que vous avez été baptisés?’” *L’Adolescence clementine*, ed. Lestringeant, 358.

⁶⁰ Screech, *A Renaissance Poet Discovers the Gospel*, 14, cited by Wursten, “Dear Doctor Bouchart,” 571; *Opus Epistolarum*, ed. H.M. Allen, vol. 4 (London: Clarendon, 1901), 121.

his trial, against the judicial system, or against his accusers, often all at once. His prisoner *persona* feverishly seeks to exonerate himself through a multitude of techniques, “soit par des dénégations et des réponses évasives, soit en accusant les autres de faussetés, de tromperies, ou d’envie.”⁶¹

Along these lines, as Wursten demonstrates, Marot reminds Bouchart not to make a judgment based on spite or to do a favor for someone else: “As tu aulcune picque / Encontre moy?” (92, vv. 24-25), “dessoubz aultruy faveur ” (92, v. 26). Marot also warns him against condemning someone based on hearsay that is assailable and open to misinterpretations: “quelque faulx entendre” (92, v. 27).⁶² Instead of listening to what people say, Marot implores Bouchart to read the hearts of those so easily accused of heresy, as he will discover that they are pure and filled with Christian sentiments: “Le cueur verrois aultre qu’on ne t’a dit” (92, v. 32). They are not heretics but Christians: again, to confess oneself a Christian is sufficient, and no denominative adjective is required: “Point ne suis Lutheriste / Ne Zvinglien, & moins Anabatiste” (91, vv. 7-8). If Bouchart does not want to do this for Marot, he then asks the “Docte Docteur” to consider doing this for his friends: “Fais quelque chose au moins pour mes amys” (92, v. 36). Through the poem’s epistolary form, Marot sought to transform his own suffering from his arrest, questioning, and imprisonment as a plea for fair trials of current prisoners. And by addressing Bouchart, Marot may have sought to address all theological inquisitors participating in prosecuting heresy and to challenge them to think twice when accusing a suspect of Lutheranism, as they may simply be Christians just like them.⁶³

⁶¹ La Charité, “*Courage et invention*,” 255.

⁶² Wursten, “Dear Doctor Bouchart,” 577.

⁶³ Wursten, 578.

La Charité insists that in Marot's prison poetry, physical observations and sensations of prison are irrelevant and ignored in favor of more important emotions of isolation, silence, and confinement, emotions which Marot still does not directly enunciate and express in his poems:

A première vue, l'aspect matériel de la prison semble être de peu d'importance; on ne parle pas des barreaux, des cachots, des fers, ni des composantes d'une expérience de ce genre, particulièrement pénibles au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance: le froid, la soif, la faim, les odeurs nauséabondes ne jouent aucun rôle. L'isolement, le silence, et la solitude – le manque de contact qui augmente le désir de la liberté, la matière typique de la littérature carcérale – ne sont jamais mentionnés.⁶⁴

Not only does La Charité discredit the importance of the “material,” physical aspects of Marot's prison on the composition of his poetry, but he also discredits the physical effects of prison on the prisoner, Marot himself, such as the cold, hunger, and foul odors. He even goes as far as to claim that Marot never mentions the silence and isolation he feels. This conclusion is easy to reach upon first glance of his “Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart,” which appears to contain no clear and direct references to these aspects of Marot's prison, nor of the prison's physical effects on his body. However, Marot's desperate and emotional complaint, request, and appeal in this *épître* may reveal the curious fact that the Sorbonne's Faculty of Theology had no jurisdiction to accuse, arrest, interrogate, or imprison (and likewise set free) individuals, even in matters of faith, as prosecution of heresy was the duty and privilege of the Church's ecclesiastic courts and of the crown. Members of the Faculty were simply consulted as witnesses.⁶⁵ It is strange then

⁶⁴ La Charité, “*Courage et invention*,” 254.

⁶⁵ Francis M. Higman, *Censorship and the Sorbonne: a bibliographical study of books in French censored by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris, 1520-1551* (Geneva: 1979), 15-16, 19-21, cited by Wursten, “Dear Doctor Bouchart,” 572-573.

that Marot considers Bouchart as someone who had the ability to imprison him and who still has the ability to free him.

In his *épître*, Marot the prisoner paints Bouchart as a figure who wants to terrorize and intimidate him, as if Bouchart was someone who can easily inflict upon him (and his body) threats and physical violence: “Qui t’a induit à [...] / vouloir mettre en luy crainte, & terreur / D’aigre justice [...]?” (91, vv. 2, 5-6). La Charité writes that Marot’s references to the Châtelet prison “ne laisse aucun doute sur l’âpreté, la brutalité, et le manque de pitié et de bonté qu’on y trouve de façon analogue, l’attente, l’incertitude, l’angoisse, la souffrance – et même l’idée de la mort – qu’on rattache d’habitude à la détention, se révèlent par leur effet sur le corps.”⁶⁶ While these are not strong indications and while Marot does not explicitly refer to his own torture, his focus on the prison’s effect on his body’s vulnerability and precarity indicates that torture as a process of investigation and punishment may have been a part of Marot’s experience of imprisonment.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, from the late Middle Ages throughout the *ancien régime*, torture was part of ordinary criminal procedure and regularly employed to investigate and prosecute routine crime before the ordinary courts.⁶⁷ The procedure of “judicial torture” (or judicial investigation) – the use of physical coercion by officers of the state in order to gather evidence for judicial proceedings – was different from the various painful modes of punishment used as sanctions against those who were already convicted and condemned.⁶⁸ Marot was also jailed indeterminately, as was custom, since fixed jail terms did not appear until the end of the

⁶⁶ La Charité, “*Courage et invention*,” 254.

⁶⁷ Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof*, 3.

⁶⁸ Langbein, 3, 29.

eighteenth century.⁶⁹ Marot indicates that he has been in prison for six days: “Qui t’a induit à faire / Emprisonner depuis six jours en ça [...]” (91, vv. 2-3). A large part of his desperation in appealing to Bouchart may stem from the sheer uncertainty of his detention.

Several textual clues in Marot’s *épître* would indicate that he attempted to communicate, through the use of semantic plays on words, that he was threatened with torture or that he was actually tortured at the Châtelet. Alternatively, Marot may also be playing with the polysemy of these words, and that it does not necessarily imply that he was subjected to torture himself. There exist limitations on making any biographical conjectures or stipulations on Marot’s actual lived experience of torture in prison. Given this uncertainty, the following terms do not exclusively reflect real acts of torture, nor do they only convey figurative depictions of it.

The first textual reference pertains to the verb *extraire* (“to extract”) in the verses “Je suis celluy, qui ay faict mainst escript, / Dont ung seul vers on n’en sçauroit *extraire*, / Qui à la Loy divine soit contraire” (91, vv. 10-12). While Marot may be protesting his innocence by proclaiming that not a single verse against God’s will can be *extracted* from his writings, that no earthly authority can nullify his deposition on the grounds that it is against God’s law by means of false testimonies – authorities who fail to correctly read into his heart⁷⁰ – *extraire* can also be understood in its sense “to extract” a word or verse (“un seul vers”) from him: to make him talk or confess. *Extraire* had also been attested in Middle French to signify to have someone speak or

⁶⁹ “Il ne faut pas oublier que la condamnation des criminels et des accusés avec emprisonnement à temps fixe ne prend forme qu’à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. A l’époque de Marot, incarcération veut dire en principe détention de durée indéterminée; cela dure jusqu’à ce que l’affaire soit réglée. C’est donc dire que le caractère indéfini du temps qui passe peut angoisser même les plus courageux.” La Charité, “*Courage et invention*,” 255.

⁷⁰ La Charité, 257.

to get a word or a response out of someone.⁷¹ *Extraire* therefore may signify the act of submitting Marot to torture or coercive interrogation in order to “extract” a confession from him in which he admits to a number of possibilities: he admits to his heretical act (of eating meat during Lent), he recants and renounces “Lutheranism,” and he divulges information on his accomplices; that is, on how he became a “Lutheran,” by whom and with whom.

The second textual clue pertains to the verb *querir* (“to ask, search”) (92, vv. 23-24). Marot appears to ask his accuser Bouchart what he is in turn trying to *ask* Marot; he is asking Bouchart what he is *looking* and *searching* for:

Brief, celluy suis, qui croit, honnore, & prise
 La sainte, vraie, & catholique Eglise.
 Aultre doctrine en moy ne veulx bouter:
 Ma Loy est bonne. Et si ne fault doubter,
 Qu’à mon pouvoir ne la prise, & exaulce,
 Veu qu’ung Payen prise la sienne faulse.
 Que quiers tu donc, ô Docteur catholique?
 Que quiers tu donc? As tu aulcune picque
 Encontre moy? ou si tu prends saveur
 A me trister dessoubz aultruy faveur? (91-92, vv. 17-26).

Querir could be similar to the verb *questionner*, and to the nouns *questionnement* and *question*, where the latter can be understood as “questioning, interrogation by use of force,” or *la torture*.

Querir may also have had a physical interpretation, and in the sixteenth century alluded to force

⁷¹ Fourteenth-century chronicler Jean Froissart uses “*extraire*” in this sense numerous times in his *Chroniques* (ca. 1375-1400) (“Et le dimenche tout le jour et le lundi et le mardi ensieuvant il fist à Ortais, en son chastel, si mate et si simple chiere que on ne povoit *estrai*re parole de lui;” “Messires Robers Canolles s’escusoit et mettoit toutdis avant que ses gens ne pooient faire nulz trettiés sans son accord, et que tout li trettiet qu’il avoient fait, estoient de nulle vaille; ne de lui on ne pooit *estrai*re aultre response”) and in his *Paradis d’amour* (ca. 1361-1362) (“Quant je ne puis merchi *estrai*re / De la plaisans et debonnaire / Qui m’a par son tres douls viaire / Le coer navré”). *Froissart. Chroniques: 1370-1377*. ed. Gaston Raynaud. t. 8 (Paris: Renouard and Laurens, 1888), 158; *Chroniques. Troisième livre: 1356-1388*. ed. Léon Mirot. t. 12 (Paris: Champion, 1931), 171; *Le Paradis d’amour, l’Orloge amoureux*. ed. Peter Dembowski (Geneva: Droz, 1986), 40-82; *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF)*, 2015. ATILF - CNRS and Université de Lorraine. Accessed July 29, 2020. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

in the sixteenth century to imply “to try hard” or “struggle to” do something.⁷² There also is a connection with the noun *querele*, a “grievance, lamentation, call for justice”⁷³ and with the verb *quereler*, “to dispute, contest, avenge” and all their senses.⁷⁴ Consequently, it is probable that Marot uses *querir* to ask Bouchart, who is not only his accuser but also his interrogator, what he is “interrogating” or rather coercing Marot to do or to say. Marot’s verses can therefore be translated as “Why are you interrogating (me), O Catholic Doctor? / So why are you interrogating (me)?” where “interrogate” can ostensibly be replaced with “torture” for Marot to ask Bouchart, “Why are you torturing (me), O Catholic Doctor? / So why are you torturing (me)?”

The third textual clue pertains to the word *pique* (lit. “pick” or “pike,” i.e. a sharp object) (92, v. 24), which appears to belong to the figurative and proverbial expression *avoir* or *prendre la pique contre (quelqu’un)*, “to have or take a pike against (someone),” figurately understood as to enter into a fight or disagreement.⁷⁵ Marot in his *épître* can be interpreted asking Bouchart if he has a grudge against him or if he spites him, or more colloquially, asking Bouchart “what he has against him.” A *pique* commonly referred to a *pike* or halberd, a military polearm “shorter than a lance and whose end it tipped with a flat, pointed iron,” or metonymically as a soldier who bore one, a pike man,⁷⁶ both of which were attested more frequently during the late Middle Ages

⁷² “Chercher à, s’efforcer de.” Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*. t. 5. (Paris: Didier, 1961), 281.

⁷³ “Plainte pour demander justice, réclamation, lamentation.” Huguet, 278.

⁷⁴ “Disputer, contester, venger.” Huguet, 279.

⁷⁵ “Entrer en lutte avec.” Huguet, 795.

⁷⁶ “Arme d’hast, plus courte que la lance, dont le bout est garni d’un fer plat et pointu,” “Soldat armé d’une pique.” *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF)*.

and second half of the fifteenth century when polearm fighting was more prevalent. *Pique* also generally signified any “*sharp, pointed iron tool*” like a miner’s pickaxe or a horse rider’s boot spur.⁷⁷ On the other hand, *pique* figuratively signified “*opposition, quarrel, disagreement*” or creatively “*hurtful speech, ridicule,*”⁷⁸ and as mentioned above, was understood to indicate any grudge or spite one possesses against another. *Pique* is also found in another proverbial expression, *passer (par) les piques*, “to go or pass through pikes,” to figuratively signify enduring a painful and unpleasant thing.⁷⁹ However, Marot could be using *pique* in its literal meaning in referring to a physical pike, halberd, or any pointed, cutting tool, and not in a figurative or proverbial way. “Combing” or “raking” was a torture technique that has been attested since Antiquity with the early Christian martyrs such as Saint Blaise, bishop of Sebaste in Cappadocia, who was tortured by the Romans by having his flesh torn with iron combs, such as they use to card wool, in ironic mockery as Saint Blaise was the “shepherd” of his Christian “flock.” Torture by combing and raking was attested until the eighteenth century, using poled metal “rakes” or blades combined with stretching the prisoner on a rack vertically or horizontally in order to perform the cutting or stabbing.⁸⁰

In his *épître*, Marot renews this possibility of physical torture through the fourth and final textual clue pertaining to the word *estendre* (“to stretch, extend”) (92, v. 28):

Je croy que non: mais quelque faulx entendre
T’a faict sur moy telle rigueur estendre.
Doncques refrains de ton couraige l’ire.

⁷⁷ “Outil pointu en fer (en particulier des mineurs),” “Éperon.” *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF)*.

⁷⁸ “Opposition, querelle, brouille,” “Parole caustique, raillerie.” *DMF*.

⁷⁹ “Subir une chose pénible, fâcheuse.” Huguet, *Dictionnaire du seizième siècle*, 794.

⁸⁰ Michael Kerrigan, *The Instruments of Torture* (London: Amber, 2001), 147.

Que pleust à Dieu, qu'ores tu peusses lire
 Dedans ce corps de franchise interdit:
 Le cueur verrais aultre qu'on ne t'a dit (92, vv. 27-32).

Again, the figurative meaning of *estendre* easily translates Marot's verses, where he seethes at Bouchart because some misinformation or misunderstanding made the theological doctor *submit* him to such an ordeal (of imprisonment): literally speaking, to "extend" upon Marot such a punishment. But the figurative meaning of *estendre* can just as easily and straightforwardly translate Marot's words to signify that he decries Bouchart for having submitted him to such an ordeal (of torture), and even more literally speaking, to "extend" upon him the torture of "stretching:" the torture of the rack.

From the Middle Ages and throughout most of the Early Modern period, the rack was, along with the "manacles" (the English name for the *strappato*: suspending the victim by his hands without foot support), one of the most common torture instruments and racking a victim was one of the most common torture techniques. Marot could have used *estendre* to signify that he was tortured on the rack; yet, one should not be necessarily led to such a literal reading of Marot's use of *estendre*, as torture is often linked to the desire to break the victim's will and sense of agency, rather than to literally break the victim's body.⁸¹ *Estendre* was attested and used in Middle French along with *à la question* or *à la géhenne* ("Gehenna," or the biblical hell, was

⁸¹ The rack and the manacles may have been used together to distend the limbs. The victim would be laid on the floor within a rectangular wooden framework, his hands firmly bound and stretched out above his head, with both hands and feet anchored by weights – or, later, more often rollers. Levers at each end of the bed loosened or tightened the cords that held the prisoner's extremities, lifting him up slowly until he hung in the air before his questioners. Later modifications appeared, such as the vertical Spanish *escalera* ("ladder"), the Italian *veglià* ("vigilance") with a sharp spike that forced the victim to keep his back tensed and clear, and the Austrian "ladder" leaned up against a wall at an angle that only stretched the victim's arms. Although not as gruesome in appearance to other torture instruments, the rack was still devastating and stretched the victim's body to the breaking point: dislocating joints in the arms and legs and tearing ligatures. With the arms and legs splayed out and anchored, the prisoner's face and body were open to any other injury his persecutors cared to inflict: it "was effectively the torturer's workbench." Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof*, 84; Kerrigan, *The Instruments of Torture*, 37-39.

an ingenious medieval euphemism for torture as “suffering”)⁸² or to indicate some mode of stretching torture or “racking,” usually in its adjective form *estendu* to describe the tortured victim.⁸³ The phrase *estendu à la question* or *estendu à la géhenne* could be also accompanied with a description of a scene or process of torture, from stripping the suspect, forcing him down upon a *tresteau* or *tresteaux* (“planks, boards”), then binding and stretching him, especially in written legal records such as those from prisons and houses of torture like the Châtelet.

In his “Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart” Marot offers a particular dramatization of prison through which he seeks to anchor the autobiographic *persona* he creates for himself. The theological debate and persuasive techniques at the roots of his protestation of innocence in the face of his Sorbonne theologian accuser Bouchart, the lack of clues as to whether he actually committed the heresy of eating meat during Lent, and the direct textual allusions to his interrogation and torture while he was jailed at the Châtelet serve to affirm that Marot attempts to politically and poetically document the physical and emotional reality of prison. These also affirm that he attempts to give prison meaning beyond its carceral context and circumstances.

⁸² Torture chambers in prisons or dungeons during the Middle Ages and beyond were referred to as “*salles de géhenne*.”

⁸³ Examples abound for *étendu à la géhenne*, such as in Guillaume de Machaut’s *Prise d’Alexandrie ou Chronique du roi Pierre Ier de Lusignan* (1369) (“Et certes c’estoit grant durté, / Et très grant inhumanité, / De creature feminine / Faire *estendre* et mettre à *gehine*”) and Jean de Roye’s *Chronique scandaleuse* (1460-1483) (“Et, après que ledit Charlot Tonnelier, dont est parlé devant, qui ainsi s’estoit incisée la langue, en fut guery, fut derechef amené en la question près d’estre *estendu en la gehyne*, pour ce qu’il ne vouloit congnoistre les cas à lui imposez”). Guillaume de Machaut, *Prise d’Alexandrie ou Chronique du roi Pierre Ier de Lusignan*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie (Geneva: Fick, 1877), 261; Jean de Roye, *Journal, connu sous le nom de Chronique scandaleuse*, ed. Bernard de Mandrot, t. 1 (Paris: Renouard, 1894), 225; *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF)*, 2015. Accessed July 30, 2020. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

“Épître à son amy Lyon”

The second and final poem that Marot wrote during his imprisonment in the Châtelet was his “Épître à son amy Lyon,” traditionally interpreted and accepted as a plea to his friend Lyon Jamet to help with his release. While Lyon Jamet is not explicitly mentioned, an alternative is François I: as the king of the animals, the lion could represent François I in his kingdom, given that he was then imprisoned in Madrid in 1525. Marot hints at whether he actually committed the heresy of eating meat during Lent, but he cloaks these hints in thick layers of metaphor and storytelling through the presentation of a fable, a creative innovation on his part. While it might be simple to guess which animal character represents Marot or Jamet (or François I) in the *épître*’s fable, Marot more importantly employs the fable form as part of a greater rhetoric of documentation, accusation, testimony, and defense between himself, the prisoner-poet, and his adversaries through which he seeks to legitimize his spiritual, poetic, and intellectual self:

Je ne t’escry de l’amour vaine, & folle,
 Tu voys assez, s’elle sert, ou affolle:
 Je ne t’escry ne d’Armes, ne de Guerre,
 Tu voys, qui peult bien, ou mal y acquerre:
 Je ne t’escry de Fortune puissante,
 Tu voys assez, s’elle est ferme, ou glissante:
 Je ne t’escry d’abus trop abusant,
 Tu en sçais prou, & si n’en vas usant:
 Je ne t’escry de Dieu, ne sa puissance,
 C’est à luy seul t’en donner congnoissance:
 Je ne t’escry des Dames de Paris,
 Tu en sçais plus que leurs propres Maris:
 Je ne t’escry, qui est rude, ou affable,
 Mais je te veulx dire une belle fable:
 C’est assavoir du Lyon, & du Rat.

Cestuy Lyon plus fort qu’un vieulx Verrat,
 Veit une fois, que le Rat ne sçavoit
 Sortir d’ung lieu, pour autant qu’il avoit
 Mangé le lard, & la chair toute crue:

Mais ce Lyon (qui jamais ne fut Grue)
 Trouva moyen, & maniere, & matiere
 D'ongles, & dentz, de rompre la ratiere:
 Dont maistre rat eschappe vistement:
 Puis mist à terre ung genoul gentement,
 Et en ostant son bonnet de la teste,
 A mercié mille fois la grant Beste:
 Jurant le dieu des Souriz, et des Ratz,
 Qu'il luy rendrait. Maintenant tu verras
 Le bon du compte. Il advint d'aventure,
 Que le Lyon pour chercher sa pasture,
 Saillit dehors sa caverne, & son siege:
 Dont (par malheur) se trouva pris au piege,
 Et fut lié contre un ferme posteau.

Adonc le Rat, sans serpe, ne cousteau,
 Y arriva joyeulx, & esbaudy,
 Et du Lyon (pour vray) ne s'est gaudy:
 Mais despita Chatz, Chates, & Chatons,
 Et prisa fort Ratz, Rates, & Ratons,
 Dont il avoit trouvé temps favorable
 Pour secourir le Lyon secourable:
 Auquel a dit: tays toy Lyon lié,
 Par moy seras maintenant deslié:
 Tu le vaulx bien, car le cueur joly as.
 Bien y parut, quand tu me deslias.
 Secouru m'as fort Lyonneusement,
 Ors secouru seras Rateusement.

Lors le Lyon ses deux grands yeux vestit,
 Et vers le Rat les tourna ung petit,
 En luy disant, ô pauvre vermyniere,
 Tu n'as sur toy instrument, ne maniere,
 Tu n'as cousteau, serpe, ne serpillon,
 Qui sceut couper corde, ne cordillon,
 Pour me getter de ceste estroicte voye;
 Va te cacher, que le Chat ne te voye.

Sire Lyon (dit le filz de Souris)
 De ton propos (certes) je me soubris:
 J'ay des cousteaulx assez, ne te soucie,
 De bel os blanc plus tranchant qu'une Cye:
 Leur gaine c'est ma gencive, & ma bouche:
 Bien coupperont la corde, qui te touche
 De si trespres: car j'y mettray bon ordre.

Lors Sire Rat va commencer à mordre
 Ce gros lien: vray est qu'il y songea
 Assez long temps: mais il le vous rongea
 Souvent & tant, qu'à la parfin tout rompt:
 Et le Lyon de s'en aller fut prompt,
 Disant en soy: nul plaisir (en effect)
 Ne se perdt point, quelque part où soit faict.
 Voylà le compte en termes rimassez:
 Il est bien long: mais il est vieil assez,
 Tesmoing Esope, & plus d'ung million.

Or viens me veoir, pour faire le Lyon:
 Et je mettray peine, sens, & estude
 D'estre le Rat, exempt d'ingratitude:
 J'entends, si Dieu te donne autant d'affaire,
 Qu'au grand Lyon: ce qu'il ne vueille faire (92-94, vv. 1-76).

In terms of biography, it is only known that Lyon (or Léon) Jamet was from Sanxay in Poitou and was a clerk of finances, that he too was implicated in the Affair of the Placards (1534), that he was often in Marot's company (hence, a "good friend") during these years, and that he composed Marot's epitaph in 1544.⁸⁴

The well-known "Fable of the Lion and the Rat" owes its origins to Aesop, and had already been popularized among French audiences by Julien Macho's editions from the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries.⁸⁵ Marot's *épître* does not attempt to provide another translation of the fable, nor does it try to match Aesop's original fable as closely as he can, which he says has been done "more than a million times:" "[...] mais il est vieil assez, / Tesmoing Esope, & plus d'ung million" (94, vv. 70-71). It is notable that the character of the Rat in Aesop's original fable was never a prisoner, and it is thus significant how Marot adapted the fable to reflect his own positionality and heighten the referential dimension of his prison

⁸⁴ L' *Adolescence clementine*, ed. Lestringant, 359; Mayer, *Clément Marot*, 112-113.

⁸⁵ Berchtold, "Le poète-rat," 57.

poetry. Marot was likely inspired to choose this fable entirely based on the names of its potential animal characters: Marot the prisoner is the rat via anagram (“*om-rat*” or *homme-rat*, the “man-rat”), and Jamet the savior and recipient of his missive is the lion via homonym (Lyon or Léon, the “lion”).⁸⁶ He casts animal characters from (known) fables such as the “Lion and the Rat,” and the implicit morale is that “one good turn deserves another:” that even little Marot the rat can turn out to be useful to the great lion king if he liberates him. But while the morale is not immediately apparent, there is also a real purpose: Marot needs and desires to fight against the immobility and fixedness of imprisonment, and against the injustice and oppression of his accusations and persecution, spurring him to contact and beg Jamet, or François I, for assistance. Marot’s *épître* reads as a scene marked by a dialogue of imploration, and the fable “The Lion and the Rat” transposes the cruel experience of prison onto the cruel reality of the animal world.⁸⁷ The fable is an example of one of the new and reconditioned forms of sixteenth-century prison writing behind which prisoners could seek refuge as a survival or coping mechanism and use as a site of resistance.

Under the surface of the fable in Marot’s *épître* “à son amy Lyon” lies a coded statement of faith of an author converted to “Lutheranism” and the reform movement, and of an author who adhered to humanist ideals such as those propagated by Erasmus, who was not able to freely express himself during a time of inquisition and censure. In medieval iconography, rats were one of the most widespread symbols of heresy due to their dirty, elusive, and infesting nature. Rats were imagined to represent heretical sin and vice “gnawing” away at the Church and spreading

⁸⁶ François Rigolot, *Poétique et Onomastique, l'exemple de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), 49, 67, cited by Berchtold, “Le poète-rat,” 57-58.

⁸⁷ Berchtold, 61.

their “plague” across the world.⁸⁸ The figure of the rat appears in the works of Marot’s contemporaries: Jean Lemaire de Belges places the rat in hell among the other cursed animals, and Artus Désiré portrays the rat waiting upon heretics at the ends of Gehenna.⁸⁹ Marot precisely chose the rat due to these established and antagonistic heretical connotations, but he instead transforms the rat into a victim and bestows upon it values of a protagonist. Marot’s rat is a prisoner-martyr-epistolarian in the image of the great Saints Peter and Paul, whose footsteps it strives to follow: “[...] je mettray peine, sens, & estude / D’estre le Rat [...]” (94, vv. 73-74). It is also finally revealed that the rat had been persecuted and became a prisoner-martyr because it, in fact, ate meat and transgressed the dictates of Lent: “[...] pour autant qu’il avoit / Mangé le lard, & la chair toute crue” (93, vv. 18-19). This textual indication may at last constitute a confession or proclamation on the part of Marot after he had not revealed any details in his previous “Épître à Monseigneur Bouchart.” But “maître” and “sire” Rat is a dignified figure who resembles a sixteenth-century nobleman kneeling and taking off its hat for the Lion in respect and gratitude for freeing it: “Puis mist à terre ung genoul gentement, / Et en ostant son bonnet de la teste, / A mercié mille fois la grant Beste” (93, vv. 24-26). The Rat is also not only courageous and ingenious, but it is strengthened and empowered by its faith, physically manifested in its “knives” which it uses to cut the ropes of the Lion’s trap: its gleaming white teeth, sharper than a saw, whose sheath is his own gums and mouth: “J’ay des cousteaulx assez, ne te soucie, / De bel os blanc plus tranchant qu’une Cye: / Leur gaine c’est ma gencive, & ma bouche” (94, vv. 57-

⁸⁸ Waldemar Deonna, “La boule aux rats et le monde trompeur,” *Revue archéologique* (1958), 62, cited by Berchtold, “Le poète-rat,” 70-71.

⁸⁹ Jean Lemaire de Belges, *Les Épîtres de l’Amant vert*, ed. Jean Frappier (Geneva: Droz, 1948), v. 212; Artus Désiré, *Le deffenseur de la foy chrestienne, avec la mireor des frans taupins, autrement nommez luthériens* (Paris: J. Ruelle, 1567), cited by Berchtold, 71.

59). Despite the sharpness of its teeth, the Rat's faith is also manifested by its resolve and dogged determination to chew and break the thick ropes trapping the large Lion; it toils for some time before eventually succeeding, thanks to the sheer repetition and amount of bites it makes: "[...] vray est qu'il y songea / Assez long temps: mais il le vous rongea / Souvent & tant, qu'à la parfin tout rompt" (94, vv. 63-65).

It is no surprise that when the Lion first encounters the rat, the rat is in a "place" from which it "does not know" how to leave: "Cestuy Lyon [...], / Veit une fois, que le Rat ne sçavoit / Sortir d'ung lieu" (93, vv. 16-18). In other words, it had been caught in a mousetrap (*ratiere*). However, the noble lion is "stronger than an old boar:" "plus fort qu'un vieulx Verrat" (93, vv. 16). It proceeds to rip open the trap by sheer, brute strength with its claws and fangs: "Mais ce Lyon (qui jamais ne fut Grue)⁹⁰ / Trouva moyen, & maniere, & matiere / D'ongles, & dentz, de rompre la *ratiere*" (93, vv. 20-22). The Marot-rat's adversary is a deceiving placer of *ratieres* intent on capturing, immobilizing, and "imprisoning" its victims. The rat-prisoner-martyr-epistolarian who pleads for help from its jail cell reminds the audience of the carceral punishment of (Early Christian) believers persecuted for their faith.⁹¹ Here, the traps are figurative – the authorities of the Sorbonne's Faculty of Theology and of the crown's special inquisitory panel led by the Queen-regent – but they are also literal, like the Châtelet prison. The Rat's *ratiere* also reflects the entire literary metamorphosis until his time in the early sixteenth century, possibly alluding simultaneously to the allegorical and didactic trap (prison) of love

⁹⁰ "Grue" in Middle French, as in Modern French, referred to a species of large long-legged, long-necked birds (cranes) and by polysemy, a construction engine or machine (a crane), but figuratively as a "personne qui se laisse facilement tromper" and even a "femme facile," like a tramp or tart in English. It is likely that Marot is using this former definition and emphasizing that the Lion was not easily fooled or duped. *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF)*, 2015. Accessed January 23, 2021. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

⁹¹ Berchtold, "Le poète-rat," 71.

(practiced in the courtly tradition), the trap (prison) of language (practiced by the Rhétoriciens), and now the physical trap (prison) of the Châtelet. Rather than necessarily referring to an actual mousetrap or rats as such, *ratiere* was attested in the late medieval and Early Modern period to signify a figurative or literal “trap,” or even a sealed, fortified, or secure “nest” (derived from a “rat’s nest”) along with the expression “être pris comme un rat.”⁹² While no specific evidence indicates that *ratiere* was used as part of penitentiary vocabulary, nor does the term appear in legal registers to signify the prison edifice, Marot could have used it to refer to prison through its figurative meanings.

Put forth as the animal-savior, the Lion was also associated with traditional antagonistic iconography. The man-eating lion had been a biblical symbol of satanic ferocity, as seen in the parable of the Prophet Daniel who was thrown in the lions’ den, only for the prophet to emerge unscathed overnight thanks to his unshakable faith in God, and in the imagery of Christ the vanquisher, a new Samson, who treads on the lion at his feet. The rat and the lion were therefore enemies of Christ and of the Catholic Church, and it is the Church’s duty to persecute and imprison the lion as it would the rat, and both animals thus find themselves allies in the face of the Church’s anathema.⁹³ Marot reuses the model of the Lion that Aesop had chosen for its hostile symbolism. More specifically, he transforms and repurposes it into a victim and protagonist by revalorizing other Christian symbols, such as Saint Jerome’s lion, which is in

⁹² Guillaume de Machaut also uses *ratiere* in the sense of a figurative or literal “trap” (that is, not intended for actual rats) in his *Prise d’Alexandrie* (1369): “Tuit serons pris à la *ratiere*. / Si que, sire, en nulle maniere / Je ne conseille la demeure. / Partons nous tuit, car il est heure.” Andrieu de La Vigne uses *ratiere* in the sense of a “nid” or nest that seems to have the impenetrable and secure qualities of a “trap” in his *Mystère de Saint Martin* (1496): “Puisque Mort dedens sa *ratiere* / Nostre prelat a faict passer / Aultant devant que de costiere, / D’en faire ung aultre fault pincer.” *Guillaume de Machaut. Prise d’Alexandrie*, 102; *Andrieu de La Vigne. Le Mystère de Saint Martin*. ed. André Duplat (Geneva: Droz, 1979), 394; *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF)*, 2015. Accessed August 2, 2020. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

⁹³ Berchtold, “Le poète-rat,” 74.

itself a Christianized version of the fable of Androcles's "grateful lion," and which perhaps represents an incarnation of the divine "Word."⁹⁴

As both allies and antagonists in the eyes of the authorities, the caught and trapped Rat (in the "ratiere") and the Lion who finds itself tied to a post are also both prisoners: "Dont (par malheur) se trouva pris au piege, / Et fut lié contre un ferme posteau" (93, vv. 32-33). As the king of the animals in his animal kingdom, the Lion could represent imprisoned king François I. Both feel the reality of isolation and immobility of imprisonment and desperately wish to be freed from their respective cage or ropes. Yet for each, it is the other animal-ally who frees them. For the Rat (Marot), who now is the "grateful rat," this scene is accompanied by a dialogue where it expresses its gratefulness and recognition of the Lion's big heart: "Tu le vaulx bien, car le cueur joly as. / Bien y parut, quand tu me deslias" (93, vv. 43-44). As a result, the Rat now repays the "lion lié:" "Par moy seras maintenant deslié: / [...] Secouru m'as fort Lyonneusement, / Ors secouru seras Rateusement" (93, vv. 42, 45-46). The "grateful" Lion doubts that the Rat can free him without any sharp tools to cut its ropes and urges it to flee so the Cat does not see it: "Tu n'as sur toy instrument, ne maniere, / Tu n'as cousteau, serpe, ne serpillon, / Qui sceut couper corde, ne cordillon" (94, vv. 50-52). The Cat is the third and final animal character in Marot's fable, and while it does not make an appearance nor speak, its menacing, off-stage presence could represent Church authorities who, like a cat who chases and hunts a rat, actively persecutes and imprisons heretics like Marot. The reciprocity and mutual gratefulness between the Rat and the Lion shown in Marot's fable directly echoes the story of Saint Jerome and the lion, where the lion is recast as a fellow comrade and companion after he helps remove a thorn from its paw, and in return, the lion is eternally grateful to the holy man and becomes his

⁹⁴ Berchtold, "Le poète-rat," 73.

companion. This story enjoyed significant popularity at the beginning of the sixteenth century as shown by the fascination of German artist Albrecht Dürer and Flemish artist Quentin Matsys.⁹⁵ The image of Saint Jerome perfectly embodies Marot's evangelistic aspirations as he envisions himself as the Rat-evangelist hard at work, writing to spread the truth of the reform movement. The rat gains an ally in the "Word incarnate" Lion, and the fable thus represents an encrypted literary and humanist "credo" of his being:

Dans sa fable du lion et du rat, Marot met en scène de manière codée le problème de l'engagement évangélique. Le rat, à ce niveau allégorique, c'est Marot "l'om-rat" disciple d'Erasmus militant pour une église purgée qui redevienne celle des "filz de souris," par la recherche d'une alliance nouvelle avec le Verbe divin. L'image de Saint Jérôme penché sur son pupitre et absorbé dans sa traduction, un lion paisiblement couché à ses pieds comme symbole visible de la caution divine, était devenu un emblème de l'entreprise philologique des évangéliques.⁹⁶

Besides the fable's derivation from a clever anagram of his name (Marot "l'om-rat"), not to mention its heretical iconography, Marot's choice of the diminutive rat communicates the *topos* and rhetoric of humility and modesty that he associates with his poetic *persona*. Based on his experiences at court, where Marot constantly depended on nobles and members of the royal family for protection and support, he takes the pose of the humble and modest rat who scurries onto their (humans') table to eat scraps of their food.⁹⁷ Yet, as demonstrated above, the rat is far from weak or pathetic. The lion is justly mistaken for underestimating the physical size of the rat, and the rat shows a great conviction of the soul⁹⁸ and does what it knows to do: to doggedly and

⁹⁵ Berchtold, "Le poète-rat," 74.

⁹⁶ Berchtold, 74.

⁹⁷ Defaux, "Rhétorique, silence et liberté," 309.

⁹⁸ The term "conviction of the soul" is inspired by La Charité's term *fermeté d'âme*. La Charité, "Couraige et invention," 260.

relentlessly bite and chew: “Lors Sire Rat va commencer à mordre” (94, v. 62), “[...] il le vous rongea / Souvent & tant [...]” (94, vv. 64-65).

The multiple *mises en abîme* of Marot’s “fable within a story” include transposing the Lion and the Rat onto persecuted heretic protagonists and onto Jamet or François I and Marot, as well as the freedom the poet finds in retelling the fable of his imprisonment. Marot’s “Épître à son amy Lyon” is therefore likely based on Marot’s experience in the Châtelet and his appeal to Jamet or François I for assistance in freeing him. Apart from the layers of allegory and metaphor that the fable brings, Marot demonstrates a fusion of this prior medieval tradition and new humanistic forms to ground his *épître* in a first-person perspective, whether it be through the narrator or the myriad Rat *personae*: the rat-martyr, the rat-prisoner, the rat-epistolarian, or the rat-evangelist.

L’Enfer

Marot’s long poem *L’Enfer* is composed of 488 decasyllabic lines in rhyming couplets and features numerous enjambments, such as the two immediately found in its first stanza: “Comme douleurs de nouvel amassées / Font souvenir des lyesses passées” (19, vv. 1-2), “Je dy cecy, mes treschers Freres, pource / Que l’amytié, la chere non rebourse” (19, vv. 5-6). In *L’Enfer*, Marot compares his incarceration to a descent into a “hell” (*enfer*) that is entirely borrowed and transplanted from the underworld and kingdom of the dead of ancient Greco-Roman mythology. Marot allegorizes the trauma of his imprisonment and perhaps torture in the Châtelet into a narrative containing multiple layers: an analogical (comparative) structure and the process in which it frames its story, points of reference, rhetorical tangents, various focuses, dramatic effects, allusive resonances, metaphorical networks, satirical components, an

antagonistic stance, arguments, morals, and most importantly to this study, autobiographical details.⁹⁹ As simultaneously a denunciation and a theatricalization, *L'Enfer* is above all a referential recollection of Marot's imprisonment. The referential components can be extracted from the fusion of mocking, satirical blows against the greater body of the social, political, and religious system of Marot's Early Modern period, in particular in the highly autobiographic opening that "stages" the poem from where it transitions to its allegorical narrative landscape:

Comme douleurs de nouvel amassées
 Font souvenir des lyesses passées:
 Ainsi plaisir de nouvel amassé
 Faict souvenir du mal, qui est passé.
 Je dy cecy, mes treschers Freres, pource
 Que l'amytié, la chere non rebourse.
 Les passetemps, & consolations,
 Que je reçooy par visitations
 En la prison claire, & nette de Chartres,
 Me font recors des tenebreuses Chartres,
 Du grand chagrin, & recueil ord, & laid,
 Que je trouvay dedans le Chastellet.

Si ne croy pas, qu'il y ait chose au monde,
 Qui mieulx ressemble ung Enfer tresimmunde:
 Je dy Enfer, & Enfer puis bien dire;
 Si l'allez veoir, encor' le voyrrez pire.
 Aller hélas! ne vous y vueillez mettre;
 J'ayme trop mieulx le vous descrire en metre,
 Que pour le veoir aulcun de vous soit mys
 En telle peine. Escoutez doncq' Amys (t. II, 19-20, vv. 1-20).

This opening directly recollects Marot's recent, two (contrasting) experiences of imprisonment: in the "Chastellet"'s "tenebreuses Chartres" which evoked "grand chagrin, & recueil ord, & laid" and in "la prison claire, & nette de Chartres" (19, vv. 10-12). Marot contrasts his "bright, clean prison" in Chartres – his house arrest in the "Aigle" hostelry – with the "dark prison," "great

⁹⁹ La Charité, "*Courage et invention*," 260.

suffering,” and “repugnant and despicable welcome” of the Châtelet. His choice of *chartre* is significant not only to rhyme with Chartres, but also to imply a harsher and crueler dimension than the often plain and surface-level term “prison.” In a religious sense, a *chartre* is an eternal prison or prison for life: the body as the prison of the soul. The notion of a prison for life is also an illusion to Hell, an eternal prison of suffering.¹⁰⁰ *Chagrin* (grief, suffering, sadness) and *mal* may also be an allusion to Marot’s torture at the Châtelet.¹⁰¹

The most significant literary theme or *topos* that Marot introduces in his opening is “ung Enfer tresimmunde” (19, v. 14); the living hell of prison that he experienced where benign natural and divine laws are overthrown by their malign opposites, chaos and anarchy, on a miserable plane of existence. It is a world reversed and upended, a *monde à l’envers*: a *topos* that had crystallized by Marot’s time in the early sixteenth century. Marot’s hell is a criticism of his society’s sins, such as its greed, degraded morals, lack of brotherhood and Christian charity, but especially the cruelty, crimes, and abuses committed by the judicial and political systems that were responsible for his imprisonment. The critique of society creates this world turned upside down, a *monde à l’envers*, a hell-on-earth populated by either victims or executioners, which has been likened to a depiction of the world on the brink of the biblical fall of mankind, and whose sins stress the seriousness of mankind’s loss of the garden of Eden.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ *Chartre*, no longer in use in Modern French, is defined as a “prison, geôle” but also as “prison à vie, les Limbes, Enfer (la prison des âmes), être privé de raison, avoir perdu la tête.” *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* (DMF), 2015. Accessed August 5, 2020. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

¹⁰¹ *Chagrin*, apart from its Modern French definition as “Qui éprouve du déplaisir, de la tristesse; qui manifeste ce sentiment” and “Qui est porté au mécontentement, à la mélancolie,” also signified in Middle French “peine morale, être triste, mauvais.” DMF. Accessed August 5, 2020. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>; *Dictionnaire Larousse de la langue française*. Accessed July 30, 2020. <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais>.

¹⁰² La Charité, “*Courage et invention*,” 263.

Marot sets up this *monde à l'envers* when he exclaims “Je dy Enfer, & Enfer puis bien dire” and invites the audience “Si l’allez veoir, encor’ le voyrrez pire” (19, vv. 15-16). He insists that what he experienced was hell, and his narration of a splendid voyage among numerous starry empires is rather that of a voyage or descent into the Greco-Roman underworld. In creating a text that is both inspired by and mixes a traditional “voyage into the beyond” with a criticism of justice, Marot has a very innovative take on the Homeric (in his *Odyssey*), Virgilian (in his *Aeneid*) and Dantean (in his *Divine Comedy*) descent into hell and metaphorical interaction with its denizens. Marot’s initial description of the descent retains his first-person narrative perspective and contains similarities to Virgil’s and Dante’s protagonists’ entries into the underworld, but he also adds a graphic medieval-Early Modern dimension of a *monde à l'envers*:

Bien avez leu, sans qu’il s’en faille ung A,
Comme je fus par l’instinct de Luna
Mené au lieu plus mal sentant, que soulfhre,
Par cinq, ou six ministres de ce gouffre:
Dont le plus gros jusques là me transporte.

Si rencontray Cerberus à la porte:
Lequel dressa ses troys testes en hault,
A tout le moins une, qui troys en vault.
Lors de travers me voit ce Chien poulsif.
Puis m’a ouvert ung huys gros, & massif:
Duquel l’entrée est si estroicte, & basse,
Que pour entrer faillut que me courbasse.

Mais ains, que feusse entré au gouffre noir.
Je veoy à part ung aultre vieil manoir
Tout plein de gens, de bruyt, & de tumulte:
Parquoy avec ma Guyde je consulte.
En luy disant: Dy moy, s’il t’en souvient.
D’où, & de qui, & pourquoy ce bruyt vient (19-20, vv. 21-38).

The Châtelet prison is an agglomerated mosaic of imagery of dark and foul-smelling recesses: “gouffre noir” (20, v. 33), “lieu plus mal sentant, que soulfhre” (20, v. 23). This mosaic also

includes imagery of heavy, thick dungeon doors and nearly impenetrable passages: “ung huys gros, & massif” (20, v. 30), “l’entrée est si estroicte, & basse, / Que pour entrer faillut que me courbasse” (20, vv. 31-32). It finally features terrifying jailers pulled from mythology and the wailing and gnashing of teeth of mobs of its damned denizens: “Si rencontray Cerberus à la porte” (20, v. 26), “ung aultre vieil manoir / Tout plein de gens, de bruyt, & de tumulte” (20, vv. 34-35). The influence of Dante Alighieri’s works on Marot is generally accepted,¹⁰³ and this scene of the entry into hell is one of many examples of Marot’s borrowing from and replicating the medieval Florentine writer’s text. In his *Inferno* III, Dante’s emphasis on the racket and din of hell that can be heard through his use of the Italian *tumulto* (“Voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle, / Facevano un tumulto [...]”) is directly echoed in Marot’s use of the French *tumulte* (“un autre vieil manoir / Tout plein de gens, de bruit et de tumulte”).¹⁰⁴ Similarly, in Book XI of Homer’s *Odyssey*, Odysseus recalls the “unearthly cries” (“up out of Erebus they came, flocking toward me now, the ghosts of the dead and gone [...] thousands swarming around the trench from every side – unearthly cries – blanching terror gripped me!”). Book VI of Virgil’s *Aeneid* even uses the same Latin *tumultus* (“Aeneas miratus enim motusque tumultu”) to describe how Aeneas was “astonished, stirred by the tumult” of the “huge throng of the dead streaming towards the banks” of the river Styx “pleading” with Charon “to be the first ones ferried over.”¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Marot may have also been inspired by much more contemporary works by his

¹⁰³ Alexandre Eckhard, “L’Enfer et L’Inferno,” *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 13 (1926), 140-142.

¹⁰⁴ Florian Preisig, “L’intertexte virgilien et ses enjeux dans L’Enfer de Marot,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 57.3 (1995), 570; Eckhard, “L’Enfer et L’Inferno;” Dante, *La Divine Comédie*, trans. H. Longnon (Paris: Garnier, 1966), 22, vv. 27-28.

¹⁰⁵ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1996), 250, vv. 41-48; *L’Enéide*, trans. J. Perret, t. ii (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1978), v. 317; Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 2006), 192, vv. 348, 355, 359-360; Preisig, “L’intertexte virgilien,” 571. All English translations of the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* will be taken from Fagles’s editions cited here.

Rhétoriqueur mentors, such as Jean Lemaire de Belges's *La seconde épître de l'Amant Vert* (1511). In his *épître*, the character of Marguerite d'Autriche's parrot (the Amant Vert) descends into the animal underworld, whose chaos is described using Marot's same French *tumulte* and whose dark recesses are also described using his same *gouffre* ("chasm, abyss"): "Plus aprouchons, plus oyons de tumulte, / Qui du parfond d'un grand gouffre resulte."¹⁰⁶

In the narrative of Marot's *L'Enfer*, two groups distinguish themselves: the space of prison and its denizens – that is, other than the souls of the damned dead (his fellow prisoners), the various personnel and figures of the justice system. These two groups are conjured from the places and people of his real-life incarceration in the Châtelet. While the "voyage merveilleux" (Ariosto's Astolfo on the moon), the *monde à l'envers* (Epistémon's sojourn in hell in *Pantagruel*), and the epic descent into Hades (which is not necessarily satiric at all, but a foreshadowing of the future) are three different modes or even genres, Marot combines elements from all of them in his narrative structure.

Marot does not only state that the prison space is "*enfer*," but his "guide," the "Ministre d'Enfer" (Virgil in Dante's *Inferno*, and the god Mercury in Lemaire de Belges's *Seconde épître de l'Amant Vert*) also reiterates it by telling him "Vous ne vallez de guere mieulx au Monde, / Qu'en nostre Enfer, où toute horreur abonde" (25, vv. 201-202). After hearing the tumult of the dead, the speaker points out "qu'icy sont d'Enfer les fauxbourgs" (20, v. 40). The prison-hell is a sort of metropolis possessing its own suburbs and neighborhoods, containing the "vieil manoir" (20, v. 34) from where the clamor of the souls of the dead emanate: "ceste feste: / Laquelle sort plus rude, que tempeste. / De l'estomach' de ces gens, que tu voys: / Qui sans cesser se rompent teste, & voix" (20, vv. 41-44). When the accused Marot is eventually brought and tried, his

¹⁰⁶ Lemaire de Belges, *Les Epîtres de l'amant vert*, ed. Frappier, vv. 115-116; cited by Preisig, 571.

Minister “guide” tells him to go through an enormous iron-barred door to enter the courtroom: “cest huys barré de puissant fer” (25, v. 211). The courtroom is a terrifying, colossal, and gaping oven which burns and engulfs all who enter it: “plus enflammé, qu’une ardente fournaise” (25, v. 221). When each damned soul is summoned to be brought and tried, the sign is given and a barred gate is struck with such ferocity that the surrounding towers “of the foul place” crumble: “ung gros marteau carré / Frappe tel coup contre ung portal barré. / Qu’il faict crouler les tours du lieu infâme” (26, vv. 229-231). The architectural imagery of the gates and towers of this courtroom citadel in fact approaches the imagery of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which is more vivid and detailed, where Aeneas spots beneath a cliff to his left

[...] an enormous fortress ringed with triple walls
and raging around it all, a blazing flood of lava,
Tartarus’ River of Fire, whirling thunderous boulders.
before it rears a giant gate, its columns solid adamant,
so no power of man, not even the gods themselves
can root it out in war. An iron tower looms on high [...]
groans resound from the depths, the savage crack of the lash,
the grating creak of iron, the clank of dragging chains (200, vv. 637-648).

Marot is hinting at Virgil’s description of Tartarus, in all its frightening glory, replete with roaring rivers of lava, crashing boulders, the scraping of iron gates and shackles, and cries of pain and torment: “Ce qui nous est alors décrit correspond précisément au Tartare *stricto sensu* ou à l’Enfer chrétien, autrement dit au lieu où l’on punit. C’est ici que les similitudes sont les plus frappantes: il s’agit, dans l’un et l’autre texte, d’une sorte de forteresse flanquée d’une ou de plusieurs tours, et placée sous la juridiction de Rhadamante.”¹⁰⁷ However, unlike the hero Aeneas who simply gazes in horror at Tartarus but remains outside while the prophetess Sibyl

¹⁰⁷ Preisig, “L’intertexte virgilien,” 573.

describes it, Marot is brought to it by his “Ministre d’Enfer” guide and he enters it as a soul to be judged and punished.

Regarding the depiction of the prison’s denizens, the officers of the court, such as jailers, defense attorneys, subordinates, and clerks, are all automatically clothed in allegorical and mythological costumes, beginning with the sluggish three-headed Cerberus (“ce Chien poulsif”) stationed at the hell’s door, who may represent the Paris *prévôt* police guards at the entrance to the Châtelet when Marot first arrives. The “Ministre d’Enfer” also gestures to Minos, the “Juge infernal” who sits, physically and metaphorically, high upon a seat of justice and authority above the souls of the dead, a location from which he is capable of issuing frightening and brutal capital justice: “Hault devant eulx le grand Minos se sied, / Qui sur leurs diets ses sentences assied. / C’est luy, qui juge, ou condamne, ou deffend. / Ou taire faict, quand la teste luy fend” (20, vv. 47-50). Minos here perhaps represents one of the Châtelet judges or court clerks who processes Marot’s accusations and sends him off to be tried and sentenced. The character of Minos is also directly inherited from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which depicts how “Minos the grand inquisitor stirs the urn, / he summons the silent jury of the dead, / he scans the loves of those accused, their charges” (196, vv. 499-501). Additionally, Marot’s guide later echoes Virgil’s depiction of Minos’s and the infernal judges’ violent shrieks pronouncing their judgement and condemnation of the dead:

Minos le Juge est de cela soigneux.
 Qui devant luy, pour entendre le cas,
 Faict deschiffrer telz noysifz altercas
 Par ces crieurs: dont l’ung soubstient tout droict
 Droict contre tort: l’aulture tort contre droict:
 Et bien souvent par cautelle subtile
 Tort bien mené rend bon droict inutile (22, vv. 92-98).

When Marot's Minister "guide" leaves him to enter the scorching courtroom abyss to be sentenced, it is presided over by Rhadamanthus, "juge d'Enfer" and "juge rigoureux et inhumain." The character of Rhadamanthus is the principal, most imposing, and most loathed antagonist in Marot's allegorical depiction of his prison experience in the Châtelet, as is evidenced in the poet's description of the judge's power, arrogance, and wickedness:

[...] je trouve en une salle
 Rhadamantus (Juge assis à son aise) [...]
 Les yeulx ouverts, les oreilles biens grandes,
 Fier en parler, cauteleux en demandes.
 Rébarbatif, quand son cueur il descharge:
 Brief, digne d'estre aux Enfers en sa charge (25-26, vv. 220-221, 223-226).

Rhadamanthus is yet another figure directly inspired from Virgil's *Aeneid*, where Aeneas had asked the Sibyl about the crimes, punishments, and "wailing echoing in the air" of the souls of the dead, and the seer replied in turn that:

Here Cretan Rhadamanthus rules with an iron hand,
 censuring men, exposing fraud, forcing confessions
 when anyone up above, reveling in his hidden crimes,
 puts off his day of atonement till he dies, the fool,
 too late (201, vv. 650-652, 658-662).

Rhadamanthus certainly represents the main judge present at the Châtelet and presiding over its courtroom (*tribunal*), and he may have belonged to the inquisitory panel against heresy, of which Docteur Bouchart may have also taken part. This head judge Rhadamanthus is a pivotal figure as it is he who will subsequently hold Marot's trial and question the poet on his accusations of heresy. While a symbol of the slimy, treacherous, pompous, and big-headed religious authorities – and the Catholic Church – he is more of a charming and sweet-talking executioner, a hunter who lays out figurative traps in his clever, tricky interrogation of the souls dragged before him to

bring down upon them fiery punishment. Rhadamanthus is the expert hunter whose job is to attract and coax prey that are to be punished and damned in the fires of his hell. Marot's vision of prison is a corrupted place devoid of any Christian charity, where its prisoners are reduced to the status of hunted and trapped animals. Similar to the bird catcher in the fields who softly plays his bird call to attract and catch birds, Rhadamanthus's coaxing interrogation has the same effect on the souls of the damned brought before him. If his persuasive coercion fails to draw out a confession or admission of guilt, then he resorts to corporal coercion: "Si tel' douceur luy faict rien confesser, / Rhadamantus la faict pendre, ou fesser" (27, vv. 271-272).

Rhadamanthus, in his haughty and serious tone, demands Marot's name, background, and occupation: "[...] d'ung accent impératif, & grave / Me demandant ma naissance, & mon nom, / Et mon estat" (28, vv. 306-308). The nature and format of the judicial proceedings and trial allow the accused Marot to take back the advantage from the formidable Rhadamanthus through skilled rhetorical maneuvering and eloquence. He places himself on a self-glorified pedestal of a resolute martyr through a winding testimony that highlights his background, accomplishments, and intellectual, psychological, and poetic journey.¹⁰⁸ His response aims to valorize and vindicate his occupation, poet and humble *valet de chambre* to an enlightened, divine Princess:

C'est du franc Lys l'yssue Marguerite,
Grande sur terre, envers le Ciel petite:
C'est la Princesse à l'esprit inspiré,
Au cueur esleu, qui de Dieu est tiré
Mieux (& m'en croys) que le festu de l'Ambre:
Et d'elle suis l'humble Valet de chambre.
C'est mon estat, ô Juge Plutonique (31, vv. 417-423).

¹⁰⁸ La Charité, "Couraige et invention," 265.

Marot also places his protectors and powerful guardians on a glorified pedestal to affirm his *occupation* and turn the tables against the imposing judge Rhadamanthus. He plays upon Marguerite d'Angoulême's name, *marguerite* ("daisy") to make a topical allusion and imply that the princess is both woman and flower, the princess (best) of the flowers. Marot also alludes to another flower, the "Lys" ("lily"), which in the *fleur-de-lis* is the traditional symbol of the French monarchy to which she belongs. In doing so, he seeks to affirm her sympathies with the religious reform movement, thus proving that if he is to be accused of being a heretic, his friends in high places are also heretics and to be accused. At the very least, Marot inserts his own reformed beliefs by referring to her "elected heart" (*cœur élu*). Such terms reference the doctrine of divine "election," but while not all Protestants believed in this doctrine, Marot seems to adhere to it in depicting Marguerite as sought after and chosen by God (as one picks a flower in a field) to be taken away from the mortal prison of the terrestrial world.¹⁰⁹

In his rhetorical positioning against the threat of Rhadamanthus's inquisition, Marot delineates two groups of enemies and allies, which alludes to his actual struggle to find protectors and benefactors to support and take him on as a court poet. The unrighteous and miserable spirits, hellish souls, and all the denizens of hell are malefactors who dwell in this space: "Umbres iniques" (28, v. 311), "malheureuses Umbres" (32, v. 472), "Ames Plutoniques" (28, v. 312), "Les Infernaux" (33, v. 476). They wish Marot's eternal agony and damnation in hell, and by association, his torture, imprisonment, and ruin in the Châtelet prison. On the contrary, the celestial spirits, angelic souls, the king of the gods Jupiter – designating king François I –, the goddess of wisdom Minerva – alluding to Marguerite –, and the mother of the gods Cybele – indicating the queen-Regent Louise de Savoie – all step forward as his guarantors

¹⁰⁹ *L'Adolescence clementine*, ed. Lestringant, 382.

and powerful protectors, whose favor and safety he enjoys: “Umbres Celiques” (28, v. 315), “[Ames] Angeliques” (28, v. 316), “sa Sœur Pallas [...] la si sage, & si belle” (28, vv. 320-321), “la prudente Cybelle, / Mere du grand Juppiter amyable” (28, vv. 322-323). Marot additionally enumerates a cast of sea divinities and fauns, nymphs, and fairies of the meadows who he can call upon for protection: “En la mer [...] des plus haultz Dieux, / Jusqu’aux Tritons, & jusqu’aux Nereïdes” (28, vv. 326-327), “En terre aussi des Faunes, & Hymnides / [...] De mainte Nymphé, & mainte noble Fée” (28, vv. 328, 330). He ends his list of illustrious guarantors with nearly all mythological and historical characters associated with charm and magic, with the power of music, singing, or rhyme, and with the beautiful speech, poetry, or song, such as the musician Orpheus, the god of shepherds and flocks Pan, his wife and nymph Aglaea and their Satyr companions, the sea nymph Galatea, the Virgilian shepherd Tityre, the nine Muses, Apollo, Mercury, and all their gifted children: “gentil Pan, qui les flustes manie (28, v. 331), “Églé, qui danse au son de l’harmonie / Quand elle voyt les Satyres suyvants” (28-29, vv. 332-333), “De Galathée, & de tous les [Sylvans]” (29, v. 334), “Jusqu’à Tityre, & ses brebis camuses” (29, v. 335), “des neuf Muses, Et d’Apollo, Mercure, & tous leurs filz. / En vraye amour, & science conficts” (29, vv. 336-338).

Marot pivots next to a valorization and vindication of his full name, for which he defends himself by employing the judicial language of his accusers against them. By playing upon and calling into question the power of words’ (real or false) meanings, he can force Rhadamanthus and the judges of hell on the back foot. Attacking straight away the cause of his damnation (and by association, his accusation and imprisonment) and distilling it down to a one-word identity, “Luthériste,” as he does in his *épître* to Docteur Bouchart, Marot defiantly insists that he is wrongly smeared as a Lutheran, because his very name, if he is not mistaken, is that of the

largest enemy of Lutheranism, Pope Clement VII (1523-1534), head of the Catholic Church that bitterly opposes the Reformation:

Car tu es rude, & mon nom est Clement:
 Et pour monstrier, qu'à grand tort on me triste,
 Clement n'est point le nom de Lutheriste:
 Ains est le nom (à bien l'interpreter)
 Du plus contraire ennemy de Luther:
 C'est le saint nom du Pape, qui accolle
 Les chiens d'Enfer (s'il luy plaist) d'une estolle.
 Le crains tu point? C'est celluy qui afferme,
 Qu'il ouvre Enfer, quand il veult, & le ferme:
 Celluy, qui peult en feu chaud martyrer
 Cent mille esprits, ou les en retirer (29, vv. 348-358).

Marot also utilizes the referential power of first names: he playfully and ironically teases that from an ideological and lexical perspective it is impossible to be simultaneously Clement and Lutheran, and to be a Catholic or Papist and a Reformer. He also entices Rhadamanthus and the judges to reconsider their logic by stating “à bien interpréter:” insinuating that their interpretation is incorrect.¹¹⁰ Marot quickly turns to indulge in the more apocalyptic sentiments among those in the reform movement, notably to antagonize the Pope as the Antichrist ruler of the pagan and satanic Babylon (Rome). The wicked Pope welcomes the hounds of hell (demons) in his priestly garments, opens and closes hell at his whim, and either sends souls to hell (by executing heretics at the pyre) or spares them through the bogus dogmatic concept of Purgatory, and its bogus corollary, the practice of paying indulgences.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ La Charité, “*Courage et invention*,” 266-267.

¹¹¹ *L'Adolescence clementine*, ed. Lestringant, 380-381.

As for his last name, Marot swells himself with confidence and renown by forging links of poetic genius and creation with Virgil, with whom he shares a phonetically similar surname, (Publius Vergilius) Maro, and which Marot proclaims as a fact as true as the biblical Gospel:

Quant au surnom, aussi vray qu’Evangille,
 Il tire à cil du Poëte Vergille,
 Jadis cheri de Mecenas à Romme:
 Maro s’appelle, & Marot je me nomme,
 Marot je suis, & Maro ne suis pas,
 Il n’en fut oncq depuis le sien trespas:
 Mais puis qu’avons ung vray Mecenas ores,
 Quelque Maro nous pourrons veoir encores (29, vv. 359-366).

Marot continues to debate the weaknesses of words and their meanings with a quizzical take on the plays on words between his (Marot) and Virgil’s (Maro) surnames. By citing the Roman author’s patron, the politician Maecenas, he may allude to his own history and quest for patronage and support – that is, the support yet to be had (from king François I).

Towards the end of his discourse, Marot finally valorizes and glorifies his background by elaborating the idyllic, bucolic paradise of his hometown of Cahors in Quercy. This lush and fertile homeland of his youth takes the form of a beautiful orchard of copious letters: “Le beau verger des lettres plantureux / Nous reproduict ses fleurs, & grands jonchées” (29-30, vv. 368-369). The image of the orchard, of course, evokes the traditional literary *topos* of the *locus amoenus* – an idealized place of safety or comfort – likely inspired by classical sources:

Entends apres (quant au poinct de mon estre)
 Que vers Midy les haults Dieux m’ont faict naistre:
 Où le Soleil non trop excessif est;
 Parquoy la terre avec honneur s’y vest
 De mille fruits, de mainte fleur, & plante:
 Bacchus aussi sa bonne vigne y plante
 Par art subtil sur montaignes pierreuses
 Rendants liqueurs fortes, & savoureuses.

Mainte fontaine y murmure, & undoye.
 Et en tous temps le Laurier y verdoye
 Pres de la vigne: ainsi comme dessus
 Le double mont des Muses Parnassus;
 Dont s'esbahyst la mienne fantasie,
 Que plus d'Espritz de noble Poësie
 N'en sont yssuz. Au lieu, que je declaire,
 Le fleuve Lot coule son eaue peu claire.
 Qui maints rochers traverse, & environne,
 Pour s'aller joindre au droict fil de Garonne.
 A brief parler, c'est Cahors en Quercy,
 Que je laissay [...] (30, vv. 377-396).

The idealized space and *locus amoenus* of the orchard can in fact be traced back to the biblical paradise of Eden: a perfect land before mankind's original sin. Marot's description of the Eden of his youth in Cahors in Quercy is precisely a "nouvel avatar de ce lieu commun," a "paysage vallonné, viticole, pierreux, ensoleillé" where the sun is soft and warm, the waters of the streams and rivers seem to sing, and the earth produces fruits, flowers, plants, and grapevines for wine in abundance that is only rivalled in comparison by the mythological Mount Parnassus.¹¹² Marot, however, also likely took more strong inspiration from Virgil's *Aeneid* and its description of the *locus amoenus* of the bucolic countryside of the realm of the joyful in the Greco-Roman underworld, the mythical "heaven" of Elysium, which Aeneas enters with the Sibyl:

They gained the land of joy, the fresh green fields,
 The Fortunate Groves where the blessed make their homes.
 Here a freer air, a dazzling radiance clothes the fields
 And the spirits possess their own sun, their own stars.
 Some flex their limbs in the grassy wrestling-rings,
 Contending in sport, they grapple on the golden sands [...]
 He glimpses left and right in the meadows, feasting,
 Singing in joy a chorus raised to Healing Apollo,
 Deep in a redolent laurel grove where Eridanus River
 Rushes up, in full spate, and rolls through woods
 In the high world above [...]

¹¹² Preisig, "L'intertexte virgilien," 574-575.

And now Aeneas sees in the valley's depths
 A sheltered grove and rustling wooded brakes
 And the Lethe flowing past the homes of peace.
 Around it hovered numberless races, nations of souls
 Like bees in meadowlands on a cloudless summer day
 That settle on flowers, riots of color, swarming round
 The lilies' lustrous sheen, and the whole field comes alive
 With a humming murmur (203-205, vv. 741-746, 760-764, 812-819).

Two identical details can be immediately drawn from Virgil's and Marot's text: the tranquil murmuring sound and the presence of laurel plants: "strepit omnis *murmure* campus" and "Mainte fontaine y murmure" (30, v. 385), "inter odoratum *lauri* nemus" and "en tous temps le Laurier y verdoye" (30, v. 386).¹¹³ Laurel, mythological symbol of poets and writers who were bestowed crowns of its leaves, is aptly acknowledged by Marot in his following verses, as laurel grows at the foot of famous Mount Parnassus, home to the Muses, the divine inspiration of the arts and letters: "[...] ainsi comme dessus / Le double mont des Muses Parnassus" (30, vv. 387-388). It is worth revisiting that Marot's idyllic homeland is a fertile land of letters and poetic art: "Le beau verger des lettres plantureux" (29, v. 368). The sage king François I himself had foreseen to cultivate this land for him for the growing of writing: "le Roy François premier du nom, / Dont le sçavoir excède le renom" (31, vv. 405-406). The king cultivated the country for the encouragement and protection of writers, the service of learning, and the "truth:" "O Roy heureux, soubz lequel sont entrés / (Presque perys) les lettres, & Lettrés" (30, vv. 375-376), "Qui hault sçavoir persecute, & destourbe" (30, v. 372), "Que vérité ne veult, ou peult entendre" (30, v. 374). This latter can be interpreted as a sign of Marot's evangelist enterprise – as shown in his earlier *épître* to Lyon Jamet or François I – to signify the "truth" of the Word of God as it is

¹¹³ *L'Enéide*, trans. J. Perret, vi (Paris: Belles Lettres: 1977), vv. 658, 709. All Latin citations will be taken from Perret's editions.

written in the Gospel, too often obfuscated, and the power and freedom that knowledge (of it) brings in combatting ignorance (of it).¹¹⁴ This Eden or Elysium of letters gives birth to poets such as Marot, and it gives birth to noble Poetry: “Que plus d’Espritz de noble Poësie / N’en sont yssuz” (30, vv. 390-391).

In the final portion of his discourse, Marot focuses upon king François I, whom he has previously praised and glorified by referring to him as the king of the gods “Jupiter” and the lettered king and champion of knowledge. The last in his sort of triptych of comparisons, Marot now envisions François I as Jesus Christ by associating the French king’s own captivity in Madrid under the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, after he had been captured following his defeat at the battle of Pavia, and the king’s subsequent liberation as a form of Passion of Christ:

Or suis je loing de ma Dame, & Princesse,
 Et pres d’ennuy, d’infortune, & destresse:
 Or suis je loing de sa tresclaire face.
 S’elle fust pres (ô cruel) ton audace
 Pas ne se feust mise en effort de prendre
 Son serviteur, qu’on n’a point veu mesprendre:
 Mais tu voys bien (dont je lamente, & pleure)
 Qu’elle s’en va (helas), & je demeure
 Avec Pluton, & Charon nautonnier:
 Elle va veoir ung plus grand prisonnier.
 Sa noble mere ores elle accompagne
 Pour retirer nostre Roy hors d’Espaigne,
 Que je souhaite en ceste compaignie
 Avec ta layde & obscure mesgnie:
 Car ta prison liberté luy seroit,
 Et, comme CHRIST, les Ames poulseroit
 Hors des Enfers, sans t’en laisser une Umbre:
 En ton advis, seroys je poinct du nombre?
 S’ainsi estoit, & la mere, & la fille
 Retourneraient, sans qu’Espaigne, & Castille
 D’elles receust les filz au lieu du pere (31-32, vv. 427-447).

¹¹⁴ Screech, *Marot évangélique*, 74-75, cited by La Charité, “*Courage et invention*,” 266.

The king equally descends into hell (representing the king's Spanish captivity) as Christ did following his death on the cross (the king's capture at Pavia), and triumphantly and majestically ascends out of hell (the king's liberation and return to France) to offer salvation to believers like Marot (the king's ability by royal decree to free the poet from his Châtelet imprisonment). As Preisig formulates it, "le roi est investi d'un statut quasi christique qui subordonne la vie du royaume et celle du poète à un ordre supérieur, transcendant. En somme, l'incarcération au Châtelet correspond en quelque sorte à la Passion du roi (retenu par les Espagnols), et la libération promise à l'ouverture des portes de l'Enfer pendant les trois jours."¹¹⁵ Marot's final rhetorical gesture is to situate himself as a sinner damned in hell (a prisoner in prison), who feels powerless away from God (his court protectors), and who awaits grace and salvation (liberation) from an arisen Christ (a liberated king François I) aided by other divine entities: the king's sister and his "lady," Marguerite d'Angoulême, and the king's mother, the queen-Regent Louise de Savoie.

Marot juxtaposes good with evil through a dichotomy of "her" and "yours" (through the French possessive adjectives *sa/son* vs. *ton/ta*). This dichotomy is also present through his allies, the mother and daughter pair Louise and Marguerite, and the infernal judge, Rhadamanthus. While for Marguerite, it is "sa tresclaire face" (31, v. 429) and "son serviteur" (31, v. 432), and for Louise, it is "Sa noble mere" (32, v. 437), for Rhadamanthus, it is "ton audace" (31, v. 430), "ta layde & obscure mesgnie" (32, v. 440), and "ta prison" (32, v. 441). As he writes earlier, Marguerite represents to Marot the only good that fortune had reserved for him in this world and life: "Rien n'ay acquis des valeurs de ce Monde" (31, v. 413). The chiasmic structure and break in verse of "[...] Et pres d'ennuy, d'infortune, & destresse: Or suis je loing de sa tresclaire face"

¹¹⁵ Preisig, "L'intertexte virgilien," 582.

(31, vv. 428-429) signals that her absence and separation from him is corollary to his misfortune and imprisonment,¹¹⁶ given that *ennui* here signifies his reduction in liberty and movement, and not necessarily “boredom” in its Modern French sense.

Perhaps the greatest value and power of the rhetorical positioning of Marot’s dialogue in response to questioning by Rhadamanthus is that it appears to mimic an actual trial. With proceedings surviving in writing in the form of court records’ notary minutes, the steps of a sixteenth-century trial can generally be distinguished, in turn enabling the reader to envision what a real trial interrogation looked like in France. First came the *mise en accusation* of one or a group of accused by a decree, with or without bodily seizure, and their *interrogatoire* under oath without intervention by the judge, who was limited to chronologically arranging the evidence without the presence of a lawyer. Next followed *l’instruction*, a secret, written, and inquisitory step of efficiently researching the infractions, primarily undertaken by the judge, given the weakness of any form of a police force at the time. *L’instruction* first included reviewing statements: the bailiff read to each witness his deposition and asked him under oath if he confirms or wishes to change it.¹¹⁷ The accused then confronted each of the witnesses, where the accused can formulate “*reproches*,” that is, to indicate why he suspects each and every witness brought against him an inadmissible testimony (for example, due to lies, family ties to the victim, old grudges, or because the witness is “*de mauvaise vie*”), which would annul the witness’s deposition that, either way, is always read to the accused.¹¹⁸ Eventually comes “*l’affrontation*”

¹¹⁶ Preisig, “L’intertexte virgilien,” 582.

¹¹⁷ Benoît Garnot, *Justice et société en France aux XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Ophrys, 2000), 107.

¹¹⁸ Garnot, *Justice et société en France*, 107-108.

when two of the accused who had given contradicting versions of the evidence are placed together, which comes down to the *ministère public*'s written conclusions and the accused's plaintiff drafted by a lawyer.¹¹⁹ The final step is the court's *jugement* behind closed doors, prior to which is conducted "*la visite*," or the examining of all the parts of the case file, listening to the *juge instructeur*'s remarks on these parts' relationship to one another, and reading the *ministère public*'s sealed and stamped conclusions that had been previously delivered. Then a final *interrogatoire* of the accused is conducted, and in the rarest of cases, the application of preliminary torture. The accused can resort to a "*preuve des faits justificatifs*" to propose the accusation's falsehood, such as hearing new witnesses or pleading self-defense or insanity, and if the judges find this evidence "*pertinents et admissibles*," a new *instruction* is conducted. If not, the sentence is pronounced assenting to the majority of the judges' votes on the *ministère public*'s conclusions, proof, legal precedent, and eventually any royal decrees that apply to the charged crime.¹²⁰ While *L'Enfer* does not contain clear references to these elements of the trial, Marot may have drawn upon his own experience of the "*interrogatoires*," "*reproches*," and "*preuves des faits justificatifs*" when composing his rebuttal to Rhadamanthus.

In portraying his defiance, yet also victimization, in his interrogation by Rhadamanthus, Marot may have also been influenced by the emergence of heresy martyr histories intended for the edification and fortification of the faithful, in a sort of reshaping of the early Christian tradition, notably found in the works of Jean Crespin later in the century. Crespin's histories emphasized the power of martyrs' heroic messages, rather than their heroic torturing and executions, in the communal survival against persecution, thereby shifting the emphasis from the

¹¹⁹ Garnot, *Justice et société en France*, 108.

¹²⁰ Garnot, 109.

tangible (martyrs' bodies on the pyre or chained in jail) to the discursive (martyrs' inspirational speeches)."¹²¹ While the chronology of the publication of Crespin's histories (1554) may not correlate with Marot's time in prison (1526), his histories do feature the earliest handful of "Lutherans" burned by order of the Paris Parliament in the 1520s, the earliest official executions for heresy in Paris during the 1530s and in the wake of the Affaire des Placards in 1534-1535.¹²² Their accounts likely existed and were spread through less formal mediums, or by word of mouth, which may have also influenced Marot and constituted an influence on the depiction of his interrogation by Rhadamanthus if he had learned of them.

Recorded interrogations (*plumitifs*) attest French judges engaging in discussion with their prisoners during heresy trials, similar to the exchange between Rhadamanthus and Marot depicted in *L'Enfer*. These discussions mostly involved theologically untrained lay judges asking relatively straightforward questions to lay prisoners, with neither side trying to develop elaborate theological positions, instead attempting to establish degrees of guilt among their heresy prisoners: their primary concern in a system of arbitrary justice which gave them enormous latitude in passing sentences.¹²³ For example, judges asked why heretical prisoners had renounced God to a certain Jean Hyllard at the Rouen Parliament in 1552, who then replied that he had no memory of ever renouncing God, or that he might have drunkenly done so in error. Questions were also often sequential. At the same Rouen trial, a local clothier named Mandin le Roy was asked about the Eucharist, who replied that it was not his business to talk about it, then

¹²¹ William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 180; Jean Crespin, *Histoire des martyrs persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l'Évangile*, ed. D. Benoît. vol. 1 (Paris: 1883), xxxiii-xxxv.

¹²² Monter, *Heresy Trials*, 181-182.

¹²³ Monter, 199.

about Christ's body (referring to the debate on transubstantiation), replying that he believed what St. John wrote in his Gospel about it, and finally about what exactly St. John had wrote about it, waffled a reply that he is no cleric but believes what the Church said about it.¹²⁴ These *plumitifs* reveal that most heretical prisoners displayed some degree of repentance, evasiveness, or both under interrogation.

Through the long dialogue he structures at the end of *L'Enfer*, Marot rhetorically turns the table on the judges who wish to push him down into the submissive position of a criminal or prisoner, and worse, as an alien or exile in his own country. His narrative is made even more powerful by the use of a first-person perspective and pronouns (*je*) to directly and personally refute his categorizations and submission.¹²⁵ In his dialogue, Marot incessantly attacks his accusers from the start, because although he may find himself physically imprisoned in the fiery crucible of Rhadamanthus's Tartarus courtroom in the depths of hell, or by association in the bowels of the Châtelet prison, he liberates himself spiritually and psychologically through his speech to the judge. A form of "dramatized self-introduction," the poet's biographical details serve to affirm the power of his poem and of the poetic form.¹²⁶ As he gradually proclaims his presence and personality, Marot is able to take back his deserved and righteous place in the natural order of life. Meanwhile, poetry, this "noble Poésie" handed down from the Muses of Mont Parnassus, is vindicated and empowered as a literary form and vehicle of resistance in the

¹²⁴ Monter, *Heresy Trials*, 200.

¹²⁵ "Bien que le Tribunal s'efforce d'imposer son autorité et cherche à le figer dans son rôle de prisonnier et d'accusé, le *je* autobiographique refuse de se considérer comme exilé dans son propre pays; c'est pour cela qu'il cède le pas dès le début à la *persona* du poète et à une puissance supérieure." La Charité, "*Courage et invention*," 265.

¹²⁶ Robert Griffin, *Clément Marot and the Inflections of Poetic Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 131; La Charité, 265.

face of denizens of hell (“les Infernaux”) and any nefarious language of discord, persecution, or oppression.

L’Enfer, for all its complexities and layers of allegory and artifice, is at its core an autobiographical recollection of Marot’s experience of imprisonment. Its autobiographical elements can and should be extracted and valorized among its mockery and satire of the greater body of the social, political, and religious system of Marot’s Early Modern period in the form of a *monde à l’envers* space and fantastical voyage: a descent into the kingdom of the dead. While Marot allegorizes the trauma of his imprisonment and torture in the Châtelet, liberty appears in the form of the orchard of the Elysium-and-Eden-like Cahors *locus amoenus* of his childhood. Marot transposes the language of imprisonment onto the Christian context, and he takes up his evangelical enterprise to not only reject the heretical accusation of “eating meat” during Lent, but also to contrast the prison of his earthly, mortal life, for which he is being judged in the hellish courtroom of Rhadamanthus, with the freedom of eternal life in heaven. Marot interprets his spatial relocation from the *locus amoenus* of his native Cahors to the Châtelet in the heart of Paris as one from liberty to captivity: employing further semantic plays on words, he states that he followed “Le Roy des francs” (31, v. 424), the “king of the Franks” and also of the frank (free). It can be strongly suggested that Marot decried his imprisonment in the Châtelet as unnatural and against nature as a “frank” (free) man and servant of the French king in the Kingdom of the “Franks” (free). The figure of the king also evokes Marot’s sense of equality and duty. Since his king and master François I was held captive at the same time in Madrid, as his servant, he should remain in prison as well: “Mais quand je pense à si grand impropere. / Qu’est il besoing, que soye en liberté. / Puis, qu’en prison mon Roy est arresté?” (32, vv. 448-450). Marot reinforces comparisons of François I to Christ undergoing the Passion in his Spanish

captivity. As a faithful Christian, he must therefore suffer and be imprisoned just like his Savior, echoing Christ's words that "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."¹²⁷ *L'Enfer* reflects Marot's evangelical enterprise of fashioning a poem into a vessel to not only spread the divine truth, but also to bolster communities of the persecuted by drawing upon the heroic words, and not necessarily the actions, of martyrs during their heresy trials. This rhetorical mode provides a recipe for strength under interrogation should any believer be brought in front of the authorities or face the pyre. The auto-diegetic *je* pronouns in Marot's dramatization of his trial and interrogation by Rhadamanthus are proof of the importance he placed on incorporating a referential dimension in his prison poetry. Just as with Charles d'Orléans and Villon, Marot viewed this referential dimension as an effective tool of resistance to proclaim not only his innocence of the religious charges brought against him, but also his vitality in prison and to vindicate his self, his existence, and his being.

V. Conclusion

In the progression and transformation of prison poetry from Charles d'Orléans to François Villon and now to Clément Marot, and from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the place of reference and autobiography continues to emerge as an integral part of the genre. Experience, inherently subjective, is never identical and exists in countless forms, even in the light of common or shared material conditions. Nonetheless, the nature of these prisoner-poets' writing remains ambivalent and elusive, and simply analyzing it as evidence of autobiography or

¹²⁷ Biblical passage in which Jesus instructs his disciples to put aside all selfish desires and plans, and to willingly to undergo the severe trials that befall them, in order to follow him and do his will. It is derived from "a figurative expression taken from the practice that condemned criminals were compelled to take up their own cross and carry it to the place of execution." Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23.

reference presents its limitations. Similarly, it is important to put into perspective what we know about the lived experience of Marot and the other prisoner-poets in my study, especially given the familiar Romantic myth that poetry is fueled by the poet's lived pain, which "enhances the readiness to use history to account for a poem whose themes are precisely the pain of living and experience."¹²⁸ Despite the fact that the "broken, discontinuous surface" of Marot's text, much like that of Villon, contains an abundance of references, it frustratingly is "the very lines that seem to fairly bristle with referentiality that are the hardest to read in historical terms."¹²⁹ In this sense, the "apparently referential content" of many of Marot's verses, which "leads readers to locate the voice within historical circumstance" can simply be a "complementary means of representing lived experience" that his poems attribute to the poetic *je*.¹³⁰ As autobiography and the referential dimension become more prominent in prison writing, and in particular in prison poetry, each textual carceral narrative implies an interpretation of a different kind and a different cogitation on the matter. The relationship between experience and cognition, experience and interpretation, and experience and perspective all crucially intertwine towards a greater understanding of why the prisoner turns to poetic writing, and why poetic literary activity is produced by constraint. This relationship will be seen in greater detail moving into the seventeenth century, where French prisoner-poets such as Théophile de Viau no longer decided to clothe their accounts of imprisonment in any sort of mythology or fable, but instead opted to present it as an open-faced diary of all their emotions, their psychological and physical suffering, and their observations of the physical environment of their prison cell.

¹²⁸ Regalado, "*Effet de réel, Effet du réel*," 68.

¹²⁹ Regalado, 69.

¹³⁰ Regalado, 76.

CHAPTER FOUR. THÉOPHILE DE VIAU: PERSUASIVE AND AFFECTIVE APPEAL

I. Introduction

As we have seen with Villon and Marot, Théophile's prison poetry (re-)affirms that religious censorship and clerical persecution served as a catalyst for the emergence of French Early Modern prison literature.¹³¹ Théophile composed twelve texts during his imprisonment that were produced in a relatively brief period from January 1624 until September 1625. Given permission to read and write in his cell, Théophile describes his experience as nearly six months "without light or fire."¹³² These texts consist of standalone prose works in pamphlet form such as his "Apologie de Théophile" and "Apologie au Roi," one in Latin,¹³³ "Theophilus in carcere," and also verse works in ode or epistolary form such as his "Lettre de Théophile à son frère." In her study, Rivkah Zim draws striking parallels between the prison poetry of Théophile de Viau and Charles d'Orléans. Both Théophile and Charles respond to their different conditions in imprisonment by composing lyric verses for similar strategic reasons with comparable themes and tactics.¹³⁴ Théophile, like Charles, uses poetry to plea for his liberation and to overturn, in his own time and for perpetuity through the immortality of his literary fame, the power structures that had controlled and confined him. To do so, like the fifteenth-century duke, Théophile speaks

¹³¹ Like Thibaut d'Assigny for Villon and Nicolas (Docteur) Bouchart for Marot, a singular ecclesiastical figure who assumed religious authority prosecuted Théophile during his trial, le Père François Garasse.

¹³² Théophile obtained this permission through a hunger strike that nearly cost his life. Michèle Rosellini, "Écrire de sa prison: L'expérience de Théophile de Viau," *Les Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques* 39 (2007): 2.

¹³³ An adept pamphleteer, Théophile likely composed this work in Latin as a rhetorical strategy to better plead his case and "stand eye to eye" with Church authorities rather than in the French vernacular, given that the Church decreed and published its accusations against him in its official ecclesiastical language, Latin.

¹³⁴ Zim, "'La nuit trouve enfin la clarté,'" 106.

to named first readers, aims to secure the attention of powerful patrons, and renews the commitment of sympathetic friends to his cause.¹³⁵ In his prison poetry, Théophile seeks to publicize his plight to secure his freedom and save his life. He addresses verse epistles and other poetic forms (sonnets, odes, elegies, appeals, requests, and petitions) composed in prison, later published in 1625, to actual and potential supporters. His poems also convey what Max Saunders terms as representations of selfhood. According to Saunders, as a prisoner, Théophile made himself knowable (to his readers), and “produced himself,” as poet and author, as a “subject of knowledge” to his readers through his life writing.¹³⁶ This knowledge and authority of the prisoner’s experience was also a factor in the concerted pamphlet war in which his friends sought to bring the charges against him into the open and discredit the witnesses who might be brought to testify against his character, his writing, and his ideas.¹³⁷

Théophile’s poems request a response in actions or in words and reminds their recipients of social ties and human relationships. The poems also implies the poet’s retribution if these actions or words should not be forthcoming.¹³⁸ Such rhetoric formed a significant part of Théophile’s strategy of self-preservation, such as in “Requête de Théophile au Roi,” an appeal to king Louis XIII, and “Requête de Théophile à Nosseigneurs de Parlement,” an appeal to judicial officers of the Paris Parliament. Both poems demonstrate the discursive role of ostentatious flattery and ambiguous indignation embedded in the client-protector or client-patron relationships maintained by the poet. Théophile’s prison verse also expressed his appreciation of

¹³⁵ Zim, ““La nuit trouve enfin la clarté’,” 82.

¹³⁶ Saunders, *Self-Impression*, 502, 507; Zim, 92.

¹³⁷ Zim, 99.

¹³⁸ Zim, 98.

his remaining friends and family and encouraged their efforts on his behalf. “Lettre de Théophile à son frère” conveys, according to Zim, “hope in the power of brotherly love, and faith in the consoling logic of a divinely ordered world in which nothing stays the same,”¹³⁹ and “Théophile à son ami Chiron” thanks the doctor that attended to his illness later in his incarceration while weighing the political and romantic fallout of past relationships. “La Pénitence de Théophile” rekindles the link between prison and consolation, following the tradition established by Boethius. Similar to Saint Augustine’s *Confessions*, it takes the form of a conversion narrative in which he claims to embark on a new path and life. Yet, Augustinian repentance and regret is absent, which additionally underscores the role of confession, conversion, and penitence as a means to free oneself from the “inside” of prison and rejoin the “outside” of the rest of society.¹⁴⁰ The “Remontrance de Théophile à Monsieur de Vertamont Conseiller en la grand’ Chambre” constitutes another form of poetic political lobbying. It avoids flattering verse and opts for a playful irony, a slipperiness of tone, and an ambiguity of referents.¹⁴¹ It also emphasizes the powerful metaphor of springtime’s natural beauty and rejuvenation, privileging Théophile’s use of an outwardly-autobiographical, lyrical *je* to affirm his authorial individualism.

In order to highlight the heightened dimension of personal experience in Théophile’s prison poetry as a form of life writing, I will first situate the poet’s association with the libertine movement. I aim to demonstrate that Théophile’s poems were specific and moving representations (or portraits) of selfhood that he artfully constructed, drawing their rhetorical

¹³⁹ Zim, ““La nuit trouve enfin la clarté,” 102.

¹⁴⁰ This contested dynamic of “interiority” and “exteriority” is found in Gaston Bachelard’s juxtaposition of “interior” and “exterior” movements, and is mirrored in both Marot’s and Villon’s longing to be with the outside world and society again. Bachelard, *La poétique de l’espace*, 15-16.

¹⁴¹ Zim, 96.

power and effect from the authority of his (the prisoner's) experience, to be used in his efforts to secure his release and save his life. My chapter will also examine his poetry as a form of auto-defense and apologetics relating to systematic argumentative discourse, especially on the subject of theology. To better situate specific trends in Théophile's prison poetry, we will refer to some of his earlier works *Première Partie* (1621) and *Seconde Partie* (1623) of his *Œuvres*, including the play *Les amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* (1623), which preemptively demonstrates themes of confinement and abuse of authority by figures of power to determine whether it reveals a relationship of continuity, but also of rupture. My analysis will also underline the extent of Théophile's lyric self-representations, examining how the use of flattery, pity, and *quid pro quo* menacing were all effective strategies of self-preservation and lobbying. I intend to locate and determine how Théophile's poetic self-imaging was a regrouping of intellectual, political, and aesthetic objectives and was an act of resistance, composing verse against his Jesuit oppressors' ideas of his personal and political identity, confirming in the process his values of free thought and expression, and recording an impression of his personal integrity.

II. Autobiography and the Authority of the Prisoner's Experience

As with each writer in my study, Théophile's prison poetry raises the difficult question whether his works were autobiographical in nature and intention. In some aspects, his affirmations can be interpreted literally, such as in its objectives of lobbying for assistance and encouraging others to work for his release. His self-identification and first-person perspective as author-narrator in his *je* also appears straightforward. However, the layers of rhetorical and artful composition in his poems, addressed to specific recipients, complicate a clear understanding of

his intention(s) (whether singular or multiple). His Jesuit prosecutors, Père Garasse,¹⁴² Coton,¹⁴³ and others, took his works, notably his *Parnasse satyrique* (1622), to be reflective of his personal conduct to form the basis of their two charges against him, “atheism” and “lechery.”¹⁴⁴ Joan DeJean remarks that autobiography, similar to other literary genres such as the novel, memoir, or essay, can be artfully manipulated to be fluid and move about in the “open, unregulated, and delimited space of textuality” where, especially in the instance of Théophile’s persecution, contradiction proves advantageous.¹⁴⁵ Stéphane Van Damme also underlines the double-edged reality of (intentional) autobiographical identification in Théophile’s works: employing *je* both condemns him, giving his accusers proof of his *libertinage*, and presents a rhetorical opportunity to construct his argument and strategy of self-defense.¹⁴⁶ He represents himself through imagery

¹⁴² Père François Garasse (1585-1631), published numerous attacks on anti-Jesuit publications, notably Étienne Pasquier’s *Recherches de la France* (1596). Described as “something of a professional troll,” Garasse immediately broadened his scope to target “libertinism:” by this he meant in general a lacking commitment to the partisan spirit and decorum of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, but more specifically the broad and tolerant literary culture that had been Pasquier’s calling card. Garasse notably expanded his attack on “libertinism” in *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps, ou prétendus tels* (1623), whose main target was Théophile. Étienne Pasquier. *The Jesuits’ Catechism or Their Doctrine Examined* (1602), trans. Patricia M. Ranum and eds. Robert A. Maryks and Jotham Parsons (Brill: Leiden, 2021), xxii.

¹⁴³ Pierre Coton (1564-1626) was Henry IV’s first confessor. His career is considered in many ways emblematic of France’s turning towards Counter-Reformation, forging a durable bond between the crown and the French Jesuits. Nicole Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience: Royal Confessors and Political Counsel in Seventeenth-Century Spain and France* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016), 158, 327.

¹⁴⁴ For instance, Théophile’s accusers took out of context a passage from his *Première Journée* to use as an incriminating document (“Il faut avoir de la passion non seulement pour les hommes de vertu, pour les belles femmes, mais aussi pour toutes sortes de belles choses [...]”). Garasse interpreted “love for all types of things” as inciting “l’amour libre,” denouncing Théophile’s lecherous words in his *Apologie [...] pour son livre contre les Athéistes et Libertins de notre siècle* as a “proposition brutale, contraire au texte de l’Evangile. Nostre Seigneur dit qu’il ne faut pas regarder une femme pour désirer sa beauté, et Théophile de Viau passe bien au-delà du désir, car il va jusques à la passion, et dit qu’il faut avoir de la passion pour la beauté des femmes et toutes choses belles.” Joan DeJean, “Une autobiographie en procès. L’affaire Théophile de Viau,” *Poétique* 48 (1981), 435, 439; *Apologie du P.F. Garassus [...] pour son livre contre les Athéistes et Libertins de notre Siècle et réponse aux censures et calomnies de l’Auteur Anonyme* (Paris: S. Chappelet, 1624), 242.

¹⁴⁵ DeJean, “Une autobiographie en procès,” 447.

¹⁴⁶ Stéphane Van Damme, *L’épreuve libertine. Morale, soupçon et pouvoirs dans la France baroque* (Paris: CNRS, 2008), 26.

drawn from traditional or contemporary literature and blurs the identity of his author-narrator, subverting a literal reading of his texts, as a discursive strategy for intellectual, aesthetic, and political aims (survival).

But what are Théophile's contradictions? And how can we approach his prison poetry? One way perhaps is through point of view and perspective, which raises the question: how can personal intentions and goals, such as self-defense and survival, shape the creative process? Théophile's prison poetry is framed in established rhetorical forms such as the *plaidoyer*, *(com)plainte*, and *lettre*, fostering transformations and different restrictive zones from one prison poem to the next. Approaching Théophile's prison poetry implies cutting through some of the ambiguity of his intentions and experiences. The reader oscillates between its *effet du réel*, term coined by Nancy Regalado by way of Roland Barthes, to describe the historical, factual interpretation of referential elements in poems, and its *effet de réel*, the "referential illusion" of treating places, objects, and people that the prisoner-poet meticulously arranges to express his emotions and agency as real or as they really are.¹⁴⁷ In Théophile's situation, in a sense, practicality subverts aesthetics, and purpose determines form. Rosellini observes that the necessity of escaping the *locus terribilis* of his prison caused an alternation from texts centered upon the tribulations of a barely-determined *je* to those that focused on the misadventures of an overtly-autobiographical *je*, ensuring the coherence of his entire corpus via a strong temporal and thematic continuation.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Regalado, "*Effet de réel, Effet du réel*," 66.

¹⁴⁸ Michèle Rosellini, "Écrire de sa prison," 17-37.

III. Théophile de Viau and “le libertinage”

In 1623, Théophile was imprisoned on a conflation of charges of “*lèse-majesté divine*” (blasphemy, heresy): in terms of religion, of atheism, and in terms of moral conduct, of sodomy. In 1622, the anthology of poetry, the *Parnasse satyrique*, was published, featuring a preliminary sonnet of satirical and sexually explicit nature (“Phylis tout est foutu, je meurs de la verolle”) attributed to Théophile, who was soon associated with the contents of the entire volume. Garasse responded to the work in 1623 by publishing his 1028-page pamphlet,¹⁴⁹ *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps*, that attacked all its presumed authors and specifically focused on Théophile, “le chef de la bande athéiste” and “le roi des libertins.” He condemned all *libertine* thought in general on the basis of atheism, as seen in his description of Théophile.¹⁵⁰ Soon afterward, chief prosecutor Mathieu Molé ordered that Théophile and several other poets (Frenicle, Colletet, and Berthelot) be imprisoned to await trial for their contribution to the *Parnasse*. But as Théophile was never found, Molé nevertheless tried, convicted, and sentenced him *in absentia* to be burnt at the stake (via an effigy) along with his works. He was captured a few months later, imprisoned in the Conciergerie for nearly two years, and subjected to a more protracted trial.

Théophile had been previously banished from Paris in 1619 for “atheism” and vague religious transgressions stemming from his poetry, which were likely pretexts to political

¹⁴⁹ Helena Taylor, *The Lives of Ovid in Seventeenth-Century French Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 112.

¹⁵⁰ “Il est vray que tout le monde dit publiquement qu’il est Athéiste, corrupteur de jeunesse, et abandonné à tous les vices imaginables [...]” *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps, ou pretendus tels. Contenant plusieurs maximes pernicieuses à l’Estat, à la Religion, et aux bonnes Mœurs. Combattue et renversee par P. François Garassus* (Paris: S. Chappelet, 1623), 239; *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps*, ed. Jean Salem (La Versanne: Encre Marine; Paris: Belles Lettres, 2009).

issues.¹⁵¹ He was frequently “in the wrong camp at the wrong time,”¹⁵² either siding with king Louis XIII and his chief minister and favorite, Charles d’Albert de Luynes, or with his patrons who previously threw their support behind queen regent Marie de Médicis and her own Italian chief minister and favorite, Concino Concini. Théophile’s banishment appeared a consequence of Louis XIII’s initiative in 1619 to increase censorship, in league with the hardline Catholic (Jesuit) faction, to consolidate power and suppress potential (“heretic” and Protestant) threats.¹⁵³ But at de Luynes’s request, the king ended Théophile’s exile in 1620, and after returning, he reintegrated into literary circles, the court, and converted to Catholicism in 1622. While the *Parnasse satyrique* was the primary text and basis of Garasse’s accusations for his trial, Théophile’s earlier texts “Élégie à une dame” (1620), “Épître au lecteur” (1621), and *Première journée* (1623) ruffled the feathers of the powers in place and also likely served as justification for his charges. In “Élégie à une dame,” Théophile alludes to the Parisian Jesuits and royal court as the source spreading the venom of idiocy and ignorance in France,¹⁵⁴ whom he contrasts with good individuals who seek truth and justice.¹⁵⁵ Théophile’s prosecutors and Garasse were aware

¹⁵¹ The reason for his banishment was reported by the *Mercure françois*: “Au mois de May de ceste année, sur ce que l’on fit entendre au Roy que le poète Théophile avoit fait des vers indignes d’un Chrestien, tant en croyance qu’en saleté [...]” Frédéric Lachèvre, *Le libertinage devant le Parlement de Paris. Le procès du poète Théophile de Viau (11 juillet 1623 - 1er septembre 1625). Publication intégrale des pièces inédites des Archives nationales*, t. 1 (Paris: Champion, 1909), 31.

¹⁵² James Petterson, “Théophile de Viau: *In turba clamor, in foro silentium*,” *Dalhousie French Studies* 42 (1998): 18.

¹⁵³ Petterson, “*In turba clamor*,” 19.

¹⁵⁴ “Qui de notre exercice aime le doux souci / Il hait sa renommée et sa fortune aussi. / Le savoir est honteux, depuis que l’ignorance / A versé son venin dans le sein de la France.” *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Guido Saba, t. 1 (Paris: Champion, 1999), 202, vv. 7-10.

¹⁵⁵ “Des bons entendements qui sans cesse travaillent / Contre l’erreur du peuple, et jamais ne défont / Et qui, d’un sentiment hardi, grave et profond, / Vivent tout autrement que les autres ne font.” *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, t. 1, 202, vv. 25-28; Petterson, 20-21.

of his prior poetry, and characterized it as an insidious influence spreading the maxims of atheism.¹⁵⁶

The controversy surrounding the *Parnasse satyrique* in 1620s France stems from its identification as obscene literature, officially condemned on grounds of “impiety and blasphemy.”¹⁵⁷ It contained 28 poems by 18 authors and 257 anonymous contributions, but of its 285 poems, only 24 were written by Théophile.¹⁵⁸ Its publisher, Antoine Estoc, had already brought forth texts otherwise considered *libertin* and obscene.¹⁵⁹ These works, along with the *Parnasse satyrique*, were associated with cabaret and “*cabinet*” literature (referring to “a secluded place where any one of a number of physical or intellectual activities can take place – some much more noble than others”) that constitute “a kind of literary privy where poets privilege the ribald, the scatological, and the grossly erotic, thereby revealing key paradoxes with respect to the status of lewd literature as a cultural marker.”¹⁶⁰ In their conventional work, their poets uphold traditional lyric forms (sonnet, ode, ballad, epigram) and themes that presumably elevate their poetry to the level of “high” culture indicting dominant courtly and aristocratic

¹⁵⁶ “[...] soubz couleur de cette lisance poétique, il peust publier plus hardiment et faire couler plus facilement dans les espritz les maximes qui le peuvent porter à cette créance.” Lachèvre, *Le libertinage devant le Parlement de Paris*, t. 1, 375.

¹⁵⁷ The Parliament *arret* from August 19, 1623 famously accused the *Parnasse*’s authors of writing “sonnetz et vers contenant les impietez et blasphèmes et abominations.” Lachèvre, 142.

¹⁵⁸ *Le Parnasse des poètes satyriques, ou dernier recueil des vers piquants et gaillards de notre temps*, ed. Georges Bourgueil (Paris: Passage du Nord/Ouest, 2002).

¹⁵⁹ These include *Les delices satyriques* with Antoine de Sommaville, *Le cabinet satyrique* with Pierre Billaine, the *Recueil des plus excellans vers de ce temps* (1617), and the *Satyres bastards et autres œuvres folastres du Cadet Angoulevant* (1615).

¹⁶⁰ Russell Ganim, “Going through the trash: meaning in the cabaret and cabinet Baroque lyric,” in *Intersections. Actes du 35e congrès annuel de la North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature (Dartmouth College, 8-10 mai 2003)*, eds. Faith Beasley and Kathleen Wine (Tubingen: Gunter Narr, 2005), 307-308.

values, but their taboo subjects (“foul expressions,” “low topics” on sexuality and gender relations) indicate an element of “low” culture, as seen in one of Colletet’s sixains in the *Parnasse satyrique* describing the “poetic process.”¹⁶¹

However, the uproar over the *Parnasse* had as much to do with secular political power via widespread and increased systematic state censorship as it did with “blasphemy” or “heresy” in its sexually transgressive content, which at times made use of religious expressions. As was the case with accusations against him and his exile in 1619, the crown sought to bring the French book trade under tighter control, and as a recently-converted Protestant in the wake of France’s devastating late-sixteenth-century wars of religion, Théophile’s charges demonstrate the blurring of the danger of literature and its menace to religious orthodoxy: between literature as a religious threat and literature as a secular threat.¹⁶² Because Théophile’s prosecutors and Garasse cast a (too) wide net condemning works like the *Parnasse* (and their authors) as spreading atheism, heresy, blasphemy, sodomy, and ultimately *libertinage*, it is necessary to take a closer look at what this term exactly implied.

Libertinage is largely defined as an anti-establishment doctrine or philosophy and equated with atheism or epicureanism (relating to the pursuit of pleasure).¹⁶³ In the seventeenth

¹⁶¹ For example, the verb *foutre* is the lexical and thematic center of the poem:

Tout y chevauche, tout y fout;
L’on fout en ce livre partout:
Afin que les lecteurs s’en doutent,
Les odes foutent les sonnets,
Les lignes foutent les feuillets,
Les lettres mêmes s’entrefoutent!

Ganim, “Going through the trash,” 307-308; *Le Parnasse des poètes satyriques*, ed. Bourgueil, 6.

¹⁶² DeJean, *The Reinvention of Obscenity*, 31.

¹⁶³ Louise Godard de Donville, *Le libertin des origines à 1665: un produit des apologètes*, Biblio 17-51: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature (Paris, Seattle, and Tübingen, 1989), 88.

century, in concurrence with the polemicized trials of *libertins* such as Théophile, this definition not only referred to any simple transgression of sexual mores, but also to the search for pleasure (hedonism).¹⁶⁴ A wealth of terms emerged to describe this movement: *libertinage* denotes “tout ce qui marque excès de ‘liberté’ en matière de morale et de religion, par rapport à ce que dogmes, traditions, convenances et pouvoir politique définissent ou préconisent.”¹⁶⁵ *Libertinage* also evoked a doctrine and system of morals that did not fall into more formal categorizations such as religious heresy, philosophy, or political thought. It instead sought to confront the abuses of the current secular and Church authorities by articulating their arguments through interpretations laid forth by the thinkers of Antiquity, just as these authorities used the term “libertine” to persecute those whom it deemed heathen or heretical.

During the years of Théophile’s accusations, imprisonment, and trial in the early 1620’s *libertinage* (or *libertinisme*) implied a “positionnement intellectuel délibérément critique à l’égard de la religion, ses principes fondamentaux, ses dogmes, ses croyances, ses cultes ou son clergé” and “des comportements et des mœurs basés sur la recherche du plaisir, sous toutes ses formes et sans limites; depuis les divertissements courants – ceux du jeu, de la boisson, de la table ou de la danse – jusqu’aux raffinements érotiques.”¹⁶⁶ Throughout the history of *libertinage*, Théophile and his trial are considered the dividing line between “une conception mondaine et aristocratique” that triumphed in the eighteenth century and “une tradition

¹⁶⁴ Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, “La polémique anti-libertine et anti-libertaire contemporaine: catholiques, libéraux, libertariens,” *Les Dossiers du Grihl* (2009): accessed January 28, 2022, <http://journals.openedition.org/dossiersgrihl/3495>.

¹⁶⁵ René Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle* (Paris and Geneva: Slatkine, 1943, 1983), xiv.

¹⁶⁶ Didier Foucault, *Histoire du libertinage: des goliards au marquis de Sade* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 7.

philosophique, intellectuelle et érudite marquée par le retrait [hors] des sphères de pouvoir et la duplicité.”¹⁶⁷ This division also highlights the survival of a *libertin* morality in the clientele of certain powerful nobles who assured the protection of so-called “atheists” (such as Théophile) against repressive institutions.¹⁶⁸

Garasse’s *Doctrine curieuse* twisted many facts and events in order to portray Théophile as an exemplary of the stereotyped “character” of the *libertin*.¹⁶⁹ It also reveals a long-standing, bitter conflict between the poet and leading religious figures that had less to do with (im)moral influence than with political power.¹⁷⁰ His two didactic examples of impious “Théophiles” in history, and the righteous Church doctors who opposed them,¹⁷¹ are proof of Théophile’s substantial influence at the highest level of French society and politics during this period at the start of the seventeenth century. Garasse accused Théophile of assimilating the thinking of Italian philosopher and libertine Lucilio Vanini.¹⁷² The Jesuits may have amalgamated Vanini’s “doctrine” with that of Théophile, drawing the poet into their greater net in pursuing and catching the Italian free thinker. Vanini’s frequent visits to Paris (1614-1618) coincided with the

¹⁶⁷ Van Damme, *L’épreuve libertine*, 9.

¹⁶⁸ Van Damme, 9

¹⁶⁹ Joan DeJean characterizes that work as “rambling, bizarre, slightly mad” and considers it a “perfect illustration of the confusion between religious and secular issues out of which the modern obscene emerged.” DeJean, *The Reinvention of Obscenity*, 44.

¹⁷⁰ Louise Godard de Donville, “Théophile et son milieu dans les années précédant son procès,” in *Théophile de Viau. Actes du Colloque du CMR 17. Offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, ed. Roger Duchêne, Biblio 17: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature (Paris, Seattle, and Tübingen: 1991), 32-33.

¹⁷¹ Garasse describes in the first section of *Livre I* how “Un meschant coquin nommé Théophile faillit à ruyner la Cour de l’Empereur Michel, n’eust esté le Patriarche Ignace qui s’opposa à son athéisme” and also how “Un homme de néant nommé Théophile ruyna la Cour de l’Emperiere Eudoxia, et causa plusieurs maux à Saint Jean Chrysostome.” *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps, ou pretendus tels*, 5.

¹⁷² Cecilia Rizza, “Théophile de Viau: libertinage e libertà,” *Studi francesi* 20 (1976): 430-462, cited by Godard de Donville, “Théophile et son milieu,” 42.

conception and drafting of Théophile's *Première satire*. King Henry IV's former counselor, the duke of Sully, owned a manuscript at Chantilly featuring Théophile's work and Sully's own handwriting,¹⁷³ suggesting that Théophile, Vanini, and Sully may have frequented the same social circles.

La Doctrine curieuse presents the *libertins* as merely Théophile's extensions in a back-and-forth narrative between the group and its leader. In this "portrait singulier-pluriel,"¹⁷⁴ the poet is broken up into innumerable, grotesque, and caricatural reflections of an undifferentiated, larger group, and vice versa, similar to disassociating the theatrical troupe from its director and the flock from its shepherd.¹⁷⁵ Garasse's depiction of the *libertins* is underpinned by a vast system of metaphorical comparisons and substitutions, notably via a "didactic metaphor" confounding human and animal behaviors,¹⁷⁶ in his zeal to prove *libertins'* brutality (and thus, bestiality) in Théophile's works and in his effort to refute their self-proclaimed intellectual superiority. Théophile himself acknowledged the power of Garasse's rhetoric and wrote in his "Apologie de Théophile" that Garasse and his other accusers fashion him into "des bêtes sauvages en autant de formes qu'il plait aux charlatans" and that "à me voir dans ses livres, je suis plus monstrueux qu'une Chimère."¹⁷⁷ *La Doctrine curieuse* conflates atheism with *libertinage* (and thus, also conflates atheists with *libertins*). It dislodges Théophile from his

¹⁷³ Godard de Donville, "Théophile et son milieu," 41.

¹⁷⁴ Godard de Donville, *Le libertin des origines à 1665*, 123, 129.

¹⁷⁵ Garasse perceives Théophile as a part of a devious, collective whole "[...] il ne faut que rompre cette ligue pernicieuse des beaux esprits pretendus, qui mettent la beauté de leur esprit à roder par les tavernes, et voltiger autour des verres et des pots, comme les mouscherons de vendage autour des cuves, à avancer quelque extravagance en compagnie des jeunes gens, ou parmy des Dames qui sont capables d'avaler le venin de l'impiété, et n'ont pas assez de force ny de cognoissance pour se desabuser [...]" *Apologie du P.F. Garassus*, 17-18.

¹⁷⁶ Godard de Donville, 132-133.

¹⁷⁷ *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, t. 2, 170; Godard de Donville, 120-121.

literary and intellectual context to situate him in the realm of the cabalistic as an agent of the devil and leader of his lecherous *libertins*.

Théophile used the preface of the *Seconde partie* of his *Œuvres*, published in 1623 and the same year as the *Doctrine curieuse*, to respond to Garasse and publicly defend himself.¹⁷⁸ While he was imprisoned, Théophile also responded to the *Doctrine curieuse* and Garasse's second work, *Apologie du Père François Garassus, de la Compagnie de Jésus, pour son livre contre les Atheistes et Libertins de nostre siècle* (1624) in his Latin prose piece *Theophilus en carcere* (1624), positioning himself in the virtuous light of the oppressed individual who speaks out in protest against society's collective furor that Garasse stirred up with his *Doctrine*.¹⁷⁹ While his trial dragged on until 1625, Théophile's prison poetry still sought to rebuff the anti-*libertin* crusade and his prosecutors' and Garasse's accusations, but as this chapter will examine, aimed to discover other persuasive pathways and fashioned other versions of his self to survive.

Théophile's *libertin* ideology as expressed in his poetry

Théophile expresses his *libertin*, or rather "non-orthodox," ideas and ideology in well-known works such as his short prose narrative *Première journée* and his play *Pyrame et Thisbé*. In *Première journée*, Théophile attributes his (*libertin*) thoughts both to the narrator and, to some extent, to his travel companion Clitiphon, as is the case in their discussion of "epicurean maxims," or in the narrator's digressive reflections on his inclinations and subversive

¹⁷⁸ "Je crains que mon silence ne fasse mon crime: car, si je ne repousse la calomnie, il semble que ma conscience ne l'ose désavouer. On a suborné des imprimeurs pour mettre au jour, en mon nom, des vers sales et profanes qui n'ont rien de mon style ni de mon humeur." *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, t. 2, 5.

¹⁷⁹ Petterson remarks that Théophile accuses Garasse, whom he "sardonically refers to as *Doctor Turbarum*, of abusing 'the crowds' and not allowing them to declare freely 'what they know'." Petterson, "*In turba clamor*," 22-23.

philosophy.¹⁸⁰ *Pyrame et Thisbé* draws its inspiration from a fable in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that recounts the story of two ill-fated Babylonian lovers. In it, Théophile conveys his conception of love and in particular his belief that the "primary requirement of youth" is to obey the laws of nature in their free and autonomous choices when in love.¹⁸¹ The play also demonstrates a pessimistic, yet lucid *libertin* view on humankind's misery accompanied by a willingness to peacefully accept nature's law that also foresees, in an eternal recurrence of things, death.¹⁸²

However, I will take up with two poems that most explicitly express Théophile's *libertin* point of view, "Élégie à M. de C.S." and "Satyre première." These poems were composed before the period of active repression of the *libertins* by religious authorities in France. While his "Élégie à M. de C.S." articulates a wider neo-platonic worldview and conceptualizations of the perfection of the soul and body through the exemplary figure of his protector Candale, his "Satyre" states more straightforwardly his views on free thought and action. Both poems serve to better outline and contextualize the poet's *libertinage* independent from Garasse's judgement in his portrait of Théophile in his *Doctrine curieuse*. Throughout these poems, Théophile expresses a materialist and deist vision of humankind through a determinist and negative view of human nature. He rejects prescribed forms of human servitude, whether by divine, cosmic fate or by the old who oppress the young. Théophile therefore utilizes these poems to encourage greater free will and actions among his audience.

¹⁸⁰ In the Second Chapter, the narrator tells Clitiphon "[...] il faut avoir de la passion non seulement pour les hommes de vertu, pour les belles femmes, mais aussi pour toute sorte de belles choses [...] Je n'aime plus tant ni les festins, ni les ballets, et me porte aux voluptés les plus secrètes avec beaucoup de médiocrité." *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, t. 2, 14-15.

¹⁸¹ Guido Saba, *Théophile de Viau: un poète rebelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), 115.

¹⁸² Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 128.

Published in the first edition of *Œuvres de Théophile* (1621), “Élégie à M. de C.S.” expresses Théophile’s materialistic and deist vision at the moment his *libertin* ideology began to coalesce as he frequented influential early seventeenth-century French aristocratic social circles. Likely composed around 1618-1619, his elegy adopts a “philosopher’s tone.”¹⁸³ Théophile first lays out his belief in the astral influence on humankind’s fate, following Vanini and the commentaries of the medieval philosopher Averroes,¹⁸⁴ according to which one’s soul inserts itself into nature and the divine (attains God) differently based on celestial influences, movement of celestial spheres, and astral conjunctions during one’s birth. Théophile’s vision of humankind’s destiny and its influences distances itself from biblical or Judeo-Christian beliefs and falls into what can be considered a Deist worldview. Théophile elaborates his own materialist philosophy that applies humoral theory to psychology to explain the human being from the inside (of the body) rather than from above the natural system.¹⁸⁵ “La trempe que tu pris en arrivant au monde / Était du feu, de l’air, de la terre et de l’onde; / Immortels éléments, dont les corps si divers / Étrangement mêlés font un seul univers.”¹⁸⁶ In affirming that “humor” conditions one’s own disposition, Théophile leans towards a deterministic thought and expresses a pessimistic conception of the human condition (*topos* of the *miseria hominis*) founded in the

¹⁸³ Antoine Adam, *Théophile de Viau et la libre pensée française en 1620* (Paris: Droz, 1935), 95, 135.

¹⁸⁴ A pivotal figure in the history of Andalusian philosophy, jurist Abu’l Walid Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), better known in European sources as Averroes, contributed to Aristotelian scholarship and marked a critical point in the history of the transmission of Greek-Arabic philosophy to Western Europe at a time when Greek philosophy in general and Aristotelianism in particular had been almost completely forgotten in the West. He was recognized, as early as the thirteenth century, as the *Commentator* of Aristotle, contributing thereby to the rediscovery of the Master that was instrumental in launching Latin Scholasticism and, in due course, the European Renaissance of the fifteenth century. Majid Fakhry, *Averroes: His Life, Works, and Influence* (London: One World, 2001), 1, 7-8.

¹⁸⁵ Adam, *Théophile de Viau et la libre pensée française*, 136.

¹⁸⁶ *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, t. 1, 209, vv. 5-8. This edition and tome will provide the text for Théophile’s poems “Élégie à M. de C.S” and “Satyre première.”

ideas of Italian naturalism:¹⁸⁷ “Triste condition, que le sort plus humain / Ne nous peut assurer au soir d’être demain / [...] Serf de tes passions, et du commun souci, / Des vices des mortels, et des vertus aussi [...]” (209-210, vv. 11-12, 19-20). Théophile promises to devote himself to composing an epic poem and proposes to celebrate Candale’s actions in an accolade exalting his virtues as a lover and as a warrior. Using Candale’s life of youthful exploits as a backdrop, Théophile stresses the eternal and universal aspect of human life despite the fast, confusing disappearance of youth and time, like a passing bird or boat. He undertakes a neo-platonic enumeration and valorization of the physical virtues and qualities of his protector as a way to elaborate on his views on the unique beauty and perfection of the human body and soul. The final verses of Théophile’s elegy to Candale reaffirm his *libertin* hatred of any restriction of freedom and candidness and his *libertin* inclination toward newness.

Théophile’s “Satyre première” is quite explicit about Théophile’s convictions in the domains of literature, philosophy, and morality, constituting an eloquent expression of the poet’s *libertin* thought.¹⁸⁸ The poem mixes and fuses *libertin* naturalism with stoic morality,¹⁸⁹ containing possible influences of a long tradition stretching back to the philosophers of Antiquity.¹⁹⁰ Théophile continues with examples of the superiority of animals’ physical

¹⁸⁷ According to William Ashworth, Italian naturalism, espoused by Early Modern philosophers such as Pietro Pomponazzi, Girolamo Cardano, and Giulio Cesare Vanini, “was considered dangerous to religion because it confused the natural with the supernatural and physics with metaphysics: essentially, it eliminated the boundaries between science and faith.” Miracles were endangered by the naturalists, because in a world filled with sympathies and occult forces, anything could happen naturally. William B. Ashworth, Jr. “Catholicism and Early Modern Science,” *God and Nature. Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, eds. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 138.

¹⁸⁸ Adam, *Théophile de Viau et la libre pensée française*, 206-220.

¹⁸⁹ Daniella Dalla Valle, *De Théophile à Molière aspectos de una continuidad* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1968), 30-45.

¹⁹⁰ Among these influences was French theologian Pierre Charron (1541-1603), who connected the scepticism of Montaigne more systematically with the main antirational currents in Christian thought. He provided a

conditions in their early stages of life.¹⁹¹ In affirming this ancient rule of following nature's designs, he also evokes the commonly-held image of inevitable death for all (the mythological ferryman), justifying in his eyes that human beings should do what pleases them, even if it entails vice:

J'approuve qu'un chacun suive en tout la nature;
 Son Empire est plaisant, et sa loi n'est pas dure:
 Ne suivant que son train jusqu'au dernier moment
 Même dans les malheurs on passe heureusement.
 Jamais mon jugement ne trouvera blâmable
 Celui-là qui s'attache à ce qu'il trouve aimable,
 Qui dans l'état mortel tient tout indifférent,
 Aussi bien même fin à l'Achéron nous rend:
 La barque de Charon à tous inévitable,
 Non plus que le méchant n'épargne l'équitable (222, vv. 85-94).

This passage presents perhaps the core component of Théophile's *libertin* philosophy: the pursuit of, or rather the ability to pursue, pleasure, which implies a certain hedonism that is justified by human free will and an autonomy that is prescribed by natural law. The notion of approval here is essential: "J'approuve qu'un chacun suive en tout la nature" (222, v. 85). Théophile positions

more thoroughgoing Christian Pyrrhonism (theoretical formulation of scepticism attributed to the Ancient Greek ethicist Aenesidemus (ca. 100-40 BC) and passed down to Western tradition by the Roman moralist and mathematician Sextus Empiricus (ca. 200 AD) in his writings, *Hypotyposes* and *Adversus mathematicos*, by uniting the doubts of Ancient Greek moralist Pyrrho [of Elis (ca. 360-275 BC)] with the negative theology of the mystics. Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), xviii-xix, 57.

¹⁹¹ His poem initially provides a striking comparison, frequent in the tradition of Antiquity (as seen in Lucretius) and of his time (as seen in Montaigne), to highlight humankind's miserable condition:

Pour ne point flatter d'une divine essence,
 Vois la condition de ta sale naissance,
 Que tiré tout sanglant de ton premier séjour,
 Tu vois en gémissant la lumière du jour,
 Ta bouche n'est qu'aux cris et à la faim ouverte,
 Ta pauvre chair naissante est toute découverte,
 Ton esprit ignorant encor ne forme rien,
 Et moins qu'un sens brutal sait le mal et le bien (220, vv. 9-16).

himself as knowledgeable in matters of morality without any regard of the Church's instructions: "Jamais mon jugement ne trouvera blâmable / Celui-là qui s'attache à ce qu'il trouve aimable" (222, vv. 89-90). These revealing declarations on the part of Théophile underscore his devotion to a freedom or an autonomy of ethical thinking. While Judeo-Christian belief articulates punishment for the abuse and misuse of free will (sin), Théophile proclaims that all human beings die: their "mortal states" are all "indifferent," they are all sent to the Acheron river "at the end" of life, regardless of their virtues or vices while living. In his poem, Théophile repurposes an existing sentiment surrounding the double nature of Judeo-Christian free will and the inherent complexities and contradictions it entails: between adhering to the Church's doctrine on controlling one's will and the eventual, universal mortality of the human flesh.

Similarly to Charles d'Orléans, François Villon, and Clément Marot, Théophile engaged in literary activity in prison as a means of personal, hermeneutic self-discovery and liberation. During his captivity, he clandestinely published three prose pieces, "Theophilus in carcere," a short narration of his experience of incarceration written in Latin, "Apologie au Roi," and "Apologie de Théophile."¹⁹² Both were written from the stance of self-defense (in anticipation of his imminent trial and interrogation), discrediting his "adversaries," and at the same time, attempting to attract the favor of public opinion.¹⁹³ His prison epistles included sixty-two French letters and twenty-three Latin ones addressed to members of the nobility, fluctuating between conventional and expressive content, appeals, and requests.¹⁹⁴ In his two epistles addressed to Candale, Théophile inserted autobiographical verses. His poems first exalt certain aspects of his

¹⁹² Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 169-173.

¹⁹³ Guido Saba, "Théophile de Viau pamphlétaire," *Cahiers de l'AIEF* 36 (1984): 133.

¹⁹⁴ Saba, 183, 188-189, 202-203.

protector Candale's personality which in turn he fashions into an idealized, moral portrait by way of narrating two salient episodes of his life. In evoking these episodes, Théophile introduces a narrative discourse through verses that contain affirmations that link the particular and the universal.¹⁹⁵

IV. Parallels Between the Prison Poetry of Théophile de Viau and of Clément Marot

Théophile's initial, intimate "penitence" and "letters" to family and protectors soon give way to flattering "appeals" and "remonstrations" as rhetorical devices towards his strategy of self-preservation. Beginning with his poems of penitence and introspection, Théophile seeks refuge in the sweet, nostalgic imagery of his pastoral childhood in southern France, much like the prisoner-poet examined in the preceding chapter. Théophile's poetry, before and during his imprisonment, exhibits striking similarities with that of Clément Marot. In particular, Théophile's "Élégie à une dame" (1620) evokes his banishment, wanderings, and tribulations without recrimination in a tone of semi-serious jest resembling that of Marot in his two epistles "À son ami Lyon" and "Au roi."¹⁹⁶ Théophile moves from a cheerful recollection of his misadventures as an exile to an auto-portrait of a man who endured persecution and imprisonment. The image that he provides of himself assumes an exemplary value in expressing his libertine conceptualization of life, and through it, his unmovable faith in human liberty which must reconcile itself with an acceptance of laws of necessity.¹⁹⁷ This is in no way, of course, to

¹⁹⁵ Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 25.

¹⁹⁶ Saba, 22.

¹⁹⁷ Saba, 22.

consider Marot a *libertin* and draw unfounded or anachronistic parallels of *libertin* practices between the sixteenth-century prisoner-poet and Théophile.¹⁹⁸

Both Théophile and Marot evoke the idyllic nature of their native towns and the rivers that flow through them, each fashioning his birthplace into a *locus amoenus* to which the *locus terribilis* (and also *monde à l'envers*) of prison can be contrasted. Just as the town of Cahors and the Lot river fulfill this purpose for Marot in “L’Enfer,” Théophile elicits the pastoral paradise of Clairac (at his family estate at Boussières) and the same rivers Lot and Garonne in juxtaposition with the horrors of his ordeal and incarceration. Sketching the idealized space of his birth, Marot emphasizes the divine, sun-kissed greenery, topography, and serenity of the south of France:

Que vers Midy les haults Dieux m’ont fait naistre [...]
 Mainte fontaine y murmure, & undoye.
 Et en tous temps le Laurier y verdoye
 Pres de la vigne: ainsi comme dessus
 Le double mont des Muses Parnassus [...]
 Le fleuve Lot coule son eaue peu claire.
 Qui maints rochers traverse, & environne,
 Pour s’aller joindre au droict fil de Garonne.
 A brief parler, c’est Cahors en Quercy,
 Que je laissay [...].¹⁹⁹

Théophile’s “Lettre de Théophile à son frère” is a long *épître* composed of 33 dizains in octosyllabic verse with an alternating rhyme scheme. The first half of the poem illustrates the bleak and dark circumstances of his imprisonment and trial, marked by repeated allusions to

¹⁹⁸ Rather, this is to juxtapose Marot’s “ton d’un badinage à demi sérieux” in recounting his exile and escape(s) from the authorities with Théophile’s own exile and escape(s), but also the existential struggle between freedom and necessity at the heart of the two poets’ texts.

¹⁹⁹ Clément Marot, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Gérard Defaux. t. i-ii (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014), 30, vv. 378, 385-388, 392-396. All quotations from the works of Marot will be taken from this edition.

death, despair, pain, and decay²⁰⁰ that he vividly contrasts halfway through the poem in evoking the tranquil verdure, geographical features, people, and animals of Clairac's gentle countryside:

Quelque lacs qui me soit tendu
 Par de si subtils adversaires,
 Encore n'ai-je point perdu
 L'espérance de voir Boussères.
 Encore un coup le Dieu du jour
 Tout devant moi fera sa cour
 Aux rives de notre héritage,
 Et je verrai ses cheveux blonds
 Du même or qui luit sur le Tage
 Dorer l'argent de nos sablons.

Je verrai ces bois verdissants
 Où nos îles et l'herbe fraîche
 Servent aux troupeaux mugissants
 Et de promenoir et de crèche;
 L'Aurore y trouve à son retour
 L'herbe qu'ils ont mangé le jour;
 Je verrai l'eau qui les abreuve,
 Et j'orrai plaindre les graviers
 Et repartir l'écho du fleuve
 Aux injures des mariniers. [...]

Je reverrai fleurir nos prés,
 Je leur verrai couper les herbes,
 Je verrai quelque temps après
 Le paysan couché sur les gerbes;
 Et, comme ce climat divin
 Nous est très libéral de vin,
 Après avoir rempli la grange,
 Je verrai du matin au soir
 Comme les flots de la vendange

²⁰⁰ "Après m'avoir fait tant mourir" (v. 10), "mon espérance morte" (v. 12), "il faut enfin que la tempête / M'ouvre le sépulcre ou le port" (vv. 19-20), "je suis abattu / Mon courage se laisse mordre" (vv. 41-42), "ma faiblesse / Et les points de la douleur" (vv. 47-48), "mon sens noirci d'un long effroi" (v. 51), "La nuit mon somme interrompu / Tiré d'un sang tout corrompu / Me met tant de frayeurs dans l'âme" (vv. 55-57), "ces noirs lutins" (v. 65), "un si barbare dessein" (v. 80), "Pourquoi tant de fiévreux accès / Me feront-ils pâlir la face / [...] Avecques des sueurs de glace" (vv. 86-87, 89). "Dans l'air brûlant de la fournaise" (v. 107), "Pour être si prêt à mourir" (v. 115), "Mes yeux sont épuisés de pleurs, / Mes esprits usez de malheurs / Vivent d'un sang gelé de craintes" (vv. 165-167). *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, t. 2, 238-242.

Écumeront dans le pressoir.²⁰¹

Perhaps to a greater extent than with Marot, Théophile's nostalgic imagery (tempered by *l'espérance*, hope) counterbalances the nightmarish conditions of prison by means of punctuating his verses with the first-person future tense verb "*je (re)verrai*:" his memories (of the past) serve as a source of projections and predictions (of the future). The other first person verb follows a predilection for personification in baroque poetry.²⁰² He declares "*j'orrai*" (I will hear) the gravel [of the riverbanks] "moan" in the same manner that he attributes, in an entertaining tone, the Lot's flooding to a joyful excess in his epistle "*Je pensais au repas, et le céleste feu*" addressed to his friend and fellow *libertin* Jacques Vallée Des Barreaux: ("Dans l'excès de la joie où tu le viens ravir, / Ce torrent glorieux ne daigne plus servir" (vv. 17-18)).²⁰³ The sudden injection of hope and the placement of these future tense verbs contribute to reinforce, both for the poet and the reader, the idea of constructing (and of composing) a "painting."²⁰⁴ The future tense also retains a pragmatic and assertive dimension. The intimate, sincere, and penetrating tone of this painting, populated by a landscape of boatmen, farmers sleeping on piles of wheat, flocks grazing on fresh grass, and flowering fields, is punctuated by Théophile's renewed attacks on his Jesuit accusers and the lugubrious *monde à l'envers* of prison filled with flames and snakes: "*je n'ose bouger mes bras, / De peur de trouver de la flamme / Et des serpents parmi mes draps*" (vv.

²⁰¹ *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, t. 2, 243, vv. 171-190; 244, vv. 231-240. All quotations from Théophile's prison poetry will be taken from this second tome.

²⁰² Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 22.

²⁰³ Frédéric Lachèvre, *Disciples et successeurs de Théophile de Viau. La vie et les poésies libertines de Des Barreaux (1599-1673)* (Paris: Champion, 1911), cited by *Œuvres complètes*, v. 1, ed. Saba, 357.

²⁰⁴ John Pedersen, "Images et figures dans la poésie de Théophile de Viau," in *Théophile de Viau. Actes du Colloque du CMR 17. Offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, ed. Roger Duchêne, Biblio 17: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature (Paris, Seattle, and Tübingen: 1991), 105.

58-60). But the beautiful image that Théophile offers us of the green paradise of his childhood forms without doubt the poem's core.²⁰⁵ The adversities that the poet encountered enabled him to construct a dream of freedom rediscovered – a georgic vision narrated in the future tense.²⁰⁶

Arguably the finest examples of Marot's and Théophile's *loci amoeni* in their prison poetry can be found in their listing of the luscious fruits that grow in the paradisaical orchards of their birthplaces, as well as of their vineyards and of the delectable wines produced there. In "L'Enfer," Marot provides a general view of his native Cahors's bounty (fruits, flowers, "liqueurs fortes et savoureuses") without specifically naming any of them and while marking a distance from mythological figures:

[...] le Soleil non trop excessif est;
Parquoy la terre avec honneur s'y vest
De mille fruits, de mainte fleur, & plante:
Bacchus aussi sa bonne vigne y plante
Par art subtil sur montaignes pierreuses
Rendants liqueurs fortes, & savoureuses (30, vv. 379-384).

Théophile goes much further in his "Lettre de Théophile à son frère" to provide an intricately detailed list of the types of fruits distinctive to his Clairac homeland. With its "baroque" embellishment inspired by his epicurean ideals of nature's beauty, the fruits of the lush orchards are also a vivid metaphor of the freedom that he craves. The openness of the sprawling fields and the fruits contrast with the restriction of his Conciergerie prison cell. In a more macabre light,

²⁰⁵ Pedersen, "Images et figures," 106.

²⁰⁶ The georgic is a literary poetic genre relating to agricultural labors. Bernard Beugnot, "L'imaginaire de l'espace privé dans l'œuvre de Théophile de Viau," in *Théophile de Viau. Actes du Colloque du CMR 17. Offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, ed. Roger Duchêne, Biblio 17: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature (Paris, Seattle, and Tübingen: 1991), 115.

this embellishment represents a resignation of his life's end in wishing to indulge in these fruits' sweetness one more (or rather, last) time:

S'il plaît à la bonté des Cieux,
 Encore une fois à ma vie
 Je paîtrai ma dent et mes yeux
 Du rouge éclat de la pavie;
 Encore ce brugnon muscat,
 Dont le pourpre est plus délicat
 Que le teint uni de Calliste,
 Me fera d'un œil ménager
 Étudier dessus la piste
 Qui me l'est venu ravager.

Je cueillerai ces abricots,
 Les fraises à couleur de flammes,
 Où nos bergers font des écots
 Qui seraient ici bons aux dames,
 Et ces figues et ces melons
 Dont la bouche des aquilons
 N'a jamais su baiser l'écorce,
 Et ces jaunes muscats si chers
 Que jamais la grêle ne force
 Dans l'asile de nos rochers.

Je verrai sur nos grenadiers
 Leurs rouges pommes entrouvertes,
 Où le Ciel, comme à ses lauriers
 Garde toujours des feuilles vertes;
 Je verrai ce touffu jasmin
 Qui fait ombre à tout le chemin
 D'une assez spacieuse allée,
 Et la parfume d'une fleur
 Qui conserve dans la gelée
 Son odorat et sa couleur (243-244, vv. 201-230).

Once again, Théophile accentuates his verses with first-person future tense verbs, such as "*je paîtrai*," "*je cueillerai*" and "*je verrai*." Pavie peaches, similar to Charles d'Orléans's and François Villon's Angoisse pears, originate from the village of Pavie in the Gascogne region and

were certainly known by Théophile from his childhood.²⁰⁷ The mosaic of the types of fruits above include figs and cantaloupes, “ces figues et ces melons” (244, v. 215), accompanied by striking colors: the bright red peaches, delicate purple nectarines, flame-colored strawberries, and half-open red pomegranates with their green leaves: “Du rouge éclat de la pavie” (243, v. 204), “ce brugnon muscat, / Dont le pourpre est plus délicat / Que le teint uni de Calliste” (243, vv. 205-207), “Les fraises à couleur de flammes” (244, v. 212), “sur nos grenadiers / Leurs rouges pommes entrouvertes, / Où le Ciel comme à ses lauriers, / Garde toujours des feuilles vertes” (244, vv. 221-224). Such colors create a much more vibrant version of the biblical garden and paradise of Eden: an image of the *locus amoenus*’s idealized space, inherited by previous genres and thoroughly rooted in medieval literary tradition.²⁰⁸

Théophile’s paradisaical descriptions of Clairac represent a “nouvel avatar de ce lieu commun” and complements Marot’s previously examined “lieu commun” in Cahors.²⁰⁹ The juxtaposition of the *locus amoenus* and *locus terribilis* landscapes can be explained through what Pedersen terms as a “psychologizing” reading. The poem seeks to project Théophile’s troubled spirit in prison, such as his despair, pain, anxiety, and worry. However, its unique atmosphere results from the contradicting images of childhood paradise become a foil to the incarcerated

²⁰⁷ Angoisse pears originate from the village of Angoisse in the Limousin region. Due to their play on words with the French word for “anxiety/worry” (*angoisse*), they came to designate a bitter or unpleasant fruit in many popular medieval fabliaux and tales. “Pears of pain” became a metaphor in literature for emotional hardship that Charles himself employs when portraying his heart in the Prison of Discomfort, which only has Angoisse pears to eat for breakfast, making it cold and weaker to the point that it cannot fully heal: “[...] il n’a que poires d’angoisse / Au matin, pour se desjeuner / Qui tant le refroidistet froisse / Qu’il ne peut santé recouvrir.” In Huitain LXXIII of his *Testament*, Villon alludes to being force-fed many “Angoisse” pears (“Menger d’angoisse mainte poire”). While it is highly unlikely he was fed actual Angoisse pears, Villon likely referred to the metaphor of “pears of pain” employed by Charles d’Orléans. Charles d’Orléans, *Poésies*, ed. Champion, 262, vv. 33-36; François Villon, *Poésies complètes*, ed. Thiry, 149, v. 740; Georgi, *Poems. François Villon*, 240.

²⁰⁸ Pedersen, “Images et figures,” 106.

²⁰⁹ Florian Preisig, “L’intertexte virgilien et ses enjeux dans ‘L’Enfer’ de Marot,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 57.3 (1995), 574.

poet's inner turmoil.²¹⁰ In his dream-vision Théophile pieces (back) together the *locus amoenus* from his imagination and nostalgia, thereby “exorcising” the *locus terribilis* by replacing a real space – the prison – with an imaginary one.²¹¹ As a result, the recognizably nostalgic “Elysian fields” of childhood eclipse the unrecognizable, twisted *monde à l’envers* of carceral confinement. Both Théophile and Marot create a sharp contrast between a green spectacle of pleasure and a black spectacle of cruelty and, as both poets imply, of death. Théophile escapes from the carceral space of his imagination, in turn establishing the *locus amoenus* of the pastoral homeland through divine presence, “la bonté des Cieux” (243, v. 201), and “le Ciel” (244, v. 223), while for Marot it is established by “les haults Dieux” (30, v. 378), “Muses Parnassus” (30, v. 388), and “Bacchus” (30, v. 382) for Marot). The *locus amoenus* becomes an interior landscape that acquires a cathartic value through the exercise of poetry as a way to flee the *locus terribilis* of the prison cell.²¹² The transformation of lived realities (past childhood, present incarceration) into imaginary ones (*locus amoenus*, *locus terribilis*) allows both poets to make sense of their limitations in prison and to express their longing for the expansive outside world.

V. Prison Poetry from the Conciergerie

“La Pénitence de Théophile”

Théophile was accused of two crimes associated with *libertinage*: atheism and lechery. During Théophile's trial, Garasse subjected his works to a literal, biographical reading. Mathilde

²¹⁰ Pedersen, “Images et figures,” 107.

²¹¹ “Figure de répétition qui souligne un sentiment que l’expression ne saurait épuiser, l’anaphore se fait ici exorcisme de l’adversité et litanie, construction pièce à pièce de l’espace imaginaire dans lequel s’efface l’espace réel.” Beugnot, “L’imaginaire de l’espace privé,” 115.

²¹² Beugnot, 120.

Bombart notes that the subject who speaks (*je*) in his poems was without question assimilated to the person of the author, giving Garasse proof of Théophile's actions.²¹³ This process of a "reduction towards the literal" subsequently led Garasse to write that, in his sonnet published in the *Parnasse satyrique*, Théophile addresses a "vow of sodomy" to a certain woman, Phyllis, therefore branding its content scandalous.²¹⁴ The accusation of sodomy takes another dimension when considering the ambiguity of the names and genders of those addressed in Théophile's lyric love poetry. Poems such as "La plainte de Théophile à son ami Tircis" have made a case for the poet's bisexuality, given Tircis's masculine indication. However, this possibility is likely the result of the narrative constructed by Théophile's accusers who sought to soil his public image.²¹⁵

The "Pénitence de Théophile" is one of the first poems composed in the Conciergerie to formally respond to his accusers and plead his innocence.²¹⁶ It is a long epistle composed of 120 octosyllabic verses organized in sizains, where each stanza features an initial rhyming couplet and then alternating rhyme (AABCBC). Théophile not only declares his religious faith, but he also insists on repeating his innocence. At the same time, the poem expresses Théophile's

²¹³ Mathilde Bombart, "Des vers méchants et impies?" Questions sur une poésie en procès," in *Théophile de Viau. Actes du Colloque du CMR 17. Offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, ed. Roger Duchêne, Biblio 17: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature (Paris, Seattle, and Tübingen: 1991), 67.

²¹⁴ Bombart, "Des vers méchants et impies?" 68.

²¹⁵ Guillaume Peureux, "Avertissements aux lecteurs," in *Théophile de Viau. Actes du Colloque du CMR 17. Offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, ed. Roger Duchêne, Biblio 1: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature (Paris, Seattle, and Tübingen: 1991), 12-13.

²¹⁶ However, Théophile targeted and decried Garasse's accusations, more specifically in his prose writings *Apologie de Théophile* ("Voici encor un flot d'injures, ou il écume avec plus de fureur, il m'appelle Athéiste, corrupteur de jeunesse, et adonné à tous les vices imaginables") and *Apologie au Roi* composed upon his release from prison. Saba, "Théophile de Viau pamphlétaire," 134-135.

recognition of guilt and condemnation of the sins he committed during his life of
 “debauchery.”²¹⁷

Je maudis mes jours débauchés,
 Et dans l’horreur de mes péchés
 Bénissant mille fois l’outrage
 Qui m’en donne le repentir,
 Je trouve encore en mon courage
 Quelque espoir de me garantir (150, vv. 67-72).

Saba draws a meaningful comparison between Théophile’s cursing of his “depraved days” and the “horror of his sins” and François Villon’s pitying of his youth spent in pleasure in Octet XXII of his *Testament*, considering it a feeble echo of his auto-portrait of “povre Villon:” “Je plains le temps de ma jeunesse / – Ouquel j’ay plus qu’autre gallé [...]”²¹⁸ Théophile’s “Pénitence” can also be read in light of the themes of dreams and reality. As Florence Orwat observes, Théophile invokes the Christian model of confession in order to dissipate any suspicion that his reputation (his “debauchery” mentioned above) could arouse, affirming his total and sincere adhesion to Catholicism after abjuring his native Protestantism.²¹⁹ This conversion may seem unconvincing; one can be surprised by Théophile’s idealized treatment of the benevolent figure of Saint Augustine, whose “pleasant and holy” works are the calming “anecdote” and consolation to his “deathly anxiety” in his dark prison:

Mon jeu, ma dance et mon festin
 Se font avec Saint Augustin,

²¹⁷ Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 84.

²¹⁸ François Villon, *Poésies complètes*, ed. Thiry, 105, vv. 169-170; Saba, 84.

²¹⁹ Florence Orwat, “Éthos rêveur et conscience d’auteur chez Théophile de Viau,” in *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les poésies*, ed. Guillaume Peureux (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 143; Saba, 84.

Dont l'aimable et sainte lecture
 Est ici mon contrepoison
 En la misérable aventure
 Des longs ennuis de ma prison [...]

Grande lumière de la Foi,
 Qui me donnez si bien de quoi
 Me consoler dans ces ténèbres,
 Mon désespoir le plus mordant
 Et mes soucis les plus funèbres
 Se calment en te regardant (148, vv. 19-24; 149, vv. 55-60).

By identifying Augustine in his metaphorical apostrophe as the “great light of Faith” and by alluding to the saint’s ability to “console” the poet, Théophile returns to the medieval tradition of introspection and inward meditation modeled after Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*. He seeks to make the connection between his “Pénitence” and Augustine’s *Confessions* in order to render his conversion narrative more compelling and to affirm that he is embarking on a new life path. He contrasts his newfound religious devotion with an initial scene of revelry and feasting, “En leur voluptueux repas” (148, v. 6), during Carnival before Lent by all categories of French society (courtesans, bourgeois, artisans, and “country people”). He then connects this Carnival scene with the sinful pleasures of the royal court: “Que le cœur le plus débauché / Contenté la plus molle envie / Que lui fournisse le péché” (148, vv. 10-12). Drawing this contrast between the categories of grotesque entities serves to emphasize the sanctity of (his reading of) Augustine’s work: “Tous ces démons du temps passé / Dont il a vivement tracé / Les larcins et adultères” (149, vv. 43-45). This contrast also allows Théophile to distance himself from the corrupting influences of his youth.

But Augustinian repentance and regret are noticeably absent in Théophile’s “Pénitence.” Théophile claims his newfound, deep faith was awakened, in part, by reading Augustine’s *Confessions* (a book that Procurer Molé brought him in his cell), and its reading inspired his

orthodox discourse of conversion whereby he solicits the figure of Christ the Redeemer as a victim of persecution:²²⁰ “JESUS m’a mis dans la pensée / Qu’il se fit ouvrir le côté, / Et que sa veine fut percée / Pour laver notre iniquité” (150, vv. 87-90). Théophile presents the figure of Christ the interceder and giver of aid to prisoners if they regain their neglected or lost faith. The poet’s Christian itinerary is conducted around these two poles of abandonment and redemption, and in the process offers a justification of his incarceration. Rather than a true expression of faith, his affirmation had an explicitly defensive aim to protect him against his accusers. Théophile’s professed conversion to Catholicism and penitence reflect, in a sense, an image that the poet strives to convey to his public through his prison poetry. The act of (re)writing, because of its inherent auto-referential possibilities, offered him the opportunity to assume different figures (or “masks”) when moving between the intimacy and authenticity of the private realm and the social representation of the public realm.

Théophile’s “Pénitence” resembles both an invocation or prayer: “La faiblesse de ma prière” (151, v. 99). It also resembles a glimpse into his present incarceration and hardship through a back-and-forth movement between the poet in his prison cell and other (mortal and divine) entities. In this sense, the poem consists of three levels of interactions. The first, and perhaps most distinct level is between Théophile and (the image of) Saint Augustine: “Grande lumière de la Foi” (149, v. 55), “Grand Saint pardonne à ce captif” (150, v. 79), “Augustin, ouvre ici tes yeux” (v. 115). Augustine’s focal point is his holy writings (*Confessions*, *City of God*): “Saint Augustin / Dont l’aimable et sainte lecture / Est ici mon contrepoison” (148, vv. 20-22), “Parmi le céleste entretien / D’un si beau livre et si chrétien” (149, vv. 31-32), “Je vois dans ces

²²⁰ Michèle Rosellini, “Écrire de sa prison: L’expérience de Théophile de Viau,” *Les Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques* 39 (2007): 24.

divins écrits” (149, v. 37), “Et désormais tous les miracles / Se font en la Cité de Dieu” (149, vv. 53-54), “La main dans les feuillets du livre / Où tu m’as attaché le sens” (151, vv. 117-118). A second level is between the poet and a vaguely-defined divinity, whether Christ or “heavenly” entities or places, a perfect and redeeming body which Théophile constantly opposes to his imperfect and fallible one: “Je me mêle à la voix des anges, / Et transporté de cet honneur” (149, vv. 33-34), “Qu’aussitôt un céleste feu / Ne me perce au profond de l’âme” (149-150, vv. 62-63), “J’entre tout sanglant dans le temple” (150, v. 83), “Et puisque Dieu m’a tant aimé” (151, v. 109), “Je proteste devant les Cieux” (151, v. 116). A final level occurs between the prisoner and his carceral surroundings through a sort of zooming in motion spotlighting the poet’s helpless and pitiful figure: “En la misérable aventure / Des longs ennuis de ma prison” (148, vv. 23-24), “Dans cette étroite solitude” (149, v. 29), “Me consoler dans ces ténèbres, / Mon désespoir le plus mordant / Et mes soucis les plus funèbres” (149, vv. 57-59), “ce captif” (150, v. 79), “Jette un peu l’œil sur ma prison” (151, v. 97), “Que d’avoir ici renfermé / Les pauvres Muses étonnées / Sous les ailes du Parlement” (151, vv. 110-112). This telescoping effect between vivid imagery of figures and places is one of the many devices that define Théophile’s strategy of self-preservation and self-defense.

“La Requête de Théophile au Roi”

Théophile’s auto-referential prison poetry appears to gain greater authenticity and less ambiguity in “Requête de Théophile au Roi,” a lengthy verse epistle composed of 33 octosyllabic dizains with a rhyme scheme featuring a rhyming couplet midway through each stanza (ABABCCDEDE). The poem can be divided into two parts with two distinct tonalities. The first, which constitutes the bulk of the poem, insinuates that his Jesuit prosecutors, “les

assassins et les voleurs” (154, v. 103), are capable of the most despicable plots and conspiracies, such as his farcical persecution leading to his incarceration. The Jesuits represent a clear and present danger to the kingdom’s institutions, especially to those of justice. This part can therefore be read as a genuine prosecution’s closing speech at a trial against these Jesuits.²²¹ The second, which concludes the poem, is a humble plea to Louis XIII for his release from prison. In it, Théophile seeks to gain the king’s recognition and foster a rehabilitation with him after his release. Should his inaction cause the death of a poet who helped build his glory, Théophile also appeals to the king’s compassion and guilt: “Qu’il plaise à Votre Majesté / De se remettre en la mémoire / Que parfois mes vers ont été / Les messagers de votre gloire” (160, vv. 301-304).

The tone and content of Théophile’s “Requête au Roi” therefore gradually shifts from reaffirming his Catholic faith to flattering and fawning over Louis XIII, and from sarcastically and burlesque sketching images of his Jesuit accusers while recounting the events of his trial to waiting for his intervention to end his suffering. The poem opens by expressing his bitterness at being abandoned by his friends, the slanderous “courtisans” in whom he had placed his trust:

Le visage des courtisans
Se peignit en cette aventure
Des couleurs dont les médisants
Voulurent peindre ma nature.
Du premier trait dont le malheur
Sépara mon destin du leur,
Mes amis changèrent de face;
Ils furent tous muets et sourds,
Et je ne vis en ma disgrâce
Rien que moi-même à mon secours (152, vv. 11-20).

²²¹ Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 86.

Théophile here references the political rather than the religious motivations behind his arrest and imprisonment. This first part of the poem narrates the poet's twists and turns since the king's *procureur général* issued a warrant for his seizure, the "trait de foudre inopiné," (152, v. 5) that disrupted his life until around the spring of 1624 when he began to seek justice and release from prison.²²² Describing himself ironically as "le porteur des Muses errantes" (153, v. 54) and "un simple faiseur de rimes" (153, v. 74) or "ce pauvre faiseur de vers" (156, v. 170), Théophile evokes in detail the steps of his persecution beginning with his summary trial and death sentence *in absentia*, escape, arrest in Catelet, and consequent imprisonment in the Conciergerie.²²³

Qu'un saint homme de grand esprit,
 Enfant du bienheureux Ignace,
 Disait en chaise et par écrit
 Que j'étais mort par contumace,
 Que je ne m'étais absenté
 Que de peur d'être exécuté
 Aussi bien que mon effigie,
 Que je n'étais qu'un suborneur,
 Et que j'enseignais la magie
 Dedans les cabarets d'honneur [...].

Que le gaillard Père Guérin,
 Qui tous les jours fait dans la chaise
 Plus de leçons à Tabarin
 Qu'à tous les clercs d'un diocèse,
 Ce vieux bateleur déguisé,
 Comme s'il eût bien disposé
 Et terre et ciel à ma ruine,
 Prêchait qu'à peu de jours de là
 La justice humaine et divine
 M'immolerait à Loyola (154-155, vv. 111-120; 155, vv. 131-140).

²²² Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 85.

²²³ Saba, 86.

Théophile's satirical evocation takes an ironic tone. He first evokes the "holy man of great spirit," Garasse, and then takes a dig at Guérin, a minor preacher involved in his trial.

Théophile calls Guérin an "old, disguised street magician" (*vieux bateleur déguisé*) "who gives more lessons," that is, who is better than "a whole diocese's clergy:" "Qui tous les jours fait [...] / Plus de leçons [...] / Qu'à tous les clercs d'un diocèse" (155, v. 132-134).²²⁴ Théophile also alludes to the recently-canonized (1622) founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius de Loyola. Garasse is the "child of blessed Ignatius" and Guérin declares to Théophile that "mankind's and God's justice would burn him [at the stake] (execute him) at Loyola:" the Jesuit founder's birthplace in Spain. One notices, too, the extent to which his "Requête au Roi" is highly auto-referential. Similar to Villon's clerical knowledge of Church formulas for creating wills (orally, written, or both), Théophile's *requête*, or formal appeal, is one of the many formulas of legal literature that he manipulates in order to cast an emotional light on his ordeal and misfortunes.

More strikingly, however, Théophile's "Requête au Roi" conveys a poignant and detailed description of the inhuman conditions of the dim, damp, and frigid jail cell where he will die if he is not to be soon freed, a description which is then followed by his proclamation of innocence in light of the false accusations made against him:²²⁵

Sans cordon, jartières ni gants,
 Au milieu de dix hallebardes,
 Je flattais des gueux arrogants
 Qu'on m'avait ordonné pour gardes:
 Et nonobstant, chargé de fers,
 On m'enfonce dans les enfers
 D'une profonde et noire cave
 Où l'on n'a qu'un peu d'air puant

²²⁴ Antoine Girard, known as Tabarin (1584?-1633) was a performer of open-air farces on stages in Paris's Place Dauphine or on the Pont Neuf. *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, 342.

²²⁵ Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 86.

Des vapeurs de la froide bave
D'un vieux mur humide et gluant.

Dedans ce commun lieu de pleurs
Où je me vis si misérable,
Les assassins et les voleurs
Avaient un trou plus favorable:
Tout le monde disait de moi
Que je n'avais ni foi ni loi,
Qu'on ne connaissait point de vice
Où mon âme ne s'adonnât,
Et quelque trait que j'écrivisse
C'était pis qu'un assassinat (154, vv. 91-110).

According to Pascal Debailly, the hyper-realistic details of Théophile's suffering body in an unknown, terrifying environment contributes to creating a unique poetry of anxiety-provoking and hallucinogenic detail.²²⁶ However, the frightening aspects of the *locus horribilis* become charged with the intention to elicit the audience's pity in a tactic of self-advocacy. Instead of simply conveying an emotional reaction such as his fear of imprisonment, Théophile deploys a strategy to gain his readers' sympathy and support. In his "Requête au Roi," Théophile's sensuality of expression, found in his earlier poems, is converted into concrete visual, tactile, olfactory, and kinesthetic perceptions of his carceral environment.²²⁷ The poet's intensely visceral portrayal of his "carceral horror" serves to demonstrate that it is not only a product of Théophile's poetic creation. Instead, this portrayal of horror invades and submerges his poems, giving it a vital, cathartic purpose in its *mise en scène*.²²⁸

²²⁶ Pascal Debailly, "Le lyrisme de la peur chez Théophile de Viau," in *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les poésies.*, ed. Guillaume Peureux (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 102-103.

²²⁷ In the "deep, black cave" of the "Hell" where they "bury" Théophile, there is only "a small amount of foul air from the vapors of the old damp and sticky walls' cold slime" (154, vv. 95-100).

²²⁸ Debailly, "Le lyrisme de la peur," 102.

Bérengrère Parmentier emphasizes the client-protector relationship implying a reciprocal sense of obligation that saturates the poet's lyrical self-positioning and intentionality in his epistles.²²⁹ She underlines that Théophile's "freedom," as he presents it, cannot be dissociated from the "dépendance clientélaire" that characterizes his relationship with Louis XIII.²³⁰ He presents the dire situation in which he finds himself using pity in the allusions to his impending end: "Sire, jetez un peu vos yeux / Sur le précipice où je tombe / Sainte image du Roi des Cieux, / Rompez les maux où je succombe" (159, vv. 291-294). In the metaphoric expression "Saintly Image of the King of the Heavens," Théophile recurs to a common association of the sovereign with God. His personal plea to the king oscillates between proclaimed references to royal glory and haunting references to his imminent death in prison if he is not saved quickly:

Ici donc comme en un tombeau,
 Troublé du péril où je rêve,
 Sans compagnie et sans flambeau,
 Toujours dans le discours de Grève,
 A l'ombre d'un petit faux jour
 Qui perce un peu l'obscur tour
 Où les bourreaux vont à la quête,
 Grand Roi, l'honneur de l'univers,
 Je vous présente la requête
 De ce pauvre faiseur de vers [...]

Juste Roi, protecteur des lois,
 Vous sur qui l'équité se fonde,
 Qui seul emportez sur les rois
 Ce titre le plus beau du monde,
 Voyez avec combien de tort
 Votre justice sent l'effort
 Du tourment qui me désespère:
 En France on n'a jamais souffert
 Cette procédure étrangère

²²⁹ Bérengrère Parmentier, "Poétique de la faveur: l'écriture de service chez Théophile de Viau," in *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les poésies.*, ed. Guillaume Peureux (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 170.

²³⁰ Parmentier, "Poétique de la faveur," 170.

Qui vous offense et qui me perd [...] (156, vv. 161-170; 158, vv. 231-240).

Towards the end of the poem, Théophile's plea noticeably takes on a more flattering tone. He alludes to the king's heroic abilities and depicts them through imagery and themes inspired by ancient mythology – abilities that can (effortlessly) break him free from his prison cell:

Comme Alcide força la mort
Lorsqu'il lui fit lâcher Thésée,
Vous ferez avec moins d'effort
Chose plus grande et plus aisée.
Signez mon élargissement:
Ainsi de trois doigts seulement
Vous abattrez vingt et deux portes,
Et romprez les barres de fer
De trois grilles qui sont plus fortes
Que toutes celles de l'Enfer (160, vv. 321-330).

In this dizain, Théophile emphasizes king's ability to accomplish Hercules's (eleventh) task – his descent into the Underworld to force Hades to liberate Theseus, who had traveled there to take away Persephone – more easily and with less effort. He takes a presumptuous position declaring that the act of freeing him is “chose plus grande” (160, v. 324) than the act of freeing Theseus. He gives himself more importance in this comparison by implying that his liberation from prison counts more than the fate of this mythological figure. An element of slight auto-derision and self-effacement also appears in these empathetic comparisons. The poem follows the conventional form and nature of an *éloge* (roughly translated as a praise or tribute text)²³¹ to a sovereign, but also differs and distances itself from it when presenting a specific request and asks a tangible favor from the king rather than simply praising his qualities: “Signez mon élargissement” (160,

²³¹ “Discours public fait à l'honneur de quelqu'un, après sa mort. Éloge funèbre. Éloge historique.”
“Louange de quelqu'un ou de quelque chose.” Émile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*.

v. 325). An ironic tone also surfaces in this strophe and more broadly in this second part of the poem. The image of “breaking down twenty-two doors” with “only three fingers” is an allusion to the king’s traditional three-fingered sign of the “hand of justice” and also a personal appeal to Louis XIII, known as “the Just” being born under the Libra zodiac sign (“weighing scales”).²³² The “three fingers” is also an allusion to the very gesture of writing and to the act of signing the document that will liberate Théophile. The poet plays upon the king’s alleged god-like omnipotence during a period of increasing absolutism and criticizes his unwillingness thus far to use his power on his behalf.

In his “Requête au Roi”, Théophile employs a formulaic “request” drawing upon medieval literary tradition to dissimulate his identity and present his longings to his reader. Horrific imagery and flattery, but also an acknowledgement of the king’s power – in the context of their client-protector or client-patron relationship – serve to reinforce the elaborate collection of auto-portraits of “Théophile the poet,” “the prisoner,” “the persecuted,” or “the inferior” that he seeks to convey to his readers.

“Requête de Théophile à Nosseigneurs de Parlement”

Following his “Requête au Roi,” Théophile addresses his judges in his “Requête de Théophile à Nosseigneurs de Parlement” and their president Verdun in his “Très Humble Requête de Théophile à Monseigneur le Premier Président” who is eager to obtain his acquittal as soon as possible. This epistle consists of eleven dizains with a rhyme scheme featuring a rhyming couplet beginning and ending each stanza (AABCBCBCDD). Its dizains alternate between octosyllabic verse (in the first eight lines) and alexandrine verse (in the final two lines),

²³² The number 22 is also perhaps significant, possibly referring to the 22 books in the Old Testament, elements by which God created the world, bones in the human skull, letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

which create a sort of crescendo effect and serve to intensify drama, leading up to the poet's emotional interjection, statement, or question. This effect also mimics an actual plea if it is pronounced in court in its slow, dramatic build-up to delivering a sharply-worded deposition.

Théophile again uses exaggerated flattery, fluctuating between identifying the Parliamentarians as “officers of the gods,” and even as “gods” in their own right:

Celui qui briserait les portes
Du cachot noir des troupes mortes,
Voyant les maux que j'ai soufferts,
Dirait que ma prison est pire:
Ici les âmes ont des fers,
Ici le plus constant soupire.
Dieux souffrez-vous que les Enfers
Soient au milieu de votre Empire?
Et qu'une âme innocente, en un corps languissant,
Ne trouve point de crise aux douleurs qu'elle sent?

L'œil du monde qui par ses flammes
Nourrit autant de corps et d'âmes
Qu'en peut porter chaque élément,
Ne saurait vivre demie heure
Où m'a logé le Parlement;
Et faut que ce bel astre meure
Lorsqu'il arrive seulement
Au premier pas de ma demeure.
Chers Lieutenants des Dieux qui gouvernez mon sort
Croyez-vous que je vive où le soleil est mort?

Je sais bien que mes insolences
Ont si fort chargé les balances
Qu'elles penchent à la rigueur,
Et que ma pauvre âme abattue
D'une longue et juste langueur
Hors d'apparence s'évertue
De sauver un peu de vigueur
Dans le désespoir qui la tue;
Mais vous êtes des Dieux et n'avez point de mains
Pour la première faute où tombent les humains (182-183, vv. 1-30).

Théophile's flattery is preceded by a certain *pathos* in his affirmation that whoever "would break down the doors of Hell" would see that his hardship and imprisonment are worse: "les maux que j'ai soufferts" (182, v. 3). Describing the *locus terribilis* of prison and the "constant sighing" of its "chained souls," the poet moves from a macro- to a micro-focus. He first addresses the "gods" whether they are content with having such a "Hell" in the middle of their "empire:" "Dieux souffrez-vous que les Enfers / Soient au milieu de votre Empire?" (182, vv. 7-8). It is worth noting that for Théophile, hell, the Conciergerie prison, located on the Île de la Cité, is at the very center of Paris. Théophile next asks these Parliamentarians whether his "innocent soul" in his "languishing body" would not be afflicted by this suffering, humbly acknowledging that they control his fate, but also perhaps acknowledging his guilt. As "gods," they are above the actions of fallible humans: "la première faute où tombent les humains" (183, v. 30), or original sin. Théophile's allusion to the Parliamentarians' hands (*mains*) is also both pertinent and significant as a metaphor for being guilty or being ashamed of something.

However, in cutting through seemingly straightforwardly-exaggerated praise of these noblemen, Théophile's "Requête ... à Nosseigneurs de Parlement" retains an ambiguous side. On the one hand, his flattery may be intended as proof of his survival in the rigors of prison. His *requêtes* seek to both judicially rehabilitate the poet accused of publishing lecherous works and to restore his poetic voice and sense of self by re-establishing a continuity broken by arrest and incarceration.²³³ On the other hand, Théophile strikingly positions himself in a groveling, humiliating light. He calls himself a "hypocritical court flatterer" who "deserved the fire" (a possible allusion to being burnt at the stake?) for not knowing how to utilize his poetic craft to

²³³ Rosellini, "La composition des *Œuvres poétiques*," 247.

“praise” such “divine spirits” (these noblemen). But at the same time, he scorns the courtiers (another allusion to this social strata) who contributed to his condemnation and imprisonment:

N'ai-je point mérité la flamme
De n'avoir su ployer mon âme
À louer vos divins esprits?
Il est temps que le Ciel s'irrite
Et qu'il punisse le mépris
D'un flatteur de Cour hypocrite
Qui vous a volé tant d'écrits,
Qui sont dus à votre mérite.
Courtisans, qui m'avez tant dérobé de jours,
Est-ce vous dont j'espère aujourd'hui du secours? (184, vv. 61-70).

The poem's ambiguity lies in the fact that its flattery, like that in “Requête au Roi,” is tainted with vengeful irony and sarcasm, as evidenced by his criticism of the court and its courtiers in the dizain above. Near the end of the poem, the ambiguity deepens as its tone shifts towards animosity, seen primarily in Théophile's apostrophes, such as “Race lâche et dénaturée” (184, v. 71), and anaphoric allusions towards the councilors, beginning with “*Que vos ...*”: “Que vos courages hébétés” (184, v. 85), “Que vos honteuses lâchetés” (184, v. 87), “Que votre faible éclat se trouvera si faux / Que vos fils rougiront de vos sales défauts” (185, vv. 99-100).

Théophile effectively exercises a form of blackmail upon this “cowardly and unnatural race.” Through his verses, he threatens to ruin, or even worse, erase, their image and posterity that will be handed down through generations – again evoking the *lieu commun* that a poet's words grant immortality to the deeds of nobles – if they do not quickly come to his aid:

Race lâche et dénaturée,
Autrefois si mal figurée,
Par mes vers récompensés,
Si ma vengeance est assouvie,
Vous serez si bien effacés,
Que vous ne ferez plus d'envie

Aux honnêtes gens offensés
 Des louanges de votre vie,
 Et que les vertueux douteront désormais
 Quel vaut mieux d'un Marquis ou d'un Clerc du Palais.

Et s'il faut que mes funérailles
 Se fassent entre les murailles
 Dont mes regards sont limités
 Dans ces pierres moins impassibles
 Que vos courages hébétés,
 J'écrirai des vers si lisibles
 Que vos honteuses lâchetés
 Y seront à jamais visibles,
 Et que les criminels de ce hideux manoir
 N'y verront point d'objet plus infâme et plus noir (184, vv. 71-90).

Théophile's menace becomes more forceful. He asserts that the courtiers are jealous that his verses were compensated, which in turn explains their animosity towards him. Worse, should Théophile's "funeral" be "held inside these restricting walls," he will write verses that will forever show their "shameful cowardice." His vengeance is also made more effective through his juxtaposition of notions of valor and honesty (*honnêtes gens, les vertueux*) with shame and cowardice (*hébétés, honteuses lâchetés, criminels, infame, noir*). It is also worth noting that Théophile's reference to the councilors' "hideux manoir" (184, v. 89) (presumably the Paris Parliament) is similar to Marot's "old manor" of screaming souls in *L'Enfer*: "Je veoy à part ung aultre vieil manoir / Tout plein de gens, de bruyt, & de tumulte" (20, vv. 34-35).

Each of Théophile's *requêtes* appears as an engaged piece of writing, already constituting a form of action as a "request" to a powerful addressee. However, the ambivalent nature of Théophile's "Requête ... à Nosseigneurs de Parlement" serves to demonstrate the array of strategies of self-preservation and lobbying in verse that the poet employs to attempt to secure his release and save his life. Unlike his mostly positive approach in "Requête au roi," he quickly shifts from a somewhat positive to negative approach in his brazen vows of vengeance.

Threatening powerful figures' or patrons' and protectors' future images and posterity in his works was yet another rhetorical strategy that Théophile employed in an attempt to rescue himself from prison.

Théophile's "Requête ... à Nosseigneurs de Parlement" remains highly ambiguous with multiple tonalities and intentions. The poem uses flattery in the *present* to coax these "protectors" to find him innocent and release him from prison: "Mais vous êtes des Dieux et n'avez point de mains / Pour la première faute où tombent les humains" (183, vv. 29-30), "Mes Juges, mes Dieux tutélaires" (185, v. 101). But, it also accuses them in the future tense as those "protectors" who abuse their status and authority. As "poet-publicist,"²³⁴ Théophile threatens to destroy their posterity through his works if they keep him locked up in prison: "J'écrirai des vers si lisibles / Que vos honteuses lâchetés / Y seront à jamais visibles" (184, vv. 86-88), "Je vous ferai paraître au jour / Dans des portraits si pitoyables / Que votre faible éclat se trouvera si faux / Que vos fils rougiront de vos sales défauts" (184-185, vv. 97-100). Théophile implies too that these noblemen will keep him locked up until his death: "Et s'il faut que mes funérailles / Se fassent entre les murailles" (184, vv. 81-82). But, along these lines, if they free Théophile, he promises in the future tense to erect their deeds in immortality and posterity: "Permettez que dorénavant / Elle [ma muse] soit sans ignominie, / Afin que votre honneur puisse trouver des vers / Dignes de les porter aux yeux de l'Univers" (185, vv. 106-110).

"Remontrance de Théophile à Monsieur de Vertamont Conseiller en la grand' Chambre"

Any form of (initial) flattery is nearly absent in his "Remontrance de Théophile à Monsieur de Vertamont Conseiller en la grand' Chambre," a much shorter *épître* consisting of

²³⁴ Adam, *La libre pensée française*, 88.

six sixains in octosyllabic verse and featuring another rhyme scheme with a rhyming couplet at the beginning of each stanza (AABCBC). The first five strophes present yet again a harmonious, pastoral landscape depicting the arrival of spring. However, this time, it is not simply about replacing the *locus horribilis* of prison with the *locus amoenus* loosely identified with his homeland of Clairac/Boussères and constructed upon certain clichés, such as the passage of seasons, metaphorically adapted to the experience of prison. In this sense, the personified Zephyrs and Aurora have little to do with Théophile's memories of Clairac. Théophile paints a vivid piece of nature that blooms, quite literally, in the backdrop of a season that signals the perpetual return to life for flora and fauna alike.²³⁵ This natural rebirth begins with the thawing of ice, whose meltwater floods the fields, threatening to make them swampy and useless: "Désormais que le renouveau / Fond la glace et dessèche l'eau / Qui rendent les prés inutiles" (199, vv. 1-3). Birds, whose songs and lungs had "frozen" in the winter ice, begin to sing upon the myrtle and rose bushes, whose association with Venus offers another allusion to love:

Que l'oiseau, de qui les glaçons
Avaient enfermé les chansons
Dans la poitrine refroidie,
Trouve la clef de son gosier
Et promène sa mélodie
Sur le myrte et sur le rosier (199, vv. 7-12).

Bees, whose wings became sluggish from the harsh conditions, can now go about making their honey, leaving the "prison" of their hives and having no limits but the sky in front of them:

Que l'abeille, après la rigueur
Qui tient ses ailes en langueur
Au fonds de ses petites cruches,
S'en va continuer le miel,

²³⁵ Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 86-87.

Et quittant la prison des ruches,
N'a son vol borné que du ciel (199, vv. 13-18).

Soothing breezes (the personified Zephyrs) flow out upon the fields' "entrails," releasing what the cold had trapped in the dew of daybreak (the personified Aurora) and opening the dungeons of the earth to let flowers grow forth:

Que les Zéphyres, s'épanchant
Parmi les entrailles des champs,
Lâchent ce que le froid enserre;
Que l'Aurore avec ses pleurs
Ouvre les cachots de la terre
Pour en faire sortir les fleurs (199, vv. 19-24).

And snakes, who normally are the toughest creatures to emerge given their predatory and poisonous character, are even brought out by order of the personified Nature from these same "dungeons of the earth" by the sheer pleasantness and softness of the changing season:

Que le temps se rend si bénin,
Même aux serpents pleins de venin
Dont notre sang est la pâture,
Qu'en la faveur de la saison,
Et par arrêt de la Nature,
Il les fait sortir de prison (199-200, vv. 25-30).

Théophile paints a resplendent glossary of weather phenomena – melting ice and soaked fields where fresh breezes pour forth and flowers spring – and a bestiary of animal activity: birds that sing again after having frozen lungs, bees that buzz again to make their honey, and venomous snakes that even venture forth from the ground. Upon this backdrop of natural conditions evoking the transition between winter and spring, Théophile uses metaphors that echo the carceral experience, to describe animals (the "key" to a bird's "throat," or rather its vocal tract

and its ability to sing) or geography (the “dungeons” of the earth). With the exception of the last one, each sixain features the noun “prison” or related terms: “des prisons à nos désirs” (199, v. 6), “enfermé les chansons” and “la clef de son gosier” (199, vv. 8, 10), “la prison des ruches” (199, v. 17), “les cachots de la terre” (199, v. 23), and “il les fait sortir de prison” (200, v. 30). In this manner, Théophile appears to refer to the natural cycle of life – the thawing of a cold, bitter winter landscape and (re)emergence of dormant flora and fauna in a spring landscape – as a plea for his liberation in arguing that it is a “natural” move now that he has served his time (and weathered his “winter”). He deserves to walk out into the blossoming “spring” of life outside the prison walls. His “Remontrance à Monsieur de Vertamont” does not praise any counselors in charge of his interrogation, nor does it explicitly remind the reader of the divine nature of this counselor’s judicial position. There are no motives drawn from eulogizing rhetoric: instead, the poem proceeds with an evocation of nurturing nature and its springtime renewal.²³⁶ Inferring that a divine power is orchestrating nature’s actions, Théophile ends the poem by inviting judge Vertamont to imitate this power, from which he draws his judicial authority: “Ne me tenez plus en suspens, / Et me faites au moins la grâce / Que le Ciel fait à des serpents” (200, vv. 34-36). Based on the episode of the original sin in Genesis, the “serpents” can be associated with manifestations of Satan, and therefore with evil and temptation. The evocation of an idealized and typified countryside setting makes his final plea even more poignant.²³⁷

The bucolic images introduced in this poem and in others around which it is regrouped compose the principal theme of Théophile’s final prison-poems. As previously examined, his “Lettre à son frère” deploys the charms of his birthplace through the prism of memory, and his

²³⁶ Rosellini, “La composition des *Œuvres poétiques*,” 248.

²³⁷ Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, 86-87.

“Maison de Sylvie,” placed immediately after his “Remontrance à Monsieur de Vertamont,” multiplies these pastoral images to depict instances of shattered happiness.²³⁸ A dualism of brightness and darkness not only extends from the radiance of the *locus amoenus* of an idyllic yet generalized countryside landscape that cathartically replaces the sordid *locus horribilis* of his jail cell, but also encompasses the structure of his prison poems themselves. The nightmarish descriptions of the *monde à l’envers* of his prison in his first set of poems give way to the rejuvenating qualities and beauty of nature in the second set. His flattering pleas to judicial and protector-patron “gods” evaporate, leaving Théophile to display and entrench himself as “I, the prison survivor,” utterly drained and spent from his ordeal. Théophile’s imprisoned *je*, presenting an intimate object of endless suffering, brings the reader back to the poet’s ambiguous sense of authorial position and autoreferentiality. His lyric *je* has always manifested itself as a strongly authorial utterance in the sense that it already served a discursive role of public self-defense (rebuttals against prior, public criticism) and also affirmed his intellectual position and individual opinions on literature and his world.

“Théophile à son ami Chiron”

In addition to employing a strongly authorial utterance to serve a discursive role of auto-defense against his accusers and to construct a self-portrait of gratitude and humility towards protectors and patrons among the king and royal court, Théophile also addresses verses of gratitude towards those who cared for him in other ways. He dedicates a touching poem to Charles de Lorme, a doctor who treated his illness (likely tuberculosis) that worsened while he was incarcerated. The poem is composed of eleven octosyllabic *sizains* and again features a

²³⁸ Rosellini, “La composition des *Œuvres poétiques*,” 248.

rhyme scheme with an initial rhyming couplet in each strophe (AABCBC). Théophile addresses de Lorme as Chiron, one of the mythological Centaurs who taught medicine to Asclepius and who also taught Achilles and Hercules. He again includes a heightened referentiality in his poem by referring to the same *ennuy* that he (like Charles d'Orléans and Marot) previously used to designate his static, confined state. In the "horrors of such a black prison," Théophile also evokes the physicality of the "infected air" from all the "damp odors" and severe cold that render him entirely "afflicted" and "defeated:"

Penses-tu que malgré l'ennui
Que me peut donner aujourd'hui
L'horreur d'une prison si noire,
Je ne te garde encor un lieu
Au même endroit de ma mémoire
Où se doit mettre un demi-dieu?

Bouffi d'un air tout infecté
De tant d'ordures humecté
Et du froid qui me fait la guerre,
Tout chagrin et tout abattu,
Mieux qu'en autre lieu de la terre
Il me souvient de ta vertu (192-193, vv. 7-18).

The poem appears to again flatter his protector "Chiron" by calling the doctor a "demi-dieu" whose cherished memory will always accompany the poet: "Je ne te garde encor un lieu / Au même endroit de ma mémoire / Où se doit mettre un demi-dieu?" (192, vv. 10-12). However, Théophile's objectives and motivations of self-preservation are not the same as in his other encomiastic poems. "Chiron" already treated an ailing Théophile in his cell, and in this light, the poem expresses gratitude for his care and medicines: "Toi qui fais un breuvage d'eau / Mille fois meilleur et plus beau / Que celui du beau Ganymède" (192, vv. 1-3),²³⁹ "Si devant que de me

²³⁹ In Ancient Greek mythology, Ganymede was a Trojan hero who became Zeus's cup-bearer in Olympus and poured "nectar" to the gods.

coucher / Mes soupirs se pouvaient boucher / D'un long trait de cet hydromèle / Où tout chagrin s'ensevelit" (193, vv. 31-34).²⁴⁰ He instead juxtaposes the "horrible visions" brought on by his imprisonment and his weakened health, which have both affected his poetic talent, "mes Muses étourdies" (193, v. 23), with sensuous dream imagery:

Au lieu de continus ennuis
Qui me font passer tant de nuits
Avec des visions horribles,
Mes yeux verraient en sommeillant,
Mille voluptés invisibles
Que la main cherche en s'éveillant (193, vv. 37-42).

As mentioned, the poem takes a sensuous turn: he dreams of "thousands of invisible delights" when he sleeps that he "reaches for" when he wakes. These delights include being in Paris among court society and not in prison, since the Conciergerie was in the same city. They also include being with the figure of Cloris instead of with the "fire and iron" in his present prison-hell:

Au lieu d'être dans les enfers,
De songer des feux et des fers
Qui me font le repos si triste,
Je songerais d'être à Paris
Dans le cabinet où Calliste
Eut le triomphe de Cloris.

A l'éclat de ses doux flambeaux
Les noires caves des tombeaux
D'où je vois sortir les Furies,
Se peindraient de vives couleurs
Et seraient à mes rêveries
De beaux prés tapissés de fleurs (193-194, vv. 43-54).

²⁴⁰ Beverage made from fermented honey and water, sometimes flavored with herbs and spices.

The anaphora “au lieu” which begins the previous stanza, “Au lieu de continus ennuis [...] / Au lieu d’être dans les enfers” (193, vv. 37, 43), introduces the important image and memory of his object of desire, his lover, Cloris. He contrasts the shining of Cloris’s eyes with the dark depths of his prison-tomb, which are soon “painted in bright colors,” and appear in his daydreams, “mes rêveries” (194, v. 53), like a “field carpeted with flowers.” The poem concludes with an explicit hierarchy of people whom Théophile laments. Chiron is named first, but placed third and last in Théophile’s order of regrets after the king, and then his lover, who exists in the poem as a representation of the poet’s desire:

Ah! que je perds de ne pouvoir
 Quelquefois t’ouïr et te voir
 Dans mes noires mélancolies
 Qui ne me laissent presque rien
 De tant d’agréables folies
 Qu’on aimait en mon entretien!

Que mes Dieux sont mes ennemis
 De ce qu’ils ne m’ont pas permis
 De t’appeler en ma détresse!
 Docte Chiron, après le Roi
 Et les faveurs de ma maîtresse,
 Mon cœur n’a de regret qu’à toi (194, vv. 55-66).

In this passage, it even appears that his apostrophe to “Chiron,” planned in the penultimate sixain, can be read as an emotional appeal to “Cloris,” punctuated by the interjection “Ah!” It is also a sensual recollection of “sometimes hearing and seeing” “Cloris” in his dark existence,²⁴¹ where he cannot touch the “so many pleasurable escapades” that both enjoyed in the past.

²⁴¹ Théophile’s repeated references to darkness and melancholy – “prison si noire” (193, v. 9), “noires mélancolies” (194, v. 57), and “noires caves” (194, v. 49) – allude to the effects of black bile, according to the humoral theory of Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Théophile’s Early Modern period. Noga Arikha, *Passions and Tempers. A History of the Humours* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 10.

“Théophile à son ami Chiron” evolves from lamentation on the poet’s current condition to direct expression of sensual desire, devoid of attempts at self-defense. Théophile had “won” his trial, so to speak, and his pleas and arguments, formulated in the verse epistles above that he composed from behind prison walls, had not been in vain. On September 1, 1625, all charges were dropped against him, but he was banished from France.²⁴² As “Chiron’s” involvement attests, Théophile never recovered from the serious illness that he contracted towards the end of his incarceration, and he died a year later while in hiding at Chantilly castle under the Duc de Montmorency’s protection.

VI. Conclusion

The “auto-apologetic” poems examined above that implored authority figures for help or expressed gratitude to protectors or caregivers like Chiron attest to Théophile’s authorial and narrative “I,” whose referential nature was gradually prized over lyrical or aesthetic aims.²⁴³ D’Angelo asserts that this process of “renewed referentialization” goes hand in hand with that of “defictionalization.” Théophile’s second- and third-person perspectives give place to first-person ones in order to drum up support for his cause, secure his release, and finally to end his suffering. The “renewed referentialization” of Théophile’s prison poetry (and of his greater corpus of prose and verse works) would appear as a product of the shifting rhetorical strategies he employs to champion his cause. Théophile creates a range of authentic and fictionalized images of himself, from the withering prisoner to the unjustly persecuted intellectual and the “client” or “protected” to “protector” figures of the king or authorities. These images further complicate determining the

²⁴² Petterson, “*In turba clamor*,” 28.

²⁴³ d’Angelo, “Le poète, le roi, le jésuite et le juge,” 228.

authenticity of his experiences and memory. As we have seen thus far along French literary history, incarcerated poets developed several adaptive and rhetorical strategies to touch their reader for interests of self-preservation.

An apt transition to the prison poetry of my study's next (and last) prisoner-poet, Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), is found in both his and Théophile's marginalized status and alleged transgressive behaviors. As I will argue in my next chapter, Verlaine's unapologetic, overt homo-/bisexuality was just one piece of his pre-carceral identity plunged into crisis. While not quite making the case that Verlaine espoused a *libertin* philosophy, his activities bear some similarities with those of Théophile and his *libertinage*. Again, although *libertinage* stipulates an aptitude to control one's desires, Verlaine's case rather gives the impression of uncontrolled excesses, especially in the earlier, dissolute phase of his life. Verlaine and Théophile share an explicit knowledge and history of marginality, both enduring accusations of homosexuality (sodomy), trials, falls from grace, and their consequent imprisonment. Both were the subject of a collective rehabilitation as authors associated with marginalized, taboo practices (bisexuality). Verlaine's statement in "Reddition" in his collection *Femmes* (1890) echoes one of Théophile's statements in the same "execrable" sonnet referencing Phyllis from his *Parnasse satyrique*. Théophile alludes to explicit acts (*foutre*) and body parts (*cul*): "Phyllis, tout est ...outu, je meurs de la vérole; / [...] Mon Dieu je me repens d'avoir si mal vécu, / Et si votre courroux à ce coup ne me tue, / Je fais vœu désormais de ne ...tre qu'en cul."²⁴⁴ Verlaine appears to re-use these elements in "Reddition:" "Je suis foutu. Tu m'as vaincu / Je n'aime plus que ton gros cu".²⁴⁵ Guillaume Peureux underlines the striking similarity between both poets, whose life writing

²⁴⁴ *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, t. 3, 136, vv. 1, 12-14.

²⁴⁵ Paul Verlaine, *Œuvres libres*, ed. Jissey (Jean Texcier) (Metz: Au verger des amours, 1949), 70-71.

sought rehabilitation after persecution for a problematic, ambiguous bisexuality that their poems cannot determine:

L'allusion à ce sonnet de Théophile de Viau, qui donne en fait lieu à une réécriture, révèle une connaissance explicite des marges, d'une littérature minoritaire qu'un lecteur averti saura goûter, mais aussi d'une histoire, celle de la chute de Théophile et de la disparition des recueils *satyriques* au terme du procès intenté (1623) contre ce dernier. Théophile fut accusé de sodomie et d'homosexualité; et si la version jouisseuse et heureuse de Verlaine se démarque des sarcasmes de Théophile, les deux poètes se rejoignent sur un point: la bisexualité mise en scène par le premier rencontre bien la conclusion du poème verlainien, où la partenaire dominatrice se dote d'une identité ambivalente, alors même que son seul "cu" semble désormais retenir toute l'attention du poète. S'articulent donc ici des problématiques personnelles et des mouvements collectifs de réhabilitations d'auteurs et de pratiques mis en minorité.²⁴⁶

It is not clear whether Verlaine was familiar with Théophile's sonnet and whether it circulated during Verlaine's period. The similarities between the bawdy forms of these two prisoner-poets' texts can simply be chalked up to a long-standing tradition of playing upon words and clichés from obscene poetry that can be found elsewhere in abundance in both poets' other works. Théophile's works were "rediscovered" in the nineteenth century partly thanks to his namesake, the poet and novelist Théophile Gautier (1811-1872). The seventeenth-century poet appealed to Gautier not only because they shared the same first name, but as Gautier remarked in *Les Grotesques* (1844), because Théophile belonged to a group of "authors of the third order, looked down upon and obsolete" whose "literary deformities" and "poetic deviations" Gautier could have found intriguing.²⁴⁷ Gautier also wanted to demonstrate that the Romantic movement had precursors not only in the Pléiade (Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, etc.) but also during

²⁴⁶ Guillaume Peureux, "Ce que le XVII^e siècle fait à Verlaine," *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 60-61.

²⁴⁷ Joan DeJean, *Libertine Strategies. Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1981), 9.

the first half of the seventeenth century. According to Gautier, Théophile was the most striking example to continue the Ronsardian tradition during this period.

While Gautier's comments in *Les Grotesques* are at times anachronistic, fantasized, and incorrect, interest in Théophile grew throughout the nineteenth-century.²⁴⁸ Victor Hugo mentions Théophile in his play *Marion de Lorme* (1831), Gérard de Nerval's character Sylvie in his collection of short stories and poems *Les Filles du feu* (1854) was inspired by Théophile's poem "La maison de Sylvie," Charles Baudelaire cites Théophile in one of his sonnets in his posthumous, fragmentary collection *Mon cœur mis à nu* (1887), and Stéphane Mallarmé wrote a vast personal anthology of Théophile's "most beautiful" poems, diligently transcribing them in his notebooks as a pupil.²⁴⁹ Verlaine's prison poetry then curiously echoes Théophile's personal experience and subsequent artful, rhetorical, and persuasive life writing employed towards the poet's survival. Verlaine's carceral poems, examined in the next chapter, will demonstrate to what extent he confronted his own identity crisis, and in what ways he succeeded in overcoming and resolving it within the confines of his jail cell.

²⁴⁸ On this subject, see Guido Saba, *Fortunes et infortunes de Théophile de Viau: histoire de la critique, suivie d'une bibliographie* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1997).

²⁴⁹ Saba, *Un poète rebelle*, ix-x, xiii.

CHAPTER FIVE. PAUL VERLAINE: HEALING THE AUTHORIAL SELF IN THE SAFETY OF PRISON

I. Introduction

Passing from Théophile de Viau's seventeenth-century prison poems in the previous chapter to Paul Verlaine's nineteenth century poetry in this chapter, the autobiographical and autoreferential "I" comes more powerfully to the fore. However, the question of biography in his poetry could be problematic. On one hand, Verlaine's sensibility and the apparent simplicity of his writing favors a literal reading that interprets his texts according to his life. On the other hand, such a reading risks restricting it to a "simple autobiographical echo" stripped of poetic design of a greater scope.¹ Verlaine's works have also been presented as fictive, but packed with referential and autobiographical details, contributing to an unstable, fleeting, and elusive "posture," or presentation of his self and a literary identity constructed by the poet himself.² The most salient motif of Verlaine's prison poetry is this exact question of identity, a question that involves the crises he experienced, a regained sense of self, and his paradoxical relationship to his carceral world, all of which should be considered sub-sections of the fundamental question of identity. While all the other prisoner-poets in this study viewed their imprisonment as a limitation to their integrity and freedom, Verlaine turns prison into a safe haven that allows him to rediscover himself and thus construct a coherent identity. The many crises he experienced during his pre-prison life contributed to a fragmented identity that contrasts with the newfound clarity and vision he discovered and cultivated behind bars. Verlaine suffered from alcoholism,

¹ Solène Thomas, "Travailler à l'indécis. Étude littéraire et stylistique de Verlaine." PhD dissertation, Université Jean Moulin (Lyon 3), 2018, 30.

² Solenn Dupas, *Poétique du second Verlaine: un art du déconcertement entre continuité et renouvellement* (Paris: Garnier, 2010), 404; Thomas, "Travailler à l'indécis," 269.

depression, and a double hetero- and homosexual life (typified in the image of the *homo duplex*) between his wife Mathilde and his lover and fellow poet, Arthur Rimbaud, with whom he had a passionate yet abusive relationship. The coherence of Verlaine's renewed identity was achieved in most part by his return to, and reconnection with, the Catholic Church³ towards the middle of his imprisonment, which contributed to his feelings of spiritual and physical renewal and his readiness to rejoin society after his release.

As we will see, prison becomes a space of transfiguration; from a closed and negative location, it transforms itself into an imagined geography of rehabilitation and security. In his self-portrayal, Verlaine recalls his past faults while at times depicting himself in a mythicized form. Verlaine was imprisoned in the Petits-Carmes prison in Brussels and the Mons "maison de sûreté" from July 10, 1873 to January 16, 1875 after a violent confrontation with Rimbaud. His poetic fecundity in prison occurred during a delimited period of time and in a delimited space, composing more than 700 verses at the beginning of his imprisonment between July and September 1873. This is striking since Verlaine until this point tended to sparingly compose poetry. During his incarceration, he underwent a "change of aesthetics" from a denser and slower style to a more abundant, easy, and unique one influenced by the experience of prison.⁴ This chapter will explore Verlaine's paradoxical experience of imprisonment. I will examine five poetic themes and motifs that his prison poetry privileges: 1) the daily carceral experience; 2) his staging of the self, or what could be called his representations of selfhood; 3) a longing for

³ Terms proposed by Guy Goffette instead of "(new) conversion," which he considers "inappropriate to Verlaine's spiritual itinerary" in prison. Guy Goffette, *L'Autre Verlaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), 60.

⁴ Gilles Negrello, "De la verve poétique: le Verlaine seconde manière de *Cellulairement*," *Recherches et Travaux* 85 (2014): 35.

infinite expansiveness and vastness; 4) the depictions of his carceral space; and 5) his spiritual renewal and return to Catholicism.

In order to explore these five themes, I will focus on eight representative poems which Verlaine wrote during his Belgian incarceration: “Impression fausse,” “Autre,” “Au lecteur,” “Écrit en 1875,” “Le dernier dizain,” “Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,” “Sur les eaux,” and “Final.”⁵ These eight poems are the most representative of the main, salient themes of Verlaine’s lyrical self-expression under the constraints of imprisonment. Many of these poems’ themes also intersect. “Autre” and “Impression fausse” evoke the limits and routine of Verlaine’s life in prison. “Au lecteur,” “Écrit en 1875,” and “Le dernier dizain” exhibit Verlaine’s staging and representation of his self as a wandering, weary pilgrim and repentant sinner, typified in the image of the *homo viator*. “Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,” “Sur les eaux,” and “Écrit en 1875” activate a Verlainian topography of infinite vastness found in expansive countryside landscapes, cityscapes, skies, and oceans that contrasts with the spatial constraints of prison. “Impression fausse,” “Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,” “Écrit en 1875,” and “Le dernier dizain” depict the carceral space by having reference to a set of symbolic colors and architecture. “Écrit en 1875” and “Final” portray Verlaine’s experience of spiritual renewal and return to Catholicism towards the end of his incarceration.

⁵ Verlaine’s corpus of prison poetry is quite large. It encompasses approximately no less than sixty-nine poems dispersed across several works, including his unpublished collection *Cellulairement* (1873-74) and also *Sagesse* (1881), *Jadis et naguère* (1884), *Parallèlement* (1889), *Dédicaces* (1890), and *Invectives* (1896). *Cellulairement*, suivi par *Mes prisons*, ed. Pierre Brunel (Paris: Gallimard, 2013), 374-377.

II. Lost in the Wilderness: Poetic Transgressions

The *Parnasse*

Verlaine published his first standalone collection of poetry, *Poèmes saturniens*, in 1866, which received varying responses or went largely unnoticed among the *Parnasse*, the lettered *milieu* Verlaine frequented in Paris.⁶ At this time, the *Parnasse* was the *avant-garde* of poetry, and all the young poets from this school became known in 1866 from a collective publication, *Le Parnasse contemporain*, with a second series appearing in July 1871.⁷ Their name evoked Mount Parnassus, the mythical home of the Muses and, more generally, of poetry, and with this return to mythology came a neoclassical turn away from the preceding Romanticism, and in particular “social Romanticism,” roughly from 1860-1880.⁸ The Parnassians rejected the “social utility” of poetry (in the name of various ideological aspirations, swift personal recognition, or financial gain) that characterized the 1830s and that had seen its “symbolic apotheosis” in 1848 when Romantic sensation and writer Alphonse de Lamartine was chosen to head the Provisional Government.⁹ Verlaine’s poems in this collection reflect his uneasy, hesitant, and youthful search for what Seth Whidden terms as a “poetic subjectivity.”¹⁰ Verlaine attempted to set himself apart, as poet and author, from the ideals and styles of the *Parnasse*’s loose social and

⁶ Alain Buisine, *Paul Verlaine. Histoire d’un corps* (Paris, Tallandier, 1995), 97-99.

⁷ Yann Mortelette, “Corbière, Hugo et les poètes du Parnasse,” *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France* 118, no. 1 (2018): 73.

⁸ Seth Whidden, *Leaving Parnassus: the Lyric Subject in Verlaine and Rimbaud* (Rodopi: Amsterdam and New York, 2007), 17.

⁹ Robert Denomé, *The French Parnassian Poets* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 3, cited by Whidden, *Leaving Parnassus*, 17.

¹⁰ Whidden, 66.

literary circle which he had quickly joined. Poems such as “Melancholia,” “Résignation,” “Nevermore,” and “L’Angoisse” communicate his internal struggle and “desire to be heard, read, and accepted” which “led him to imitate – sometimes to the point of parody – his predecessors and contemporaries,” taking the form of reminiscences or desired imitations in his early poetry.¹¹ Verlaine attempts to shape his “lyric subject”¹² and to create a distinct voice among the other poets around him.

The title *Poèmes saturniens* was inspired by Charles Baudelaire’s (1821-1867) works, in particular “Épigraphe pour un livre condamné” (“[...] Jette ce livre saturnien, / Orgiaque et mélancolique”), which was published in the posthumous edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* (1868).¹³ Verlaine encountered the first edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857) during his studies at Lycée Condorcet in 1860, and excerpts from his essay on Baudelaire (1865) written in his youth give an idea of the legacy he received from the poet.¹⁴ Élodie Wahl remarks that the malign influence of Saturn was also Baudelaire’s malign impact, which did not exclude a form of resistance on Verlaine’s part: “la dépression saturnienne revendiquée se convertit en fait en un malicieux clin d’œil à Baudelaire que Verlaine est en train de récrire.”¹⁵ Baudelaire’s works were nonetheless an influential reading for Verlaine and a crucial catalyst in his poetic reflection “au moment

¹¹ Whidden, *Leaving Parnassus*, 49.

¹² Whidden, 68.

¹³ Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois. 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1975-1976), 1.137; Whidden, 50.

¹⁴ Arnaud Bernadet, *Commentaire de Fêtes galantes, Romances sans paroles précédé de Poèmes saturniens de Paul Verlaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 212-219.

¹⁵ Élodie Wahl, ““On sait trop tout le prix du malheur pour le perdre en disert gaspillage,”” *Revue Verlaine* 12 (2014): 227.

d'une puberté à la fois physique et littéraire."¹⁶ The "School of Baudelaire" that formed inside the *Parnasse* also started a revolution of poetic language from 1860-1880 through figures such as Mallarmé, Verlaine, and Rimbaud. Verlaine's *Poèmes saturniens* therefore serve as an important point of reference for demonstrating the persistence and continuation of this melancholic tone in his later poetry.

While it is debated whether the *Parnasse* was simply a continuation of earlier Romanticism or a separate reaction against it,¹⁷ Whidden remarks that it was never a clearly defined literary movement or school, unlike Romanticism and eventually Symbolism. The Parnassian movement remained more of an "assemblage of poets whose work shared, to varying degrees, some common approaches to poetic content or form."¹⁸ Steve Murphy also defines the *Parnasse* as more of an obscure and nascent social circle: "bien davantage à ses débuts une nébuleuse qu'une école" and "un mouvement social embryonnaire."¹⁹ Leconte de Lisle's works, in particular his *Poèmes antiques* (1852) and *Poésies barbares* (1862), led the Parnassian call for a turn away from the trappings of nineteenth-century French society towards Antiquity and an earlier, mythological, and barbaric past.²⁰ In 1868, the Parnassians, including Verlaine, began to attend the salon of Marie-Anne Gaillard de Villard, nicknamed "Nina," Comtesse de Callias, a young, eccentric, and wealthy bourgeoisie socialite who played the piano and composed poetry.

¹⁶ Steve Murphy, *Marges du premier Verlaine* (Paris: Champion, 2003), 67.

¹⁷ Gretchen Schultz, *The Gendered Lyric: Subjectivity and Difference in Nineteenth-Century French Poetry* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), 84, cited by Whidden, *Leaving Parnassus*, 18.

¹⁸ Denommé, *French Parnassian Poets*, 17, cited by Whidden, 18.

¹⁹ Murphy, *Marges du premier Verlaine*, 88-89.

²⁰ Whidden, 20.

The Parnassians also began meeting each month starting in 1869 for what came to be called the “Vilains Bonshommes” dinners.

Alcoholism and the *poète buveur*

Verlaine’s identity crisis was brought about by numerous factors that defined his pre-carcer life. One of these factors was his alcoholism combined with his urge to flee and wander. As Nicolas Pinon suggests, alcohol and religion appear to be two (ultimately failing) attempts at healing from the wounds of a desperate search for self.²¹ Porter similarly remarks that alcoholism achieved a compromise “between suicide and survival, preserving him as much as possible in a blurry, dreamy swoon that did not threaten immediate self-annihilation but offered one advantage of that state – relief from pain.”²² Verlaine’s use of alcohol was a “narcissistic retreat into the self,” a retreat into an interior world in order to erase the disappointment elicited by the exterior world. Although alcohol was an important part of his life, Verlaine did not need it to write poetry: “jamais Verlaine ne fit de vers au café, affirmera toujours son ami Gustave Le Rouge [...] Tout au plus se contentait-il d’y corriger des épreuves en retard ou d’y griffonner à la hâte une lettre pressante.”²³ Nevertheless, the café was the location *par excellence* for Verlaine and it played an important role in his self-representation. This self-portrayal was at once transgressive and limiting. On one hand, Verlaine’s life and work were irreversibly shaped by the status and aura of a “*poète maudit*,” “cursed” by his alcoholism, abusive love affair with

²¹ Nicolas Pinon, “Métopsychole du mal. Paul Verlaine: entre alcool et religion,” *Caitale Echinox* 24 (2013): 202.

²² Laurence Porter, *The Crisis of French Symbolism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 87.

²³ Buisine, *Histoire d’un corps*, 92.

Rimbaud, and incarceration. On the other hand, his creative talent was restricted to this preconception of the *poète buveur*: “ce versant en effet capital de sa création a fini par occulter de larges pans de sa palette créatrice, au point de lui imputer un coloris unique, stéréotypé commode qui a entraîné la censure consensuelle de tout ce qui ne coïncide pas avec cette idée reçue.”²⁴ Solène Thomas classifies Verlaine’s alcoholism as an errancy both in a metaphorical and physical sense.²⁵ His urge to flee and escape was motivated by a search for a personal and poetic identity,²⁶ which aligns with his desire to “vivre beaucoup dans tous les sens du terme: vivre longtemps, vivre intensément, vivre superlativement,” or rather, “dans toutes les directions.”²⁷

“The infernal bridegroom:”²⁸ Arthur Rimbaud and Verlaine’s homo-/bisexuality

Another factor contributing to Verlaine’s existential crises was his relationship with Arthur Rimbaud, which laid bare his latent homosexuality. A vagrant from an early age, Rimbaud was determined to establish himself in Paris to begin his career as a poet. “Bored and penniless,” he sent a few of his poems to Verlaine who was so impressed that he invited the

²⁴ Steve Murphy, “‘Pauvre Lelian’? Pour une découverte des richesses de Verlaine,” *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 4.

²⁵ “Les errances de Verlaine, au sens littéral (voyages en Angleterre et en Belgique) comme au sens métaphorique (alcool, ‘affaire Rimbaud,’ prison, divorce...) témoignent de la désorientation.” Thomas, “Travailler à l’indécis,” 25.

²⁶ “La fugue est bien plus qu’une fuite pour un poète qui cherche un nouveau langage poétique qui soit en relation spéculaire avec la quête d’un nouveau soi.” Antonio Viselli, “Paul Verlaine et le langage fuyant des oiseaux,” *TRANS – Revue de littérature générale et comparée* 18 (2014). <http://journals.openedition.org/trans/1028>.

²⁷ Thomas, 25.

²⁸ Term used by Rimbaud (*l’époux infernal*) to refer to himself in the section entitled “Délires I: Vierge folle – L’époux infernal” recounting their relationship in his famous extended prose poem “Une saison en enfer” (1873). He refers to Verlaine as the “mad virgin” (*vierge folle*). Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. André Guyaux and Aurélia Cervoni (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), 259-262.

teenager to stay with him and his family in Paris.²⁹ Arriving in September of 1871, Rimbaud was ten years younger than Verlaine and the same age as his pregnant wife, Mathilde, who was repelled by his crude and deliberately offensive behavior. Rimbaud expressed a disdain of the Parnassians, who also viewed Rimbaud as unbearable, boorish, and outrageous, but tolerated Verlaine's homosexual relationship, which he and Rimbaud openly flaunted in Paris and abroad during trips to England and later Belgium.

The duo frequented together the Cercle Zutique (or Cercle des Poètes Zutiques) composed of Parnassians who splintered from the Vilains Bonshommes. Despite its brief stint from October to November of 1871, the Cercle Zutique has been labeled a confraternity, a heterogenous group of poets, artists, and musicians who gathered on the third floor of the Latin Quarter *Hôtel des Étrangers* to drink liquor, smoke hashish, play music, and fill what is now known as the *Album zutique* with a disparate mix of ribald and anticlerical songs and caricatures, poems experimenting with formal or syllabic constraints (such as monosyllabic sonnets and rondeaux), punning aphorisms and epigrams to jokingly reinforce the social order rather than undermine it, and poetic parodies.³⁰ Given its exclusively male nature and homoerotic themes of some of the “*zutismes*” penned by its “*Zutistes*,” the Cercle Zutique may also have functioned as an imagined homosexual space that opposed traditional family (heterosexual) normativity.³¹

²⁹ Jeffrey Meyers, “The Savage Experiment: Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine,” *The Kenyon Review* 33, no. 3 (2011): 170-171.

³⁰ Robert St. Clair, *Poetry, Politics, and the Body in Rimbaud: Lyrical Material* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 212.

³¹ The Cercle's name, and those of its members and texts, derive from the one-word French interjection (*zut*, “darn”) that epitomized the rupture, quite literally (*zut* can interrupt a situation or conversation), at the heart of this society of poetic parody and satire. Robert St. Clair notes that “to the poetry of the intellect and of the *Patrie* proposed by a certain Parnassus in 1870-71, the *zutistes* opposed a complex poetics of laughter and debauchery, of anti-conformist reverence, unserious cheek and *sauoulerie* (drunkenness), of community and creative communism.” 81 texts were originally left in the *Album*, 36 of which were composed by Verlaine and Rimbaud. Its homoerotic pieces include *calembour* maxims “positing male homosexuality as an axiomatic source of semiotic and corporeal

Murphy also notes that Verlaine demonstrated a “pragmatic contradiction or paradox” in the way in which he approached and discussed homosexuality in his poetry. The context of masculine homosexuality was a means of both paying homage to and competing with Baudelaire’s legacy and image.³² Indeed, Baudelaire had alluded to “sapphic” and homoerotic themes in his poetry, leading to his prosecution and trial in court.³³ However, Whidden notes that if Verlaine’s poetry is to be read as a simple poetic transcription of his personal life, then his divided lyric subject is “a mirror of the divided Verlaine, split between heterosexuality and homosexuality.”³⁴ Porter, too, comments that Verlaine’s poetry, such as his *Romances sans paroles* (1872), oscillates between homosexual and heterosexual feelings. His poems in “Ariettes oubliées” appear to communicate the predominance of the heterosexual (his remembered relationships with the “loved woman” of the poem and the loss of his blissful past) over the homosexual.³⁵

Verlaine’s tension between homosexuality and heterosexuality further contributed to fracturing his identity. As Russel King remarks, his *Romances sans paroles* can be described as a

jouissance: ‘La pédérastie est un cas / Est un cas bandable.’” The *Album* culminated in the sonnet “Propos du cercle” by Léon Valade and Jean Keck that serves as the best “(in)coherent statement of the group’s aesthetic identity.” St. Clair, *Poetry, Politics, and the Body in Rimbaud*, 212, 216-217.

³² Murphy, *Marges du premier Verlaine*, 204.

³³ Myriam Robic notes that during the period, the celebrated Ancient Greek poetess became synonymous with lesbianism. With society’s refusal to acknowledge homosexuality (among women), considered against nature, Robic states that poets like Verlaine sought to capitalize on the taboo topic of sapphic (lesbian) love to advance their art: “à l’image de Baudelaire, les jeunes poètes de la seconde partie du XIXe siècle, cherchent à utiliser l’effet de scandale des ‘amours lesbiennes’ pour promouvoir le produit de leur plume.” Verlaine also shared an affinity for Sappho (in light of her alleged hetero- and homosexual liaisons), publishing a sonnet entitled “Sappho” and the collection *Les Amis* (1867), later integrated into *Parallèlement* (1889). Myriam Robic, “Verlaine et le saphisme: autour des Amis,” *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 200-202, 208; Murphy, 203.

³⁴ Whidden, *Leaving Parnassus*, 71.

³⁵ Its fifth poem references Verlaine’s longing for a vaguely defined “Her,” sensually evoking her smell (“Un air bien vieux, bien faible et bien charmant / Rôde discret, épuré quasiment, / Par le boudoir longtemps parfumé d’Elle”), which strongly alludes to the loss of his wife Mathilde by this time. Paul Verlaine, *Œuvres en prose complètes*, ed. Jacques Borel (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 193; Porter, *Crisis of French Symbolism*, 108.

bisexual text since the majority of its poems “are inspired by, or depict, however indirectly” his heterosexual relationship with Mathilde or his homosexual relationship with Rimbaud.³⁶ King observes that Verlaine’s poetry often has “been forced into the straightjacket of binarism: in the intimate inter-textual reading between the two texts of life and poetry, heterosexuality and homosexuality, security and freedom, idealistic and pornographic writing, and good poetry and bad poetry.”³⁷ Rather than offering a negative image of being split between heterosexual and homosexual desires, or a more neutral image of alternating between them, Verlaine’s poetry can instead be viewed as bisexual in the sense that the representation of his sexuality is fluid and interchangeable. Going a step further, Gretchen Schultz observes that Verlaine’s poetic corpus has been uniquely subjected to an unjust process of “feminization”³⁸ since his homosexuality is too easily understood as an affirmation of his femininity.³⁹ Demonstrating the complex relationship between sexual identity and poetry, his poetic corpus should be viewed as “*sexué*” rather than strictly “feminine” (or “masculine”).⁴⁰ Take, for example, Jean-Pierre Richard’s remarks that Verlaine appears as a “sexually ambivalent being.” His themes of vapidness and insipidity, “*fadeur*,” with Verlaine as “*le fané*,” and “taste for haziness” “represent the feminine within him” which contrasts with the “wholly male” Rimbaud, whose defining masculine traits

³⁶ Russell S. King, “Verlaine’s *Romances sans paroles*: The Inscription of Gender,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 27.1/2 (1998-1999), 117.

³⁷ King, “The Inscription of Gender,” 118.

³⁸ “La critique textuelle [...] féminise le poète en associant sa poésie à un romantisme anti-intellectuel [...] La notion suivant laquelle Verlaine, à la différence des autres ‘grands’ poètes de la période pré-symboliste, manquait un programme poétique théorisé, contribue de façon implicite à sa féminisation.” Gretchen Schultz, “Sexualités de Verlaine,” *Revue Verlaine* 5 (1997): 51.

³⁹ “L’homosexualité de Verlaine se traduit trop facilement en l’affirmation de sa féminité.” Schultz, “Sexualités de Verlaine,” 48.

⁴⁰ Schultz, 48.

are a “besoin de déchirure,” dissonance, and shock.⁴¹ Schultz asserts that while also homosexual, Rimbaud has been “masculinized” as “young, handsome, and audacious” in detrimental juxtaposition to the “ugly, uncertain, and passive” Verlaine, and he notes that Verlaine’s poetry has been read much more autobiographically as a “mirror of his life” than that of his peers Rimbaud, Mallarmé, or Baudelaire.⁴² While Verlaine has either been feminized or had his sexuality ignored, others have tried to “establish” his virility (locate “masculine” traits in his works) in the complex subtleness (and vapidness and insipidity) of his poetry.⁴³

King notes that the gender, and thus sex(uality), of the first-person subjects in Verlaine’s poetry are blurred, made obscure, and “relegated to oblique cases, who could be made male or female” by manipulating gendered French adjectives that could refer to either Mathilde or Rimbaud.⁴⁴ Verlaine’s own bisexuality is revealed by the aesthetic choices he makes in his “bisexual writing” to obfuscate both male and female genders, with his narrative subject opting to employ French feminine forms to distinguish his object of love. However, his aesthetic choices lack the sharp contrasts or traits of traditional femininity and masculinity and therefore

⁴¹ Jean-Pierre Richard, *Poésie et profondeur* (Paris: Seuil, 1955), 171-172; cited by King, “The Inscription of Gender,” 121.

⁴² Schultz evokes Barbara Johnson’s quote, “Women are read literally, men rhetorically,” to insist that homosexuals, especially historically “feminized” ones like Verlaine, “also attract and are subject to literal readings.” Barbara Johnson, “Gender and Poetry: Charles Baudelaire and Marceline Desbordes-Valmore,” in *Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French*, eds. Joan DeJean and Nancy K. Miller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Schultz, “Sexualités de Verlaine,” 49.

⁴³ Schultz, 52.

⁴⁴ King provides the example of the ambiguity of gendered French adjectives in the first poem (“C’est l’extase amoureuse”), traditionally identified as an erotic piece alluding to Verlaine’s love interest, of his collection *Romances sans paroles* (1874). Verlaine writes “Cette âme qui se lamente / En cette plainte dormante. / C’est la nôtre, n’est-ce pas ? / La mienne et la tienne,” where the reader is unable to determine if “la tienne” (“yours”) refers to a masculine (such as Rimbaud) or feminine (such as Mathilde) subject, since French adjectives are modified by the object (“cette âme,” “this soul”), and not by the subject or speaker, like in English. King, 122, 124-125.

create a sort of ambiguously neutered or neutral, yet romanticized and sexualized, lover.⁴⁵

Charles Minahan suggests that Verlaine's juxtaposition of life and works, or rather his conflation between life and art, presents an exemplum of bisexuality as both a lived and figured experience.⁴⁶ His bisexuality is "decentered" in what many, including Verlaine, have termed a *homo duplex*: a "double man" having two lives and existences.⁴⁷ Murphy also observes that "Verlaine a tiré parti de plus en plus des 'contradictions' qu'on lui reprochait, cultivant son aspect Jekyll catho et Hyde homo."⁴⁸ Verlaine's "catho" "half" could refer to his return to Catholicism in prison, whereas his "homo"(sexual) "half" was evident throughout his life. The image of Jekyll and Hyde is befitting of his *homo duplex* nature: Verlaine was aware of such an image and built upon it in his staging and representation of his self. His marriage to Mathilde progressively deteriorated: Rimbaud was not simply an innocent bystander and actively attempted to separate and isolate Verlaine, who strove to maintain his two lives.⁴⁹ Their relationship now was largely characterized by Rimbaud's one-sided, aggressive domination and provocation, and by Verlaine's conscious and consensual acceptance, humiliation, and injury. As

⁴⁵ King, "The Inscription of Gender," 130.

⁴⁶ Charles D. Minahan, "Homosexual Erotic Scripting in Verlaine's *Hombres*," in *Articulations of Difference: Gender Studies and Writing in French*, eds. Dominique D. Fisher and Lawrence R. Schehr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 120.

⁴⁷ The term was first introduced by Symbolist author Charles Morice (1861-1919) in his long essay *Paul Verlaine* (1888), referenced by Verlaine himself, and taken up again by commentators into the 20th century. Morice and Verlaine established a bond through their exchanges of literary criticism after Verlaine's generous reply to Morice's criticism of his *Art poétique* in an 1882 publication of *La Nouvelle Rive Gauche*. The two remained close for the rest of Verlaine's life, and even after his death in 1896, Morice remained his strongest supporter. In his essay, Morice essentially remarked that Verlaine's poetry is "inseparable from his personality," which was "so divided by weakness and contrition, by lofty ideas and base appetites" that he termed him a *homo duplex* ("double man"). Minahan, "Homosexual Erotic Scripting," 121; Murphy, "'Pauvre Lelian'?", 10-11.

⁴⁸ Murphy, 11.

⁴⁹ Buisine, *Histoire d'un corps*, 184.

Meyer suggests, violence for Rimbaud was a way to “get even for his sexual degradation” by “mocking Verlaine’s ugliness, cowardice, toadyism, family connections, and religious beliefs (which resurfaced in prison)” and calling him despicable and weak.⁵⁰ At first the contradictions in their characters and natures attracted the two men to each other, and each met the other’s needs. However, both Verlaine and Rimbaud increasingly saw the other as polarizing and unattractive, widening an irreparable rift. Gilles Negrello remarks that Verlaine composed the majority of the poems in *Cellulairement* during the first moments of his imprisonment as a sort of assessment, under the guise of fiction, of his passionate and metaphysical adventure with Rimbaud.⁵¹

During a violent confrontation in Brussels on July 10, 1873, Verlaine fired a newly-purchased revolver at Rimbaud, injuring his left arm. After treating Rimbaud’s gunshot wound, Verlaine again suffered a fit of despair. At a train station, as Rimbaud prepared to depart, Verlaine threatened to “blow his own brains out.”⁵² Terrified, Rimbaud reported Verlaine to the police for the hotel shooting incident. Verlaine was arrested and detained at the Hôtel de Ville and then the Petits-Carmes prison.⁵³ After interrogations, testimonies, and an examination of evidence (including a humiliating bodily exam affirming Verlaine’s participation in “past and recent acts of pederasty”⁵⁴) on August 8, he was found guilty of “attempted assassination” and

⁵⁰ Meyers, “The Savage Experiment,” 174.

⁵¹ Negrello, “De la verve poétique,” 33.

⁵² Buisine, *Histoire d’un corps*, 263; Richter, *Ces fabuleux voyous*, 107.

⁵³ Buisine, 264-265

⁵⁴ Richter, 111.

“immorality” (homosexuality) and condemned to two years in prison and a fine of 200 francs (the maximum according to the Belgian penal code).⁵⁵

III. Poetry from Belgium: Brussels and Mons

The poems comprising the collection that Verlaine anticipated publishing under the title *Cellulairement* clearly indicate their date (and location) of composition. While it would be convenient to examine Verlaine’s poems chronologically, I will rather focus on the five themes (daily carceral experience, staging of the self, infinite expansiveness and vastness, depictions of his carceral space, and his spiritual renewal and return to Catholicism) in the eight poems mentioned above since these are most representative of his prison poetry.⁵⁶ The themes and poems highlight the interplay between the state of being a prisoner and the question of identity. They also illustrate how prison impacts the lyric subject’s perception and self-depiction.

1. Daily Carceral Experience

“Impression fausse”

On a basic level, Verlaine’s prison poetry evokes the routine and limitations of his incarcerated life. During his very first moments in Petits-Carmes, a former convent converted into a prison, Verlaine composed “Impression fausse,” which he dates “Br.[uxelles] 11 Juillet 73 (entrée en prison).” In it, Verlaine alludes to highly mundane and repetitive parts of the prisoners’ days (and nights). The poem is composed of six four-line stanzas with an underlying

⁵⁵ Buisine, *Histoire d’un corps*, 272; Richter, *Ces fabuleux voyous*, 115-116.

⁵⁶ It would have been possible to include other poems, such as “Berceuse,” “La Chanson de Gaspard Hauser,” “Kaléidoscope,” “Réversibilités,” “Crimen amoris,” or “Don Juan pipé” that were also associated with Verlaine’s imprisonment and intended to be published in his collection *Cellulairement* (1873-74), but I decided to focus on the poems that I believe were the most emblematic and representative of his carceral experience.

base meter of alternating five- and seven-syllable verses. This regular rhythm can be read in a more playful way, calling to mind a nursery rhyme or song with its back-and-forth rhythm of repeated verses, and it reflects the prisoners' regulated daily routines such as ringing a bell to signal their bedtime. Verlaine's own alternating repetition of the verse "on sonne la cloche" mimics the repeated chimes of the bell and conveys its sonority. Verlaine's successive observations of his carceral settings appear unassuming: a mouse, which he affectionately calls "Dame souris," scurries across the floor in the evening and at night, moonlight enters his cell, and a cloud passes overhead. These observations also constitute the repeated first and third verses of each stanza, which serve to emphasize the monotonous repetition of everyday life in the prison, as does the alternating rhyme scheme.

Dame souris trotte,
Noire dans le gris du soir,
Dame souris trotte,
Grise dans le noir.

On sonne la cloche:
Dormez les bons prisonniers!
On sonne la cloche:
Faut que vous dormiez!

Le beau clair de lune!
On ronfle ferme à côté!
Le beau clair de lune
En réalité!

Un nuage passe.
Il fait noir comme en un four.
Un nuage passe ...
Tiens, le petit jour!

Dame souris trotte
Rose dans les rayons bleus
Dame souris trotte:

Debout, paresseux!⁵⁷

Verlaine's observations are arranged chronologically, from the beginning of the poem to the end, to depict an entire night cycle from dusk to dawn. One salient feature in his depiction is his use of colors. The first stanza portrays his mouse-companion as the evening sets: "Dame souris trotte / Noire dans le gris du soir" (125, vv. 1-2). Its dark body appears in the darkening hues of the evening and with the eventual darkness of the night: "Grise dans le noir" (125, v. 4). The black and grey colors blend together and seem interchangeable. The poem emphasizes the night's darkness through the popular expression comparing it to the inside of an oven, "Il fait noir comme en un four" (125, v. 14), and by contrasting it with the bright moonlight: "Le beau clair de lune" (125, vv. 9, 11). The mouse's pink-shaded body finally contrasts with the light hues of the breaking dawn: "Dame souris trotte / Rose dans les rayons bleus" (126, vv. 17-18). The reader is given the impression that the shift in the colors of the mouse's body (from grey to pink) reflects the colors of the sky at dusk and at dawn. Although Verlaine identifies with the group of prisoners, the poetic voice is that of an insomniac prisoner who watches, observes, and becomes aware of the passing of time while the other prisoners sleep. He acts as a caring figure and presence whose affectionate tone instructs his fellow "good" prisoners to sleep, using the French second-person plural *vous* forms: "Dormez [...]!" (125, v. 6), ("Faut que vous dormiez!" (125, v. 8). Caring imagery, especially maternal and infantile in nature, was already present in Verlaine's poetic corpus, drawn from the close relationship he had with his mother.⁵⁸ Verlaine's other main

⁵⁷ *Cellulairement*, ed. Brunel, 125-126, vv. 1-20. Unless otherwise noted, this edition will provide the text for Verlaine's poetry.

⁵⁸ In the same fifth poem in "Ariettes oubliées" in *Romances sans paroles*, Verlaine mentions "a sudden cradle that softly coddles" his "poor being" ("Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce berceau soudain / Qui lentement drolote mon pauvre être?") in an ambiguous reference to a motherly female figure, either Madame Verlaine or Mathilde. In

observation as night falls is that of the mouse: the presence of a mouse can be more acutely noticed in the silence of carceral isolation. Accordingly, Verlaine's description serves to reinforce the complete silence of his prison settings. A mouse is also a nocturnal creature associated with the night time world that it calls home, like Verlaine.⁵⁹

The meaning of the poem's title, "false impression," is difficult to decrypt. Composed during (or inspired by) Verlaine's first night imprisoned at Petits-Carmes (July 11, 1873), it remains unclear what exactly constitutes Verlaine's "false impression:" is it his disillusion from his wife Mathilde's recent visit, the vanishing moonlight underneath a dark cloud, or the quickly appearing dawn when his (first) night in prison appeared to last an eternity?⁶⁰ This latter perhaps constitutes Verlaine's "false impression:" day might well break after the phases of night that he illustrates with this vivid change of colors, but his situation as a prisoner remains unchanged. "Lady Mouse," unlike Verlaine, can move about freely and is not trapped like him. In tandem with the daily isolation of incarceration, the poem "Impression fausse" appears to primarily emphasize the immobility of prison life. Verlaine plays upon the contrast between the small, active, and mobile animal and the prisoner who lost his freedom of movement.

"Autre"

In "Autre," which he dates "Br.[uxelles] Juillet 73 (préau des prévenus)," Verlaine communicates his reactions to his carceral environment through the movements of the communal

the sixth poem, he also mentions "the little poet who is never weary / Of chasing the rhyme he will never catch" in a reference to a child's playing. *Œuvres*, ed. Borel, 193-194; Porter, *Crisis of French Symbolism*, 108.

⁵⁹ Olivier Bivort, "Éditer *Cellulairement*," *Revue Verlaine* 7/8 (2002): 31-53.

⁶⁰ *Cellulairement*, ed. Brunel, 203-204.

mass of prisoners to which he now belongs. Verlaine describes his first moments entering Petits-Carmes in prose in *Mes Prisons*: “Une vaste cour pavée, plutôt longue. D’affreux types en général. Beaucoup d’Allemands, majorité de Belges, naturellement, des Italiens, comme de juste, et trop de Français hideux, hélas! J’arrive là, ahuri, timide et comme ivre encore.”⁶¹ A guard ordered him to join a group of prisoners peeling potatoes, where he worked standing for an hour until the lunch bell rang and he was led to the refectory, “crépi à la chaux” with “des tables et des bancs pas propres” (289). The prisoners then ate supper while the prison *adjudant* recited a Benedictus prayer in the background: “l’on s’attable devant des gamelles d’étain et des cuillers de fer. Cette pâtée! De l’orge à la graisse, évidemment, de cheval” (290). However, the prisoners’ ritual of “recreation” in the prison courtyard served as his main inspiration for “Autre:” “Une fois par jour, le matin, les prévenus, par sections, descendaient dans une cour pavée, ‘ornée’ au milieu d’un petit ‘jardin’ tout en la fleur jaune nommée souci, munis de leur seau ... mieux et pis qu’hygiénique, qu’ils devaient vider à un endroit désigné et rincer avant de commencer leur promenade à la queue-leu-leu sous l’œil d’un gardien tout au plus humain” (293). Verlaine’s everyday carceral experience involved his loss of individualism as he was now absorbed into this anonymous mass of prisoners. Furthermore, the loss of individualism also signified the end of his wandering and escaping, an integral facet of his fractured pre-prison identity. Like a ritual, his daily life in prison implicated movements of constant, monotonous circularity:

La cour se fleurit de souci
Comme le front
De tous ceux-ci
Qui vont en rond
En flageolant sur leur fémur

⁶¹ *Mes Prisons*, in *Cellulairement*, ed. Brunel, 289. All citations taken from this edition.

Débilité,
Le long du mur
Fou de clarté.

Tournez, Samsons sans Dalila,
Sans Philistin,
Tournez bien la
Meule au destin!
Vaincu risible de la loi,
Mouds tour à tour
Ton cœur, ta foi
Et ton amour!

Ils vont – et leurs pauvres souliers
Font un bruit sec, –
Humiliés,
La pipe au bec ...
Pas un mot, sinon le cachot!
Pas un soupir!
Il fait si chaud
Qu'on croit mourir!

J'en suis de ce cirque effaré,
Soumis d'ailleurs
Et préparé
À tous malheurs.
Et pourquoi, si j'ai contristé
Ton vœu têtue,
Société,
Me choierais-tu?

Allons, frères, bons vieux voleurs,
Doux vagabonds,
Filous en fleur,
Mes chers, mes bons!
Fumons philosophiquement,
Promenons-nous
Paisiblement:
Rien faire est doux! (127-128, vv. 1-40).

“Autre” is comprised of five eight-line stanzas. Its meter of one octosyllabic verse followed by three tetrasyllabic ones creates a rising and falling, oscillating rhythm. Coupled with Verlaine’s description of the sounds of the prisoners’ shoes while walking about the courtyard, “Ils vont – et

leur pauvres souliers / Font un bruit sec” (vv. 24-25), it conveys the sensation of bodies ambulating in a circular motion: the natural sounds of (the shuffle of) footsteps. One can naturally distinguish a “cadence” made by a person’s gait: one loud(er) step (represented by Verlaine’s octosyllabic verses) followed by a quick silence, and then a soft(er) second step (represented by his three tetrasyllabic verses). The repetitive rhythm evoked by Verlaine’s meter in “Autre” recalls prisoners marching in step from their cells to recreation or engaging in monotonous, repetitive work: the popular image of the “chain gang” striking railroad nails in rhythmic unison. This up-and-down rhythm suggests the circularity of the prisoners walking around the courtyard but also their circular fate, condemned to walk in circles day in, day out. It also transmits a feeling of enclosure, given the nature of a circle (a contained line), and serves as a metaphor for imprisonment.

“Autre” additionally features a play on words in the verse “La cour se fleurit de souci” (127, v. 1). The verb “*se fleurir*” can both allude to the garden blossoming with yellow “*souci*” flowers (marigolds, daisies) in a literal sense, and blossoming with “worry” in a figurative sense that describes the prisoners’ anguished looks: “Comme le front / De tous ceux-ci” (127, vv. 2-3). The poem also reinforces the idea of circularity in the prisoners’ turning movements, “Qui vont en rond” (127, v. 4), and evokes how the prisoners’ legs tremble with frailty: “En flageolant sur leur fémur / Débilité” (127, vv. 5-6). The notion of circularity is elsewhere more overtly referenced when Verlaine urges his “anti-hero” prisoner comrades to “turn” the grindstone of fate: “Tournez, Samsons sans Dalila, / Sans Philistin, / Tournez bien la / Meule au destin!” (127, vv. 8-12). Verlaine’s choice of *fémur* over *jambe* is of note here, giving a more morbid tone of mortal acceptance to the poem in referring to the bone rather than to the leg in general. *Fémur* can also imply thinness, old age, or the muscular weakness of prisoners deprived of freedom of

movement. Verlaine then describes the extreme brightness of the courtyard wall using the adjective *fou* to signify a “crazy” brightness: “Le long du mur / Fou de clarté” (127, vv. 7-8).

According to Philippe Destruel, “Autre” symbolizes the carceral present in the temporal landscape and aesthetic evolution of Verlaine’s prison poetry. It marks the first moments of his acclimation to the prison universe characterized by humiliation and a fear of reprimand or punishment: “Ils vont [...] / Humiliés” (127-128, vv. 17, 19), “Pas un mot, sinon le cachot! / Pas un soupir!” (128, vv. 21-22).⁶² The numerous exclamation points in these verses likely depict the real commands that the prison guards’ shouted at the prisoners, which Verlaine had the habit of portraying, as we will see later in his other prison poem, “Le dernier dizain,” where he depicts another command addressed to him by a guard upon his release from the Mons prison (“car c’est bon pour une fois!”). Verlaine’s inclusion of the jailers’ actual words adds a greater realism to his poetic narration of imprisonment in both an aesthetic, formal and theatrical sense. His inclusion of the jailers’ words also creates a representational context that serves to stage his poem’s “characters” and through which readers of the poem can make meaning of its formal and aesthetic qualities. Much like the motions and sounds prisoners make while circulating the courtyard, Destruel adds that incarceration also evokes in Verlaine, and in every prisoner, the feeling of circularity, of being trapped or “stuck” in one’s mind just as one is confined in space: “La captivité renvoie l’être contraint, malgré soi, à son for intérieur dans l’orbite de la prison, où l’on ne peut que tourner en rond [...] dans sa tête, loin du monde des sensations dissipatives et centrifuges.”⁶³ As Jérôme Solal remarks, because Verlaine’s life has now been segmented into daily rituals, he is no longer susceptible to dissipation and centrifugal forces: “La démesure est

⁶² Philippe Destruel, “D’un château ... l’autre ...,” *Revue Verlaine* 16 (2018): 261, 263.

⁶³ Destruel, “D’un château ... l’autre ...,” 263.

conjurée pour un temps avec le logis minimal qui cimente une intériorité ailleurs menacée de chaos. La question de la liberté ne se pose pas, moins parce qu'elle serait trop théorique pour cet impulsif vivant au jour le jour, que parce que tranchée par avance."⁶⁴ Verlaine does not entertain any militant discourse in his jail poetry, nor does he complain about his fate. In his penultimate strophe, he changes register, using the French first-person singular pronoun *je* for the first time. He also conveys a feeling of resignation of his fate, "Soumis d'ailleurs / Et préparé / À tous malheurs" (128, vv. 26-28), an emotion also powerfully seen in Charles d'Orléans's poetry.⁶⁵ However, Verlaine directs an apostrophe towards "Society," asking why it would still "take good care of him" (give him convalescence in prison) if he "upset" its "stubborn wish," its moral code and the mores of the time: "Me choierais-tu?" (128, v. 32), "si j'ai contristé / Ton vœu têtû" (128, vv. 29-30). This rhetorical question could also constitute a form of acknowledgement, suggesting that he did not leave society a choice (whether to imprison him or not) on account of his actions and life, and his imprisonment thus makes sense. In this strophe, Verlaine lets himself assimilate into the regimented order of his new prison environment's constrained space-time.

"Autre" appears to communicate that, for Verlaine, a prisoner's fate does not permit them to complain, either out loud or in writing: a feeling that can be interestingly put in parallel with Foucault's systematic analysis of the punitive, correctional apparatus.⁶⁶ A prominent feature of

⁶⁴ Solal, "'Du jour suffisamment et de l'espace assez,'" 31.

⁶⁵ In his *ballade* "Je fus en fleur ou temps passé d'enfance," Charles's resignation is centered around his refrain and metaphor "Put on prison straw to grow ripe" (*Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison*): "Et pour cela Raison, qui tout redresse / A son plaisir, sans tort ou mesprison, / M'a bon droit, par sa tresgrant sagesse, / Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison." It is also reiterated in the passages "J'en suy content et tiens que, sans doubance, / C'est pour le mieulx [...]" and "J'attens bon temps, endurant en humblesse, / Car j'ay espoir que Dieu ma guerison / Ordonnera; pource m'a sa haultesse / Mis pour meurir ou feurre de prison." *Charles d'Orléans. Poésies. I: La retenue d'amours, ballades, chansons, complaints et caroles*, ed. Pierre Champion (Paris: Champion, 1923), 130-131, vv. 5-8, 11-12, 21-22.

⁶⁶ Both Verlaine and Foucault discuss and describe the institution of prison and its disciplinary regime. According to Foucault, prison "corrects" the detained: "qu'on les isole dans les cellules, ou qu'on leur impose un

the daily carceral experience that Verlaine chose to portray was the unity that he quickly felt among his fellow prisoners. According to Foucault, prison is capable of encouraging solidarity and collective organization among the detained to mobilize either towards criminal ends or towards achieving their own freedom, in itself constituting a form of self-activism: “La prison rend possible, mieux, elle favorise l’organisation d’un milieu de délinquants, solidaires les uns des autres, hiérarchisés, prêts pour toutes les complicités futures.”⁶⁷ The “panopticon” seeks to neutralize the effects of a counter-power born from within the prison itself. The counter-power resists the power that wishes to dominate it, consisting of “agitations, révoltes, organisations spontanées, coalitions – tout ce qui peut relever des conjonctions horizontales.”⁶⁸ Even so, the solidarity Verlaine suggests in “Autre” is of a different kind: it does not entail a call to collective militant or revolutionary self-activism or mobilization. However, his affectionate tone notably shifts in the second half of the last stanza (the last four lines of the poem) from resignation to a sort of recognition of harmony, to a quiet togetherness, as the adverb *paisiblement* suggests, when he urges his fellow prisoners to “walk peacefully.” Similarly, the adverb *philosophiquement* implies a willing and stoic acceptance of one’s fate. Both adverbs also suggest activities that represent coping mechanisms for prisoners. They create a tone of reconciliation and they imply that doing such mundane activities (walking, smoking), or

travail inutile [...] elle [la prison] est destinée à appliquer les lois, et à en enseigner le respect; or tout son fonctionnement se déroule sur le mode de l’abus de pouvoir.”⁶⁶ Through its corrective nature, prison flattens prisoners’ individualism and mobility to comply to their prescribed regimes. However, Verlaine does not see what is imposed on him as an abuse of power (like Foucault), but as a legitimate measure. He focuses on the circularity of daily carceral life. Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, 310-311, 255-256.

⁶⁷ Foucault, 311.

⁶⁸ Foucault, 255-256.

otherwise doing “nothing” is not as bad as it seems: “Rien faire est doux!” (128, v. 40). Verlaine may even be admitting that imprisonment can have its agreeable moments.

Because he now (self-)identifies as a prisoner, Verlaine appeals to the togetherness of his fellow inmates, which he sees as a sort of band of anti-heroes. In the second stanza, he uses the French *vous* second person plural imperative twice in anaphora to address and command his prisoner comrades: “Tournez, Samsons sans Dalila, / Sans Philistin, / Tournez bien la / Meule au destin!” (127, vv. 9-12). His allusion to anti-heroes is emphasized here through his comparison with biblical figures. They are a weakened Samson without a heroic and dramatic love interest (Delilah) and without any mortal enemies (the Philistines) with whom they can engage in legendary combat.⁶⁹ Verlaine’s instruction to his fellow powerless Samsons to “tourner la meule au destin” also leads to interesting interpretations. Utilizing the same Biblical context, it can allude to Samson’s forced labor of turning a large millstone to grind grain after his capture by the Philistines (Judges: 16). It likely and more specifically alludes, as evidenced in the poem, to turning the millstone of fate, representing a different take on the medieval and conventional *topos* of the “wheel of fate:” “Meule au destin!” (127, v. 12). Verlaine suddenly switches to using a second-person singular *tu* imperative and possessive adjectives *ton* and *ta* to instruct his fellow prisoners to “turn the grindstone of fate” and “grind” their “hearts, faith, and love:” “Mouds tour à tour / Ton cœur, ta foi / Et ton amour!” (127, vv. 14-16). Like the other prisoners, Verlaine must also turn the millstone. The apostrophe “Vaincu risible de la loi” (127, v. 13) that addresses, and speaks of, himself as “you (there), laughable one defeated by the law” is a further

⁶⁹ The Old Testament judge Samson was betrayed by his lover Delilah, at the behest of his Philistine enemies, who, after lulling him to sleep had his hair cut, depriving him of his superhuman strength. Captured by the Philistines and paraded to the public, Samson asked God for one final feat of strength, pulling down the Philistine temple in a rage, killing him and those around him. James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 271-272.

reflection on the incarcerated state in which he finds himself. While the notion of grinding one's heart, faith, and love appears cryptic, this can allude to Verlaine's forced, new start to life in prison where he must forget (thus, grind away) his past, including his previous loves (his wife Mathilde and Rimbaud) and lifestyle. This imagery implies that he must reflect on his actions and be capable of "separating the good grain from the chaff."

The multiplication of perspectives and the alternation of pronouns in "Autre" also creates a sense of mobility, namely that of turning (like the prisoners circular shuffling in the courtyard) in prison's restricted space. Verlaine changes to an impersonal, third-person observation of the prisoners through the subject pronoun *ils* and possessive adjective *leurs*: "Ils vont – et leurs pauvres souliers / Font un bruit sec" (127, vv. 17-18). He then shifts to employ an author-narrator-character *je* to personally identify and situate himself in such a scene: "J'en suis de ce cirque effaré" (128, v. 25). It is interesting to note here that the notion of *cirque* also evokes circularity. Moreover, Verlaine's choice of the adjective *effaré* (roughly translating to stunned or flabbergasted) is important. In French, it refers to being "struck by a trouble that makes one lose themselves, makes one crazed, crazy, or stupefied" and to "become distressed" or to "trouble." Due to these intense and broad definitions, Verlaine deliberately chose to use "*effaré*" to represent a prisoner's existential dilemma when imprisoned.⁷⁰ Verlaine finally shifts to the first-person plural *nous* imperative, "Allons, frères [...]" (128, v. 33), and third-person singular subject pronoun *on*, "Il fait si chaud / Qu'on croit mourir!" (128, vv. 23-24), to indicate a sense of confraternity with his fellow inmates, encouraging them with his endearing use of "brothers," "my dears," "my old, good, sweet thieves and vagabonds," and "flowering rascals:" "[...] bon

⁷⁰ "Frapper d'un trouble qui égare, rend hagard, hébété," "devenir hagard," "troubler, rendre comme fou." *Dictionnaire du Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales (CNRTL)*. <https://www.cnrtl.fr>. Accessed August 11, 2023.

vieux voleurs, / Doux vagabonds, / Filous en fleur, / Mes chers, mes bons!” (128, vv. 33-36).

These terms of endearment and solidarity parallel his caring words to his cellmates in “Impression fausse,” but they also resist the prison institution’s attempts at dehumanizing its prisoners. In addition, the affectionate tone suggests that Verlaine stands in solidarity with those whom society punishes and rejects. All share a vagabond nature, which is why he affectionately calls this unified group the “flowering rascals:” the motif of flowers is present from the poem’s very first stanza, creating an effect of circularity in the allusion to the round shape of flowers, all while introducing a different tone in the verses. The notion of vagabondage, too, is interesting because it introduces an idea of free movement in a space (prison) that is deprived of it. The poem seems to introduce a hint of freedom and fantasy at its end, or at least an invitation to accept one’s fate, both of which are ways to escape feelings of alienation.

2. Verlaine’s Staging of the Self and Representations of Selfhood

“Au lecteur”

“Au lecteur,” as its title implies, outlines the complex and at times conflicting image that Verlaine seeks to present to his readers, on one hand, and the relationship he seeks to establish with them, on the other. Verlaine claims to offer an honest account of himself, yet the manner in which he speaks entails a confusing mix of confession, concealment, pity, resignation, and denial. In particular, the concealment involves a series of negations. The form and style of the poem borrows from older or traditional models in its direct addressal of his reader(s). Like in “Autre,” Verlaine uses and switches between different French pronouns to better stage and present his self through different perspectives. These alternating pronouns hint at a complex identity within the poet that oscillates between an impersonal *on* and a vindictive feeling of

being himself. He also adopts a more endearing tone in an about-face admission of his faults, a consciousness of his responsibility, and an admission of his “Saturnian” melancholic disposition. “Au lecteur” is a poem of allusions that holds itself back from revealing everything, which encourages its reader(s) to keep reading what is next.

Verlaine intended “Au lecteur” to open his planned collection *Cellulairement*, which he dated “Bruxelles, de la prison des Petits-Carmes, Juillet 1873.” It serves as an initial message and starting point for Verlaine’s experience of imprisonment in Belgium and the poetry that it helped foster. Verlaine’s technique of the apostrophe, and use of the ode genre with the form *Ô*, is a recurring feature of his carceral compositions.⁷¹ More revealing, perhaps, are the different tones with which Verlaine reminisces about his time in prison:

Ce n’est pas de ces dieux foudroyés,
Ce n’est pas encore une infortune
Poétique autant qu’inopportune:
Ô lecteur de bon sens, ne fuyez!

On sait trop tout le prix du malheur
Pour le perdre en disert gaspillage:
Vous n’aurez ni mes traits ni mon âge,
Ni le vrai mal secret de mon cœur.

Et de ce que ces vers maladifs
Furent faits en prison, pour tout dire,
On ne va pas crier au martyre:
Que Dieu vous garde des expansifs!

On vous donne un livre fait ainsi;
Prenez-le pour ce qu’il vaut, en somme.
C’est l’*aegri somnia* d’un brave homme
Étonné de se trouver ici.

On y met avec la ‘bonne foy’
L’orthographe à peu près qu’on possède,

⁷¹ In the poem, Verlaine addresses his reader directly, similar to addressing his “castle” – “Ô sois béni, château d’où me voilà sorti” (114) – in “Écrit en 1875” and Belgium – “Ô Belgique qui m’as valu ce dur loisir” (166) – in “Le dernier dizain.”

Regrettant de n'avoir à son aide
Que ce prestige d'être bien soi.

Vous lirez ce libelle tel quel
Tout ainsi que vous feriez d'un autre;
Ce vœu bien modeste est le seul nôtre,
N'étant guère, après tout, criminel!

Un mot encore, car je vous dois
Quelque lueur, en définitive,
Concernant la chose qui m'arrive:
Je compte parmi les maladroits;

J'ai perdu ma vie et je sais bien
Que tout blâme sur moi s'en va fondre:
À cela, je ne puis que répondre
Que je suis vraiment né saturnien (123-124, vv. 1-32).

“Au lecteur” is composed of eight quatrains in decasyllabic verses. The final (fourth) line in some stanzas ends with an exclamation, and various verses throughout are interrupted by punctuation, such as semi-colons or colons. “Au lecteur” features several references to an older “style” of poetry in his description of “dieux foudroyés” (123, v. 1) and by his use of the *tréma* accent for the word “poétique,” characteristic of Early Modern French spelling. This is better understood through his use of “foy” (“foi,” faith) and his comments on such antiquated spelling inspired by Michel de Montaigne’s preface to the reader in his *Essais*:⁷² “On y met avec la ‘bonne foy’/ L’orthographe à peu près qu’on possède” (124, vv. 17-18). While Montaigne states the complete opposite, his intention to present a completely honest and personal self to the reader, writing for his close friends and family to preserve his thoughts and character traits after his death with no pretense or desire for public acclaim, Verlaine uses an expression from ancient rhetoric, a *captatio benevolentiae*, to fish for good will: “Ô lecteur de bon sens, ne fuyez!” (123,

⁷² Alain Chevrier, “Rêves en vers: les poèmes oniriques de Verlaine,” *Revue Verlaine* 15 (2017): 110.

v. 4), (“Que Dieu vous garde des expansifs!” (123, v. 12). In a *captatio benevolentiae*, the reader “is to be rendered ‘attentive, teachable, and well disposed:’ and the prescription for this last requirement involves a display of modesty and good manners on the part of the speaker.”⁷³

Verlaine also draws on traditional rhetorical tropes to fabricate his self-portrayal to his reader, such as the gesture of handing or dedicating a “book” to the reader, notably seen in Catullus’s Poem 1 (“Dedication to Cornelius”). More relevant is Catullus’s Latin term *libellum* (“little book”) in his opening two lines that inspired Verlaine’s “*libelle*,” “Vous lirez ce libelle tel quel” (124, vv. 21-22), and also “*livre*,” “On vous donne un livre fait ainsi” (123, v. 13). Like Catullus, Verlaine also “dedicates” his book and gives it to the reader: “On vous donne un livre fait ainsi; / Prenez-le pour ce qu’il vaut, en somme” (123, vv. 13-14).⁷⁴ The expression is also found in Montaigne’s *Essais*,⁷⁵ seemingly alluding to the work and its antiquated spelling through the noun “foy” in his verse “On y met avec la ‘bonne foy’” (124, v. 17). While it may seem that Verlaine is insisting that the reader should take the book for what it is worth, it might also serve as an important mechanism of auto-defense. Verlaine continues these tropes through the Latin term “*aegri somnia*” (a “sick man’s dreams”) that he uses to call his “book” and by depicting himself as a bystander shocked to find himself “here,” with this deictic designating prison: “C’est l’*aegri somnia* d’un brave homme / Étonné de se trouver ici” (123, vv. 15-16).

⁷³ Donald Russell and Tobias Reinhardt, “Captatio benevolentiae,” *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 22 Dec. 2015; Accessed 11 Mar. 2023.
<https://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-1357>.

⁷⁴ “Cui dono lepidum novum libellum / Arida modo pumice expolitur?” *The Poems of Catullus. A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. Peter Green (Berkeley and Los Angeles: the University of California Press, 2005), 44-45.

⁷⁵ “Au lecteur,” “C’est icy un livre de bonne foy, lecteur.” *Les Essais*, eds. P. Villey and V.-L. Saulnier, 3 vols. (1930-1931), I, 4.

Aegri somnia is an expression taken from Roman author Horace's "Epistle to the Pisos."⁷⁶ It was also referenced in Montaigne's *Essais*⁷⁷ and had become a French expression by Verlaine's time.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Verlaine uses on multiple occasions the third-person subject pronoun *on*, known for its ambivalent meaning between "one" and "we:" "On sait trop tout le prix du malheur" (123, v. 5), "On ne va pas crier au martyr" (123, v. 11), "On vous donne un livre fait ainsi" (123, v. 13), and "On y met avec la 'bonne foy'" (124, v. 17). This *on* creates a feeling of estrangement or distance, and can also allude to a form of erasure. His tone is specifically designed to be aloof to better stage his wise status in presenting this "book" of his trials and tribulations (his imprisonment and rehabilitation) to his reader(s). The poet is nothing more than a poor, sickly man suffering from a melancholic Saturnian disposition: "[...] je ne puis que répondre / Que je suis vraiment né saturnien" (124, vv. 31-32). His image of an ill man whose work reflects his condition – "vers maladifs" (123, v. 9) – and who is afflicted by Saturn's black, melancholic rays is taken in large part from Baudelaire's works (e.g., "fleurs malades" in *Fleurs du mal*) and is also seen in Verlaine's earlier *Poèmes saturniens*.

As mentioned above, the French pronouns that Verlaine uses and shifts between are an important part of his process of staging the self in "Au lecteur." Here, at the very end of the poem, he switches from the third-person subject pronoun *on* to the first-person subject pronoun *je*: "Je compte parmi les maladroits; / J'ai perdu ma vie et je sais bien / [...] je ne puis que

⁷⁶ Jean-Luc Steinmetz hypothesizes that Verlaine found the expression *aegri somnium* (or *somnia*) starting in 1874 when he was in prison and that it is an essential key to understanding him, "une bonne définition de ce qu'il voit, de ce qu'il vit." Steinmetz proposes that the expression describes his state of sickness and nightmares, a "perpétuel convalescent et le rescapé d'un cauchemar [...] qu'il repasse, qu'il ressasse." Jean-Luc Steinmetz, "Verlaine par Verlaine," *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 19.

⁷⁷ "De l'oisiveté," "Et n'est folie ny rêverie, qu'ils ne produisent en cette agitation. *Aegri somnia, vanae / Finguntur species*." Montaigne, *Les Essais*, VIII, 32.

⁷⁸ Chevrier, "Rêves en vers," 110.

répondre / Que je suis vraiment né saturnien” (124, vv. 28-32). Verlaine also switches to the object pronoun *me* and the disjunctive pronoun *moi*: “Concernant la chose qui m’arrive” (124, v. 27), “Que tout blâme sur moi s’en va fondre” (124, v. 30). This could signal a sort of reaching out to his reader(s). But more so, it allows Verlaine to make himself more vulnerable, genuine, and visible. He admits to his misdeeds, that he “lost” his life, and expects “all blame to fall upon him,” but then he returns to the theme of *aegri somnia* and states that he could not help himself as a cursed melancholic. In this intimate moment of retelling, he forewarns the reader that he will not give any details about his physical appearance or age, nor will he tell anything about his true, secret pain: “Vous n’aurez ni mes traits ni mon âge, / Ni le vrai mal secret de mon cœur” (123, vv. 7-8). Verlaine then employs an expression that has come to famously define his view of his imprisonment, *être bien soi*: “Regrettant de n’avoir à son aide / Que ce prestige d’être bien soi” (124, vv. 19-20). The notion of prestige remains ambiguous, since it can signify both privilege and illusion.⁷⁹ But as Solal suggests, “l’emprisonnement n’engendre pas chez lui d’humeur héroïque (esprit de rébellion, soif d’évasion, orgueil du martyr), mais accorde simplement le privilège d’une domiciliation et restaure ce prestige ‘d’être bien soi’ – et pas un autre.”⁸⁰ Prison was a shelter to Verlaine and at last afforded him a secure domicile unlike under the roof of his doting mother or his wife Mathilde, or with Rimbaud in their rented hotels and apartments while running away to England or Belgium.

⁷⁹ “Illusion attribuée aux sortilèges,” “Illusions produites par des moyens naturels. Les prestiges de la fantasmagoria,” “Illusion produite sur l’esprit par les productions des lettres et des arts. Les prestiges du théâtre.” Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*.

⁸⁰ Solal, ““Du jour suffisamment et de l’espace assez,”” 33.

“Écrit en 1875”

Verlaine exhibits a different kind of self-portrayal in his poem “Écrit en 1875.” It did not feature in his unpublished collection *Cellulairement*, but instead in the much later collection *Amour*, the poems of which appeared in various journals between 1883-1888.⁸¹ Nor was “Écrit en 1875” tracked by Brunel in his list of poems intended to be included in *Cellulairement*. Its place within *Amour* separates it from the poems that were considered composed while incarcerated, given that the poems in the collection are dated with a much wider and more random time range, from “À Madame X...” in 1873, presumably before his imprisonment, to “Adieu” in November 1886. The poem communicates Verlaine’s maturation and spiritual renewal by depicting him as a wise old hermit or pilgrim who nostalgically contemplates his years of solitude and isolation (prison):

J’ai naguère habité le meilleur des châteaux
 Dans le plus fin pays d’eau vive et de coteaux:
 Quatre tours s’élevaient sur le front d’autant d’ailes,
 Et j’ai longtemps, longtemps habité l’une d’elles.
 Le mur, étant de brique extérieurement,
 Luisait rouge au soleil de ce site dormant,
 Mais un lait de chaux, clair comme une aube qui pleure,
 Tendait légèrement la voûte intérieure.⁸²

Such a depiction highlights the poet’s transformation: the stormy instability of Verlaine’s previous life turned into interior peace. It also contributes to defining prison as a protective, educational, and reparative space, and the poem additionally reinforces Verlaine’s criticism of the ordinary world and its pleasures. His self-staging conveys the message that true freedom is

⁸¹ *Sagesse. Amour. Bonheur*, ed. Jacques-Henry Bornecque (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 243.

⁸² *Amour*, ed. Bornecque, 112, vv. 1-8.

not where one thinks it is, and it also reflects the tension between a desire for sobriety and the dramatization of his new conversion.

After nearly three months at the Petits-Carmes, Verlaine was transferred to another Belgian prison, the “Maison de sûreté cellulaire” in Mons, to spend the remainder of his sentence (a little over one year). Verlaine felt an immediate, uncanny admiration and fondness for this “castle,” naming it on account of its architectural appearance and façade with medieval crenellations, towers, and gate:⁸³

La prison, cellulaire aussi, [...] est, je dois le confesser, une chose jolie au possible. De brique rouge pâle, presque rose, à l’extérieur, ce monument, ce véritable monument, est blanc de chaux et noir de goudron intérieurement avec des architectures sobres d’acier et de fer. J’ai exprimé l’espèce d’admiration causée en moi par la vue, ô la toute première vie de ce désormais mien “château” [...] ⁸⁴

The comparison between prisons and castles is not as exaggerated as it might seem. As a site of punishment and correction, according to Foucault, and as a location that evokes despair and suffering, imagining one’s prison as a bleak fortress (and a dungeon) is logical. However, Verlaine’s comparison here is favorable: castles evoke medieval chivalric lore but also, security and safety. Chronologically one of Verlaine’s last prison poems, “Écrit en 1875” is perhaps one of his most elegant and evocative ones. Composed of 78 alexandrine verses, it contains no stanzas or breaks. Verlaine frequently uses apostrophes (beginning with *Ô*), imitating the ode genre, six in total with two addressing the prison castle directly: “Ô lieu presque aussitôt regretté que quitté” (114, v. 66),⁸⁵ “Ô sois béni, château d’où me voilà sorti” (114, v. 73). The other four

⁸³ Richter, *Ces fabuleux voyous*, 119.

⁸⁴ Verlaine, *Mes prisons*, ed. Brunel, 304.

⁸⁵ Verlaine, *Amour*, ed. Bornecque, 114.

apostrophes immediately follow one another in couplets: “Ô diane des yeux qui vont parler au cœur, / Ô réveil pour les sens éperdus de langueur” (112, vv. 9-10), “Ô fraîcheur de sentir qu’on n’a pas de jaloux! / Ô bonté d’être cru plus malheureux que tous!” (113, vv. 41-42). To heighten the rhetorical dramatization, Verlaine employs three different types of anaphora. “N’être plus là” is repeated four lines apart: “N’être plus là, parmi les choses de la foule, / S’y dépensant, plutôt dupe, pierre qui roule, / Mais de fait un complice à tous ces noirs péchés, / N’être plus là, compter au rang des cœurs cachés [...]” (114, vv. 51-54). “C’était” is repeated at the beginning of two successive verses: “C’était la liberté (la seule!) sans ses charges, / C’était la dignité dans la sécurité!” (114, vv. 64-65). And “château” is repeated both four lines apart and immediately following the first: “Château, château magique où mon âme s’est faite, / Frais séjour où se vint apaiser la tempête / De ma raison allant à vau-l’eau dans mon sang, / Château, château qui luis tout rouge et dors tout blanc” (114, vv. 67-70). It is also worth noting that these anaphoras all occur toward the end of the poem, a formal strategy that certainly intensifies the theatricality of the depiction, but also expresses his deep attachment to the prison.

Verlaine’s depiction of the poem’s lyrical subject and self diverges from the sick and afflicted Saturnian from “Au lecteur” in that it is clothed in religious connotations. This reflects Verlaine’s return to Catholicism towards the end of his incarceration, confirmed by the date of the poem’s composition. The poem strongly alludes to the image of a holy hermit emerging from his ascetic seclusion in the cave of prison. Verlaine draws inspiration from biblical figures who secluded themselves in harsh or unforgiving environments to cleanse themselves of a life of sin (St. Augustine in the desert, for example) or to resist any temptation (Jesus’s forty days in the wilderness). The most prominent self-portrayal is that of the *homo viator* proposed by

Constantina Mitchell, a pilgrim leaving his seclusion, fastening his cloak, and packing bread into his rucksack for his journey on the dusty road ahead:

Ô sois béni, château d'où me voilà sorti
Prêt à la vie, armé de douceur et nanti
De la Foi, pain et sel et manteau pour la route
Si déserte, si rude et si longue, sans doute,
Par laquelle il faut tendre aux innocents sommets (114, vv. 73-77).

Verlaine portrays his poetic self as a repentant sinner who, like Saint Augustine, lived in excess, lust, and sloth before his conversion: “[...] j’étais ce mauvais sans plus qui s’édulcore / En la luxure lâche aux farces sans pardon / [...] un complice à tous ces noirs péchés” (113-114, vv. 48-49, 53). Prison is a refuge from the dissolute and squandered life that Verlaine led in the past. Mirroring the anti-hero in “Au lecteur” of the “brave man who found himself in prison” but who was just a sickly melancholic, Verlaine’s hermit expresses his desire to prolong his beneficial stay in the privileged space of his cell-cave: “Maintenant que voici le monde de retour, / Ah! vraiment, j’ai regret aux deux ans dans la tour!” (113, vv. 25-26).⁸⁶ Colette Windish remarks that in his “poetry of conversion” from prison, Verlaine conflictingly juxtaposes his self-portrayal as a sinner with that as a believer.⁸⁷ In what she terms as a “paradoxal tension between writing and conversion,” his prison poetry is both born from his return to religion – joy of the redemption of his soul through divine perfection – and restricted by it – poetry as a previous mode of exalting the pleasures of the flesh, reflecting his human imperfection: “l’acte de création poétique est tout à la fois conditionné *et* enfreint par la conversion religieuse. Si elle est une condition nécessaire à

⁸⁶ Constantina Mitchell, “Mythogenèse et métamorphose du *moi*: la Belgique imaginaire de Verlaine,” *The French Review* 65.6 (1992), 926.

⁸⁷ Colette Windish, “Une voie hors du silence: Verlaine entre sacré et profane,” *Revue Verlaine* 12 (2014): 89-90.

la poursuite de l'écriture, la conversion offre, en même temps, la tentation de se détourner de la poésie au profit du sacré.”⁸⁸ “Écrit en 1875” emphasizes Verlaine’s inner transformation in prison, from leaving an identity plunged into crisis to discovering an inner solace and a new sobriety. Prison is a sheltering and rehabilitating space that allows Verlaine to distance himself from temptation and freedom in the outside world. Paradoxically, Verlaine found freedom inside prison: the opposite of this location’s intention.

“*Le dernier dizain*”

A poem that can be placed in conversation with “Écrit en 1875” in regard to the lyrical subject’s readiness, “Prêt à la vie” (114, v. 74), to leave confinement and rejoin society and life is “Le dernier dizain.” Like “Écrit en 1875,” it did not feature in the unpublished collection *Cellulairement*, but was instead included in the later collection *Parallèlement*, published in 1889. *Parallèlement* regroups poems written or published since 1884, others that go back nearly twenty years earlier, and finally eight pieces that originated from *Cellulairement*. The poem was likely composed right before Verlaine’s release from prison, or shortly thereafter. Verlaine again chooses an apostrophic form to address not just his prison “castle,” but also Belgium. Unlike the confident, evangelic undertones of “Écrit en 1875,” “Le dernier dizain” adopts a more impatient tone expressing his readiness to leave prison behind:

O Belgique qui m’as valu ce dur loisir,
 Merci! J’ai pu du moins réfléchir et saisir
 Dans le silence doux et blanc de tes cellules
 Les raisons qui fuyaient comme des libellules
 A travers les roseaux bavards d’un monde vain,
 Les raisons de mon être éternel et divin,
 Et les étiqueter comme en un beau musée

⁸⁸ Windish, “Une voie hors du silence,” 81.

Dans les cases en fin cristal de ma pensée.
 Mais, ô Belgique, assez de ce huis-clos têtû!
 Ouvre enfin, car c'est bon pour une fois, sais-tu!⁸⁹

The poem consists of one ten-line stanza of alexandrine verses. It is unique in that it begins with one short exclamation cut by a caesura and ends with two others, which enclose a long seven-line sentence. "Le dernier dizain" is distinguished by two prominent apostrophes. The first addresses a personified Belgium: "Ô Belgique [...]" (166, v. 1), "Mais, ô Belgique [...]" (166, v. 9). The second is achieved through the informal second-person *tu* imperative, "Ouvre [...]" (166, v. 10), subject pronoun, "[...] sais-tu!", and plural possessive adjective: "tes cellules" (166, v. 8). Verlaine's depiction of the ready, emerging poetic self is accomplished in "Le dernier dizain" through his message of an identity mended and found again, as well as through his personification of Belgium. Verlaine tells "Belgium" that he has been confined for long enough and has adequately reformed and atoned for his crimes: "Mais, ô Belgique, assez de ce huis-clos têtû! / Ouvre enfin, car c'est bon pour une fois, sais-tu!" (166, vv. 11-12).⁹⁰ What is more, the term "têtû" could represent a hypallage as an attribute of such stubbornness, or it could represent a possible double entendre reference to his prison's towers ("têtes").

Verlaine implies that he had the time to mature and collect his dispersed self during his incarceration, which he conveys through his metaphor of (catching) scattering dragonflies across the "chatty" reeds of a "vain" world: "J'ai pu du moins réfléchir et saisir / [...] Les raisons qui fuyaient comme des libellules / A travers les roseaux bavards d'un monde vain" (166, v. 2). He

⁸⁹ Paul Verlaine, *Parallèlement*, ed. Louis Forestier (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 166, vv. 1-10.

⁹⁰ These were the words addressed to Verlaine by a guard upon his release from the Mons prison, which he also repeats in a different form in the first poem, "Bon chevalier masqué qui chevauche en silence," in *Sagesse*: "Au moins, prudence! Car c'est bon pour une fois" (50, v. 20). *Œuvres en prose complètes*, ed. Borel, 502, cited by Windish, "Une voie hors du silence," 83.

also communicates this process through a second metaphor of labeling and conserving precious objects in a museum: “J’ai pu du moins réfléchir et saisir / [...] Les raisons de mon être éternel et divin, / Et les étiqueter comme en un beau musée / Dans les cases en fin cristal de ma pensée” (166, vv. 2, 6-8). In both metaphors, it is difficult to determine whether each set of “reasons” (in the plural) are the same – “reasons that flee like dragonflies” and “reasons of my eternal and divine being” – since the word “reason” has multiple meanings.⁹¹ A few of these meanings might apply best to Verlaine’s verses: reasons as “truths” “proof,” “causes,” “subjects,” or “motives.”⁹² Perhaps Verlaine describes how prison helped him realize the “causes” of his imprisonment: his scandalous affair and life with Rimbaud. Or it could indicate a desire to return to sanity, with “collecting reasons” paralleling the expression “*rassembler ses esprits*,” he notably uses the term “esprit” in his other prison poems, such as “Sur les eaux.” Perhaps Verlaine is explaining how he identified and preserved the “truths” of his “eternal, divine” being, which could be an allusion to his new conversion and saving of his eternal soul. Verlaine nonetheless alludes to preserving, organizing, and sorting all aspects of his self, much like individual museum exhibits, where the objects preserved is his “reason” and the display case preserving it are his “thoughts.” Here, he also constructs his scene through imagery of flying, fleeting, and escaping (“fuyaient [...] à travers”), that is, of mobility which he accentuates through the notion of opening (“ouvre [...]).” He juxtaposes this with the idea of stasis and immobility, represented by his allusion to tagging items and placing them in museum display cases.

⁹¹ Among which “the faculty through which a person knows, judges, and conducts themselves,” “the sum of truths that people uniformly admit,” “the good use of the faculty of good sense, correctness of spirit, and wisdom,” and “relating to need, law, equity, and justice.” Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*.

⁹² Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*.

Verlaine's museum metaphor communicates a degree of self-discovery, inward meditation, and withdrawal. It also suggests that his imprisonment led to a hermeneutic experience. However, the image of tags does not quite comply with the ideal of a (now) coherent "I." The "fine crystal" of the cases "of his thoughts" is a delicate material, also indicating a sense of fragility in his mental state when he leaves prison. Yet Verlaine underlines the beneficial effect of imprisonment as if to thank this experience for allowing him to find and discover himself, a feeling that does not contradict the fact that he wishes to leave prison. Verlaine expresses a strong feeling of readiness to end his stasis and immobility in his jail cell, to move on with his life after admitting to his prior excesses and infractions, and to rejoin society as a renewed, changed human being. While not quite the sympathy-inducing sick man with his dreams (*aegri somnia*) of "Au Lecteur," nor the astute pilgrim provisioned with bread and faith setting out on the path ahead in "Écrit en 1875," "Le dernier dizain" is intended to be the "last" stanza. Verlaine is both spiritually, physically, and psychologically ready to re-enter the outside world.

3. Infinite Expansiveness and Vastness

"Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit"

While Verlaine's prison poetry emphasizes the constraints of confined space, it also privileges an imaginary topography of expansiveness. His poem "Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit" appears in *Sagesses*, published in 1880, as an untitled sixth poem in its third section (III, 3). Its date of composition can be traced to Verlaine's imprisonment in Petits-Carmes in 1873, given that it appears in *Sagesses* next to poems clearly dated from this time, such as "Final" (III, 4),

“Berceuses” (III, 5), and “Sur les eaux” (III, 7).⁹³ The poem communicates the increased solitude and isolation that Verlaine experienced in the *pistole*: part of a prison where prisoners of privileged social strata are separated from the rest, can benefit from greater space and privacy, and acquire modest comforts at their own expense.⁹⁴ Verlaine recounts the furnishings of his collective cell – a hammock, stool, and sink – where he was first held, as well as its conditions: the barley mash, with the exception of pea mash on Sundays, and water that always constituted his meals, and the lice he caught.⁹⁵ Following the intervention of his friend and colleague Victor Hugo, Verlaine described how he was able to benefit from slightly more comfort: “Tout le monde sait ce que c’est qu’être à la pistole. Moyennant finances, on peut faire venir sa nourriture et sa boisson (ô peu!) du dehors; on jouit d’un lit sortable, d’une chaise au lieu d’un escabeau, et autres ‘douceurs’” (295). Verlaine rejoices in having his own window in the *pistole*: “J’avais une fenêtre, une vraie! Munie, par exemple, de longs et rapprochés barreaux” (295). His observations of the outside world occupy the first half of the poem,⁹⁶ and it is followed by emotional expressions of remorse at the trajectory of his life that led to his imprisonment. Through his

⁹³ *Cellulairement*, ed. Brunel, 353-377.

⁹⁴ “Régime de faveur dans une prison, obtenu moyennant finance; quartier de prison où l’on bénéficie de ce régime. *Être à la pistole; cellule de la pistole; chambre à la pistole.*” CNRTL. <https://www.cnrtl.fr>. Accessed July 5, 2024.

⁹⁵ “Ameublement: un hamac et une couverture, une table, un tabouret, un lavabo ... et un seau. Nourriture, une pâtée d’orge; le dimanche, une pâtée de pois concassés. Boisson, de l’eau à discrétion. Signe particulier, dès le premier jour j’attrapai des ... poux.” *Cellulairement*, 292.

⁹⁶ “Par-dessus le mur de devant ma fenêtre [...] au fond de la si triste cour où s’ébattait, si j’ose ainsi parler, mon mortel ennui, je voyais, c’était en août, se balancer la cime aux feuilles voluptueusement frémissantes de quelque haut peuplier d’un square ou d’un boulevard voisin. En même temps m’arrivaient des rumeurs lointaines, adoucies, de fête (Bruxelles est la ville la plus bonhommement rieuse et rigoleuse que je sache). Et je fis, à ce propos, ces vers [...]” *Cellulairement*, 295.

window and above the rooftops, Verlaine emphasizes the spatiality and distance of the sky, the gentle rustling of a tree, the faint ringing of a distant belltower, and a bird chirping on a branch:

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,
Si bleu, si calme!
Un arbre, par-dessus le toit,
Berce sa palme.

La cloche, dans le ciel qu'on voit,
Douxement tinte.
Un oiseau sur l'arbre qu'on voit
Chante sa plainte.

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, la vie est là,
Simple et tranquille.
Cette paisible rumeur-là
Vient de la ville.

– Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà
Pleurant sans cesse,
Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà,
De ta jeunesse?⁹⁷

The poem is composed of four quatrains with an identical meter of alternating eight- and four-syllable verses. This meter creates a back-and-forth rhythm, where the longer verses present Verlaine's observations (or thoughts) and the shorter verses appear to imitate the brief movements of objects in the distance. The poem is pervaded by a feeling of calmness and slowness. Each quatrain contains one sentence in two-verse segments: the first segment is split by caesura, and the second by punctuation. "Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit" also features a change in narration mid-poem from a third-person ("le ciel est," "un arbre berce," "la cloche tinte," "on voit," "un oiseau chante," "la vie est," "cette rumeur vient") to a second-person perspective ("as-

⁹⁷ Paul Verlaine, *Sagesse*, ed. Jacques-Henry Bornecque (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 93-94.

tu fait,” “toi,” “ta jeunesse”), which illustrates Verlaine’s shifting between narrator, author, and character. The poem utilizes devices such as self-interrogation in its last quatrain and anaphora through the repetition of “toit,” “voit,” “là,” and “voilà,” which mimic a children’s lullaby or nursery rhyme, just as in “*Impression fausse*.”

Verlaine’s assonance with *là* (there), “la vie est là” (94, v. 9) and “Cette paisible rumeur-là” (94, v. 11), and *voilà* (here, but also there), “ô toi que voilà” (94, v. 13) and “toi que voilà” (94, v. 15), creates an important telescoping effect, like the back-and-forth rhythm of the versification above. Verlaine confronts himself using *voilà* to accept his current location, inside prison, but by using “*là*” he reminds himself that true life exists outside prison. “*Voilà*” comes to denote what is attainable or tangible to the poet inside the prison – that is, being a prisoner and the jail cell around him – while “*là*” comes to denote what is unattainable outside prison, both material (Brussels’s buildings and people) and immaterial (freedom). The juxtaposition of “*voilà*” and “*là*” also conveys Verlaine’s fractured identity through a simultaneous interplay of past and present. In stark contrast to the mobility of his past in his errancy and escapades, he is now confronted with incarceration and the immobility it imposes on his present. This simultaneity is also found in the contrasts and mirroring effects between Verlaine’s jail cell and the outside world. He moves to and from the scenery outside the prison walls, which is emphasized by the repetition of “par-dessus le toit” (above the rooftop), “qu’on voit” (that we see), and “là” (there). He accentuates his condition inside the prison walls through the verse “ô toi que voilà” (O you here now) pitying his imprisoned status and inability to enjoy the nature and bustling city laid out before him.

Verlaine contemplates his past errors: the poem contrasts the softness of the exterior world with the pain of the prisoner. The bird’s lament mirrors the elegiac tone of the poem: the

indeterminate bird sits peacefully on its tree branch and sings as if to signify that nature responds to the prisoner's qualms and condition: "Un oiseau [...] / Chante sa plainte" (94, vv. 7-8). The bird creates harmony by singing in its immobility and sends a message of solidarity and encouragement to the imprisoned Verlaine, suggesting in turn that he should do the same and seek out (and cultivate) harmony. His attempt to carve out peace and solace in the confines of his cell and the seemingly encouraging reply of peaceful, natural imagery outside of it can in fact be observed as an echo or mirror effect, for example between the incarcerated poet and the bird. Verlaine's restricted view from the narrow *pistole* window is suddenly brightened by his sudden visual and auditory encounter with the outside world that is forbidden to him. His solitude becomes eclipsed by this sudden, total lightening and "return to the surface."⁹⁸ Verlaine never explicitly refers to his *pistole* as a dark cavern, but the verticality of his upward-turned gaze is noticeable and important. It can be assumed that the window he describes in *Mes prisons* is located towards the ceiling of his *pistole*, and his field of vision is thus pointing upwards in such a way that he only sees the sky: "Le ciel est [...] / Si bleu, si calme!" (93, vv. 1-2).

"Sur les eaux"

The prison poem that epitomizes Verlaine's desire for infinite expansiveness is "Sur les eaux," which, as its title suggests, immediately communicates the image of a body of water, and more specifically, its wideness and flatness. Dated "Brux[elles]. Juillet 1873," the poem was also composed during Verlaine's incarceration in Petits-Carmes, and it takes the form of an inner monologue. The lyrical subject compares his mind to a "*mouette*" (seagull) gliding and swerving up and down in the strong gusts over the turbulent waves:

⁹⁸ Mitchell, "Mythogenèse et métamorphose du moi," 927-928.

Je ne sais pourquoi
 Mon esprit amer
 D'une aile inquiète et folle vole sur la mer;
 Tout ce qui m'est cher,
 D'une aile d'effroi
 Mon amour le couve au ras des flots: pourquoi?
 Pourquoi?

Mouette à l'essor mélancolique,
 Elle suit la vague, ma pensée
 À tous les vents du ciel balancée
 Et biaisant quand la marée oblique,
 Mouette à l'essor mélancolique!

Ivre de soleil
 Et de liberté,
 Un instinct la guide à travers cette immensité:
 La brise d'été
 Sur le flot vermeil
 Doucement la porte en un tiède demi-sommeil.
 Parfois si tristement elle crie
 Qu'elle alarme au lointain le pilote,
 Puis au gré du flot se livre et flotte
 Et plonge et, l'aile toute meurtrie,
 Revole et puis si tristement crie!

Je ne sais pourquoi
 Mon esprit amer
 D'une aile inquiète et folle vole sur la mer:
 Tout ce qui m'est cher,
 D'une aile d'effroi
 Mon amour le cherche au ras des flots. Pourquoi? Pourquoi? (129-130, vv. 1-22).

The poem is composed of four different irregular-length stanzas, varying between a sestet, quintain, and an eleven- and a thirteen-line one. The first and fourth (last) stanzas are identical and create a sort of echo caused by the waves, wind, or animal sounds (seagull cries), as is common on the open waters. Verlaine's use of uncommon thirteen-syllable verses that puncture and disrupt the poem's flow, giving the poem an erratic form, may imitate the instability and volatility of the sea and water, which in turn reflects Verlaine's emotional instability and

volatility during his incarceration. For all its irregularities, “Sur les eaux” is systematic in one aspect, alternating between very short and long stanzas, with a more compact middle stanza without interruption. Symbolizing his mental distress in prison, the poem’s repetition emphasizes the incessant crashing of waves and blowing of wind over Verlaine’s figurative “sea.” Verlaine also uses the interrogative repetition “Pourquoi? Pourquoi?” (129-130, vv. 6, 28) at the end of the final verses to the first and the fourth (last) stanza. The frequency of Verlaine’s interrogative forms, especially at the end of his poems such as “Sur les eaux,” is notable as a symptom of his vexed relationship to his own identity. As certainly was the case before his incarceration, Verlaine remains a mystery to himself, and despite prison’s reparative and rehabilitating qualities, he has still not defined or made sense of who he is.

“Sur les eaux” features the nautical allegory of traversing an open sea, in image that also conveys a sense of vastness and expanse.⁹⁹ The imagery of a swimmer or a boat traversing or plowing through a dangerous body of water has been employed since the medieval period¹⁰⁰ and is also present in Charles d’Orléans’s prison poetry explored in Chapter 1.¹⁰¹ According to

⁹⁹ This imagery also features in Rimbaud’s renowned poem “Le Bateau ivre” (1871), which he shared with Verlaine in a letter. He hoped to come to Paris, present himself, and impress the *Parnasse* with it. “Le Bateau ivre” describes the drunken boat breaking its anchors and shaking loose from them: an allusion to Rimbaud’s breaking with poetic norms or conventions of morality. Tossed about by the sea and its own “drunkenness,” the wreck arrives at the great unknown. The poem concludes with the lyrical subject’s exhaustion and nostalgia for the past world, amidst the constant dizziness and instability (a “ballet”) of the sun’s reflection on the water’s surface, atmospheric accidents, the sunset, night, and dawn on the ocean. Seth Whidden, *Arthur Rimbaud* (London: Reaktion, 2018).

¹⁰⁰ For further information on the tradition of nautical metaphors from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and beyond, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 128-130.

¹⁰¹ In three separate *ballades* (“Nouvelles ont couru en France,” “En la nef de bonne nouvelle,” and “Dieu veuille sauver ma galee”), Charles d’Orléans utilizes the allegory of a ship’s distance from port – “Je suis assez loing de son port” (133, v. 23) – or a ship carrying precious cargo of heartfelt emotions – “En la nef de bonne nouvelle / Espoir a chargé Reconfort / Pour l’amener, de par la belle / Vers mon cuer qui l’ayme si fort” (47, vv. 1-4), “Dieu veuille sauver ma galee / Qu’ay chargée de merchandise / De mainte diverse pensée / En pris de Loyauté assise” (169, vv. 1-4) – to convey the experience of time endlessly passing as he ages and experiences a separation from his wife and home. Unlike Charles d’Orléans, Verlaine never explicitly describes a boat in his poem and

Valazza, Verlaine's Romantic allegory of freedom, of transcending the location of his "exile" (his imprisonment), loses its willpower and force. As a result, the lyrical subject's euphoric flying escape comes across instead as muted by worry and fright.¹⁰² Verlaine's "*esprit*" and "*pensée*" seek to metaphorically break through the prison walls to (re)gain freedom on the outside. However, they remain trapped in this fractious world conveyed through allusions to the turbulent air and water: "En traversant métaphoriquement les murs de sa cellule, l'‘esprit’ du poète se retrouve ainsi dans un espace tumultueux, indéfini, figuré par l'inconstance des ‘flots,’ où ses sentiments paraissent lui échapper."¹⁰³

"Sur les eaux" also communicates the extent to which Verlaine's spirit and thoughts are trapped in the shaken, unstable world of prison, an emotive state that is reflected in the poem itself. The sounds evoked in the poem relay a sense of panic or distress, such as the shouting and screaming (*crier*) of Verlaine's "*pensée*:" "Parfois si tristement elle crie" (130, v. 18), "[...] puis si tristement crie!" (130, v. 22). Verlaine's emotive state is also conveyed by the poem's allusions to hallucinating, dreaming, drunkenness, and madness: "La brise d'été / [...] Doucement la porte en un tiède demi-sommeil" (129, vv. 15-17), "Ivre de soleil / Et de liberté" (129, vv. 12-13), "Mon esprit amer / D'une aile [...] folle vole sur la mer" (129-130, vv. 2-3, 24-25). As Destruel remarks, Verlaine metaphorically re-enacts traversing this sea-scape by taking formal liberties and by manipulating its imagery and tonality: "le rythme est suggestif grâce aux combinaisons des vers impairs (5, 13, 9) associées à l'usage du rejet; les sonorités, l'interrogation lancinante ('Pourquoi?') permettent la fusion du paysage ('la mer') et de la

instead only alludes to a boat's pilot who is frightened by the crying of his personified "thoughts:" "Parfois si tristement elle crie / Qu'elle alarme au lointain le pilote" (vv. 18-19). Charles d'Orléans. *Poésies. I*, ed. Champion.

¹⁰² Nicolas Valazza, "L'en-vers de la cellule," *Revue Verlaine* 15 (2017): 88-89.

¹⁰³ Valazza, "L'en-vers de la cellule," 89.

‘pensée’ du poète qui semble dans l’attente, dans un ‘demi-sommeil’.”¹⁰⁴ Verlaine’s image of a seagull embodying his spirit’s or soul’s flight over the waters can be contrasted with Baudelaire’s image of the swimmer and flyer in his poem “Élévation” in *Fleurs du mal*. Verlaine’s seagull is portrayed in a more disorienting and negative light than Baudelaire’s swimmer-flyer’s ecstasy.¹⁰⁵ Verlaine’s unstable and alarmed condition is communicated by imagery of weakness, injury, and stumbling: “l’aile toute meurtrie” (130, v. 21), “D’une aile inquiète” (129-130, vv. 3, 25), “D’une aile d’effroi” (130, v. 27), “biaisant quand la marée oblique” (129, v. 10), “elle alarme au lointain le pilote” (130, v. 19). Finally, in the poem, he makes references to “*mon amour*” twice, describing how it “covers” his “bitter spirit” and it looks for his spirit “at the water’s edge:” “Mon esprit amer / [...] Mon amour le couve au ras des flots” (129, vv. 2, 6), (“[...] Mon amour le cherche au ras des flots” (130, v. 22). His “love” could naturally point to his wife Mathilde or his lover Rimbaud, as they have so often been interchangeable or indissociable in his poetry. Or, perhaps, it is a metonymy for his emotions, in particular the sad acknowledgement of his fall from grace and current situation in prison. The seagull and its haphazard movement over the infinite vastness of the open sea reflects the psychological instability he felt as a prisoner.

¹⁰⁴ Destruel, “D’un château ... l’autre ...,” 260.

¹⁰⁵ Baudelaire’s spirit flying beyond a baneful miasma, fetid marsh, the noxious surroundings, or a fog of pestilence (“ces miasmes morbides”) mirrors Verlaine’s own spirit, compared to a seagull, riding the rising gust of melancholy: “Mouette à l’essor mélancolique” (vv. 7, 11). Baudelaire’s imagery of liquids and drinking – “Et bois, comme une pure et divine liqueur, / Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides” – and of bodies of water – “des étangs,” “des mers” (10) – also parallel Verlaine’s descriptions of the sea swells – “au ras des flots” (v. 6), “le flot vermeil” (v. 16) – tides – “la marée oblique” (v. 10) – and waves: “Elle suit la vague, ma pensée” (v. 8). Baudelaire’s imagery of the flyer – “Envole-toi bien loin,” “S’élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins” (10) – of air – “Va te purifier dans l’air supérieur” (10), – of wings – “d’une aile vigoureuse” (10), – and of the swimmer – “[...] comme un bon nageur qui se pâme dans l’onde” (10) can be juxtaposed with Verlaine’s seagull. Verlaine’s poem does not express the euphoria nor the feelings of power that Baudelaire’s poem does: “Tu sillones gaiement l’immensité profonde / Avec une indicible et mâle volupté” (10). Baudelaire also emphasizes the notion and portrayal of the poet gliding smoothly above and beyond the foulness of the world. Verlaine, by contrast, stages the turmoil of a worried and melancholic soul. Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois. 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1975-1976).

“Écrit en 1875”

A final, brief example of a depiction of infinite vastness and expanse in Verlaine’s prison poetry is found in “Écrit en 1875.” Verlaine introduces his Mons prison situated amongst a stable and harmonious pastoral background, similar to a painting’s canvas. In sweeping motion, he zooms out from his tower: “Quatre tours s’élevaient sur le front d’autant d’ailes, / Et j’ai longtemps, longtemps habité l’une d’elles” (112, vv. 3-4). Verlaine then zooms out from his castle: “J’ai naguère habité le meilleur des châteaux” (112, v. 1). He finally zooms out to the cheerful valley where the castle is located: “Dans le plus fin pays d’eau vive et de coteaux” (112, v. 2). This effect of reduction-expansion serves to contrast Verlaine’s physical restriction in his jail cell with the immensity of an imagined, fairy-tale landscape of a castle, rolling hills, and running streams as far as the eye can see in the outside world. Here, the streams (*eau vive*) could also symbolize benediction and conversion by evoking the sacrament of baptism, and even redemption. The contrast between Verlaine’s jail cell and the surrounding landscape calls to mind Gaston Bachelard’s dialectics “*du grand et du petit*,” “*du dedans et du dehors*,” and “*de l’ouvert et du fermé*.”¹⁰⁶ This “outsideness” is created by dreaming, and human beings render the “inside concrete” and the “outside vast,”¹⁰⁷ which in Verlaine’s context implies rendering boundlessly beautiful the exterior world. Verlaine’s desire for serenity and freedom (and a freedom of movement) echoes the notion of *liesse* previously evoked by Charles d’Orléans. These dynamics lead Verlaine to privilege an imagery of wide, vast, and infinite spaces that to him imply mobility and remind him of his troubles and past misfortune.

¹⁰⁶ Bachelard, *La poétique de l’espace*, 20.

¹⁰⁷ Bachelard, 194.

4. The Carceral Space

In his prison poetry, Verlaine employs a set of symbolic and meaningful colors and architectural features to describe and recreate his prison space. Each color and each of these features are associated with specific feelings or emotions that his imprisonment elicited.

Colors

In his prison poetry, Verlaine privileges three specific colors (and their hues): red, blue, and white. Red (along with pink) and blue are typically used with sunlight. They depict various times of the day, in turn rendering the prison setting soothing. They also mirror the inner peace that Verlaine slowly acquired during his incarceration. White communicates a sense of purity and dignity, as it traditionally does in Western culture, but Verlaine extends this significance a step further to depict the sanitizing and cleansing aspect of his prison.

Such privileged colors appear in “*Impression fausse*” through the central figure of “*Lady Mouse*” scurrying across the prison floor, “*Dame souris trotte*” (125-126, vv. 1, 3, 17, 19), that Verlaine observes and “paints” during the night. Verlaine’s use of colors to portray his mouse-companion scurrying about his jail cell at two contrasting times of the day also conveys a sense of softness and tranquility, as seen in his description of the “pink” mouse moving about in dawn’s “blue” rays (of sunlight): “*Dame souris trotte / Rose dans les rayons bleus*” (126, vv. 17-18). An emphasis on the peacefulness of the color blue can also be seen in “*les rayons bleus*” (126, v. 18). “*Écrit en 1875*” also presents florid descriptions of the physical features and appearance of both the exterior and interior of his Mons prison that utilize all three colors: white,

red, and blue.¹⁰⁸ Verlaine recalls how this sleepy castle's red brick walls glow in the sunlight: "Le mur [...] / Luisait rouge au soleil de ce site dormant" (112, vv. 5-6). This imagery is repeated later in the poem in his apostrophe to the castle in which he compares the prison-castle to a (red) fruit stain on his teeth, thereby creating the pleasing or enticing feeling mentioned above: "Château, château qui luis tout rouge et dors tout blanc, / Comme un bon fruit de qui le goût est sur mes lèvres" (114, vv. 70-71). A figurative representation of Verlaine's blood, which had been calmed down from debilitating madness by the "fresh stay" of prison, also invokes the color red: "Frais séjour où se vint apaiser la tempête / De ma raison allant à vau-l'eau dans mon sang" (114, vv. 68-69).

The most striking aspect of Verlaine's description of his Mons "castle" is his fixation on the color white. Verlaine emphasizes its hallways' limewashed milk white arches, as "clear as the crying dawn," and the white walls of his jail cell: "[...] un lait de chaux, clair comme une aube qui pleure, / Tendait légèrement la voûte intérieure" (112, vv. 7-8), "Cette chambre aux murs blancs" (113, v. 30). He also revels in the effect of everything in his "castle," including all these white colors: "Innocence et fierté des choses, couleurs blanches!" (113, v. 12). Verlaine then combines both colors' affective meanings to describe "so soft a bluish whiteness" that floods the prison interior with silence and fresh air during the day that, using a metaphorical expression, "night comes to dream of pale blue:" "Cette blancheur bleuâtre et si douce [...] / S'emplissait tout le jour de silence et d'air pur / Pour que la nuit y vînt rêver de pâle azur" (113, vv. 15. 16-18). The color white also features in "Le dernier dizain" to describe the silence, and not the physical walls, of his Mons prison: "Dans le silence doux et blanc de tes cellules" (166,

¹⁰⁸ Nicolas Wanlin remarks that Verlaine "se plaît à évoquer les couleurs (blanc, or, vert, noir, bleu ...), ce qui pourrait rappeler les nuances chromatiques de jadis [...]." Wanlin, "Verlaine au miroir de l'art," *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 232.

v. 3). As Windish observes, this emphasis on silence is characteristic of Verlaine's prison poetry of conversion and religious renewal. Silence has many meanings that appear one after another in his poems, but it is first and foremost a lived reality for Verlaine who spent 18 months in the silent solitude of his jail cell(s). The poet, however, soon "adorns" silence with new, idealized "appeals" or "charms," such as its "soft whiteness" in "Le dernier dizain," but also in "Écrit in 1875," where it is associated with "pure air" to highlight the healing properties of this space that paved the way for his return to Catholicism: "Cette valeur positive assignée au silence permet de créer une atmosphère propice au recueillement et à la conversion."¹⁰⁹ His new perspective on the silence imposed upon him during his imprisonment allowed him to aspire to, and attain, his revelation of spirituality because silence is necessary for a sinner's "conversion,"¹¹⁰ that is, repentance, notably through silent prayer and meditation during the sacrament of confession.

In his poems, Verlaine associates the color white with healing and recovery, and blue with softness and tranquility. These colors contrast with blackness, a color which he evokes in "Écrit en 1875," "[...] à tous ces noirs péchés" (114, v. 53), and in "Impression fausse:" "Dame souris trotte / [...] Noire dans le gris du soir / [...] Grise dans le noir" (125, vv. 1-4), "Il fait noir comme en un four" (125, v. 14). Blackness is additionally powerfully used by Villon, Marot, and Théophile to portray the typical "dungeon" prison environment.

"The best of castles"

The repertoire of medieval and Gothic architectural vocabulary in "Écrit en 1875" reinforces Verlaine's conceptualization of his Mons prison as a site of romantic wonder but also

¹⁰⁹ Windish, "Une voie hors du silence," 84.

¹¹⁰ Windish, 87.

security and safety (a fortress). Verlaine enumerates the Mons prison-castle's towers: "quatre tours s'élevaient [...]" (112, v. 3), "deux ans dans la tour!" (113, v. 26), "rien dans la tour jamais ne remuait" (114, v. 62). He also lists the prison's walls: "le mur" (112, v. 5), "murs blancs" (113, v. 30). Verlaine finally evokes the vaulted arches, "la voûte intérieure" (112, v. 8), and metal stairs and gates synonymous with castle drawbridges, "des escaliers en vrille, tout aciers" (113, v. 13), that bring to mind Gothic architecture. While his Mons prison did not date from the medieval era, late nineteenth-century historical photographs show that its front entrance was constructed in brick with a large gate, crenellated walls, and tower-like structures. The medieval atmosphere of the Mons prison is also complemented by the religious and monastic themes present in "Écrit en 1875." Verlaine compares his life as a prisoner to the life of a monk, further reinforcing the notion of prison as a monastery.¹¹¹ Verlaine fills his solitude with beneficial prayer and study along with manual work: "Je partageais les jours de cette solitude / Entre ces deux bienfaits, la prière et l'étude, / Que délassait un peu de travail manuel" (113, vv. 43-45). Caroline Janowski comments that Verlaine's references to the Middle Ages are closely linked to his biography and the architecture he encountered in his youth and during his travels (Paris, Arras, Douai, Oxford) and his fascination for Gothic architecture was already noticeable in his *Poèmes saturniens*. Across his works, he privileged two architectural structures in particular, the cathedral and the belltower, the latter notably found in "Le ciel est, par dessus le toit": "La cloche, dans le ciel qu'on voit, / Doucement tinte" (vv. 5-6). These structures allowed him to express an "aesthetic fascination," a "consciousness of history," and while imprisoned, a

¹¹¹ Victor Brombert proposed this resemblance between the jail cell and a monk's "cell," citing that the walls of a cell "protègent aussi la méditation poétique et la ferveur religieuse." Prison has been cast in the image of the monastery, observes Brombert, transforming it into a favorable environment for inner reflection for the "prisoner-monk:" "le modèle monacal se trouve explicitement associé à l'utopisme pénitentiaire." Brombert, *La prison romantique*, 11-13.

“Catholic exaltation” after his return to religion.¹¹² His religious return also draws upon comparisons of Western civilization’s conversion from paganism to Christianity. The references to mythological deities in “Écrit en 1875,” “Ô diane des yeux qui vont parler au cœur” (112, v. 9), and in “Au lecteur,” “Ce n’est pas de ces dieux foudroyés” (v. 1), communicate the “transfiguration” of his lived experience of imprisonment, his rejection of the profane, and his return to the faith.¹¹³ Finally, Verlaine’s medievalism can be traced, in a highly relevant way to this study, in his connections to François Villon and Charles d’Orléans. Verlaine read Villon’s poetry during his schooling, and he later imitated it (notably, Villon’s *Ballades en jargon*) in his works after 1890. His use of allegory echoes Charles’s poetry, which drew on allegory as a “poetic gesture” and as a mode to forge new relationships with his self, the world, and language.

According to Solal, “Écrit en 1875” brings into stark contrast the poet’s break with the “sensorial spontaneity” which had largely guided him and his poetic production during his prior “delinquent” and “criminal” life,¹¹⁴ and notably during his altercations with Rimbaud: “dans le parcours chaotique du poète délinquant, l’espace cellulaire se met alors à briller de l’éclat de l’exception.”¹¹⁵ Solal notes that, for Verlaine, prison represents a space of unity and coherence. Prison is a space that reconnects, reassembles, and reconstitutes: “un espace qui se ressoude, s’articule, se comprend, au-dehors tout autant qu’au-dedans. L’immonde recule. Un monde s’organise. L’univers carcéral est ‘rejointure’.”¹¹⁶ Emmanuelle Laurent characterizes Verlaine’s

¹¹² Caroline Janowski, “Présences médiévales dans la poésie verlainienne,” *Revue Verlaine* 11 (2013): 255.

¹¹³ Janowski, “Présences médiévales,” 265-266.

¹¹⁴ Solal, “Du jour suffisamment et de l’espace assez,” 30.

¹¹⁵ Solal, 30.

¹¹⁶ Solal, 30.

Mons prison-castle as “un garde-fou, un havre de paix, la tour mystique, l’antique château dont les hauts murs protègent du monde [...] une sorte de *paradis perdu*, qu’il se prendra à regretter, comme d’autres regrettent le pays de l’enfance.”¹¹⁷ Victor Brombert’s dialectic of a “poétique de l’évasion,” where “le mur appelle l’escalade”¹¹⁸ both does and does not apply to Verlaine’s experience of imprisonment. The portrayal of infinite vastness in his poetry proves to be a form of evasion, even if it does not imply a condemnation of the prison space. For Verlaine, “le mur appelle le mur, et la vie derrière ce mur,” which incites Verlaine to think about his adequately comfortable and safe life behind these walls:¹¹⁹

Une chambre bien close, une table, une chaise,
Un lit strict où l’on pût dormir juste à son aise,
Du jour suffisamment et de l’espace assez,
Tel fut mon lot durant les longs mois-là passés,
Et je n’ai jamais plaint, ni les mois ni l’espace,
Ni le reste [...] (113, vv. 19-24).

Instead of the prisoner’s expected *outward* desire to break free from the prison walls and regain the freedom of everyday life, Verlaine is drawn *inward* to the cohesive, hierarchical safety of his jail cell. His cell is itself situated in a romanticized tower, a part within a part of the whole magical prison-castle, like a cell among other cells in the living prison organism. Verlaine’s claim that the Mons prison was the “best of castles” is not simply an exaggeration, but rather a recognition of the coextensive harmony and organization of the entire prison-castle itself.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Emmanuelle Laurent, “Verlaine en prison: le roman du poète ou l’impossible confession,” *Revue Verlaine* 3/4 (1996): 150.

¹¹⁸ Brombert, *La prison romantique*, 16.

¹¹⁹ Solal, “Du jour suffisamment et de l’espace assez,” 30.

¹²⁰ Solal, 30-31.

“Écrit en 1875” is the most revealing description of Verlaine’s experience of imprisonment as it depicts the prison space and his psychological state. Although his freedom and life are reduced and restricted to a meagre existence in his jail cell, he expands his universe by imagining an Edenic landscape of rolling hills and running streams. As Solal notes, rather than commenting on his experience of incarceration from the exterior, he instead does so from the interior: “Son expérience carcérale engendre non pas une parole *sur* la prison mais (à partir) *de* la prison [...] S’accommodant d’une existence réduite à peu de chose, il goûte l’amplitude d’un espace-temps qui l’enveloppe en s’étirant jusqu’aux limites du ‘plus fin pays’.”¹²¹ Prison is a location where Verlaine (re)discovers himself and overcomes the crises and divisions of his past, which transforms prison into a hospitable and comforting space.

5. Spiritual Renewal and Return to Catholicism

“Final”

Toward the end of his incarceration, Verlaine’s prison poetry is dominated by Christian imagery that reflects his return to the Catholicism of his youth. His poem “Final” serves as a parting platform to represent and communicate his beliefs and emotions as a renewed believer. This religiosity is perhaps the final act, as the poem’s title suggests, in reconstituting Verlaine’s broken identity and healing his crisis from his pre-prison life. The poem is ominously dated “Mons, 16 janvier 1875. Sie de prn:” the date of his release. Due to its length, only its last sonnet (VIII) will be examined here:

– Ah! Seigneur! qu’ai-je? Hélas! me voici tout en larmes.
D’une joie extraordinaire. Votre voix
Me fait comme du bien et du mal à la fois.

¹²¹ Solal, “Du jour suffisamment et de l’espace assez,” 31.

Et le mal et le bien, tout a les mêmes charmes;

Je ris, je pleure, et c'est comme un appel aux armes
D'un clairon pour des champs de bataille où je vois
Des anges bleus et blancs portés sur des pavois,
Et ce clairon m'enlève en de fières alarmes

J'ai l'extase et j'ai la terreur d'être choisi.
Je suis indigne, mais je sais Votre clémence.
Ah! quel effort, mais quelle ardeur! Et me voici

Plein d'une humble prière, encor qu'un trouble immense
Brouille l'espoir que votre voix me révéla,
Et j'*aspire* en tremblant ...
– Pauvre âme, c'est cela! (197-198, vv. 1-15).

“Final” is composed of eight sonnets with the same form: four stanzas comprised of two quatrains and two tercets, all in alexandrine verse. “Final” also contains five conventional caesuras without punctuation: “[...] Votre voix / Me fait comme du bien et du mal à la fois” (197-198, vv. 2-3). The poem then features one unconventional caesura with punctuation: “Hélas! me voici tout en larmes. / D'une joie extraordinaire” (197, vv. 1-2). This caesura in the poem's first two lines reminds us of Villon's and Charles's celebrated renditions of the theme of dying from thirst next to the fountain (“Je meurs de soif à côté de la fontaine”).¹²² The presence of multiple caesurae in “Final” suggests Verlaine's halting, stuttering speech as he is overcome with ecstasy from the divine presence. To this end, Verlaine's dialogue features many exclamations and interjections when addressing Christ's presence and also when addressing the speaker of the poem: “Ah! quel effort, mais quelle ardeur! [...]” (198, v. 11).

¹²² The first lines of Charles's *ballade* C (“Je meurs de soif en couste la fontaine / Tremblant de froit ou feu des amoureux”) and Villon's *ballade* VII “du concours de Blois” or “des contradictions” (“Je meurs de soif auprès de la Fontaine / Chault comme feu, et tremble dent à dent”) reference this theme. *Charles d'Orléans. Poésies I*, ed. Champion, 156, vv. 1-2; *François Villon. Poésies complètes*, ed. Thiry, 277, vv. 1-2.

“Final” more personally expresses and affirms Verlaine’s completed reconnection with Catholicism. The poem takes the form of a dialogue between Verlaine and Christ and provides allusions to the Passion (crucifixion) of Christ (in one of Verlaine’s visions), the Gospels, Saint Augustine, Catholic liturgy, his catechism, and many aspects of the Christian faith. More importantly, its last sonnet (VIII) conveys Verlaine’s sentiments on his new religiosity, reconstituted identity, harmony, and even willingness (and readiness) to now finish the chapter of imprisonment of his life. Verlaine feels the effects of divine grace bestowed upon him: “J’ai l’extase [...] d’être choisi” (198, v. 9). The poem provides a depiction of overwhelming emotion or ecstasy, as seen in its epigraph taken from Saint Catherine of Siena’s (1347-1380) *Dialogue of Divine Providence* (1378), “Ivi ad sanguinem Christi” (“I went to the blood of Christ”).¹²³ The poem provides a depiction of Verlaine as a devotee in trance trembling and sobbing with joy: “me voici tout en larmes. / D’une joie extraordinaire” (197, vv. 1-2), “je pleure,” (198, v. 5). He also trembles in intimidation (“terreur”) from the power of Christ’s presence and voice: “[...] Votre voix / Me fait comme du bien et du mal à la fois / [...] encor qu’un trouble immense / Brouille l’espoir que votre voix me révéla” (197-198, vv. 2-3, 12-13). Windish perceives a link between Verlaine’s process of “conversion” (return) to Catholicism and that of mysticism, affirming that his poetry also undergoes a mystical journey. Verlaine effectively becomes a mystic who is no longer an observer of an external revelation – hearing Christ’s voice, seeing Christ’s image – but who experiences the divine presence from within in his “humble and hidden vows:” “Plein d’une humble prière” (198, v. 12).¹²⁴ As Windish points out, he cannot speak or articulate his words (and put them into verse): “Le poète ainsi réduit au silence fait ici l’aveu de

¹²³ *Cellulairement*, ed. Brunel, 255.

¹²⁴ Windish, “Une voie hors du silence,” 87-89.

sa tragique impuissance à traduire par des mots adéquats son sentiment face au sacré, mais révèle aussi une tentation de composer des recueils comme des limpides reflets de la réalité, où la parfaite adéquation des mots aux choses est enfin rendue possible par le recours au divin.”¹²⁵

The poem is also characterized by a pulsating, staccato, and punctuating rhythm caused by its frequent anaphoras, as is common in Verlaine’s prison poetry, that repeat the first-person object pronoun *me* (“Votre voix me fait,” “Ce clairon m’enlève,” “Et me voici,” “l’espoir que votre voix me révéla”) and first-person singular present-tense verbs (“Je ris, je pleure,” “je vois,” “J’ai l’extase,” “Je suis,” “je sais,” “j’aspire”). Verlaine’s repeated use of the first-person pronoun resembles that in Clément Marot’s rondeau “À ses amis, auxquels on rapporta qu’il était prisonnier:” “Je rys, je chante en joye solennelle, / Je sers ma Dame, & me consolle en elle, / Je rime en Prose (& peult estre en raison), / Je sors dehors, je rentre en la maison.”¹²⁶ Verlaine’s “Je ris, je pleure, et c’est comme un appel aux armes” (198, v. 5) is also strikingly reminiscent of Marot’s verse. It is unknown whether Verlaine read Marot’s poetry, or Charles’s and Théophile’s poetry, for that matter.¹²⁷ Verlaine did, however, read Villon’s poetry, and his early poems show some degree of influence of the latter.¹²⁸ Despite not reading Marot’s poetry, Verlaine shares

¹²⁵ Windish, “Une voie hors du silence,” 86.

¹²⁶ “Rondeaux,” *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. Defaux, t. 1, 146, vv. 10-13.

¹²⁷ Verlaine’s Medieval and Renaissance readings were limited to his schooling and included *chansons de geste*, courtly romances, works by chroniclers, Villon, Dante, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Saint Theresa, Thomas of Aquino, Shakespeare, Marlowe, (John) Webster, (John) Ford, and (Ben) Jonson. Georges Zayed, *La formation littéraire de Verlaine* (Paris: Nizet, 1970), 46-47.

¹²⁸ Georges Zayed remarks that “L’influence de Villon en particulier se manifeste très peu dans les poèmes de jeunesse. C’est à peine si l’on relève des réminiscences de l’*Épithaphe Villon (Ballade des pendus)* [...] dans *Effet de nuit (Poèmes Saturniens)*.” Zayed draws attention to lines from Verlaine’s poem (“[...] un gibet plein de pendus rabougris”) to establish this (small) link with Villon’s “Ballade des pendus,” and with his “Débat du cuer et du corps de Villon.” Zayed, *La formation littéraire*, 50-52.

with the sixteenth-century poet not only the experience of incarceration, but also the composition of religious verse.

Verlaine's return to Catholicism began on April 24, 1874, when he requested a chaplain, the abbot Eugène Descamps, to teach him catechism.¹²⁹ Although he found the style of Gaume's catechism haughty and frivolous, Verlaine started to meticulously study the clergyman's book as if it were written by an "apostle." On "a certain morning in June," he claimed to notice underneath a small crucifix in his new prison cell (which adorn every cell) an image of the sacred heart of Christ, a powerful and "truly extraordinary revelation:"

Il y avait depuis quelques jours, pendu au mur de ma cellule, au-dessous du petit crucifix de cuivre semblable à celui dont il a été précédemment parlé, une image lithographique assez affreuse, aussi bien, du Sacré-Cœur: une longue tête chevaline de Christ, un grand buste émacié sous de larges plis de vêtement, les mains effilées montrant le cœur 'qui rayonne et qui saigne' [...] Je ne sais quoi ou Qui me souleva soudain, me jeta hors de mon lit, sans que je pusse prendre le temps de m'habiller et me prosterna en larmes, en sanglots, aux pieds du Crucifix et de l'image surrogatoire, évocatrice de la plus étrange mais à mes yeux de la plus sublime dévotion des temps modernes de l'Église catholique (311-312).

This episode of overwhelming emotivity cements Verlaine's transition to a newfound identity of a believer and a man of faith. Yet, the two moments that formally completed Verlaine's conversion were his confession and communion, receiving the latter from chaplain Descamps on an auspicious day, the Feast of the Assumption (August 15). Verlaine expressed, at last, a true feeling of happiness, beyond the mere adequate comfort ("Du jour suffisamment et de l'espace assez") of his prison cell, from his first communion until his release from prison:

Priant, à travers mes larmes, à travers les sourires comme d'enfant, de comme un criminel racheté, priant, ô, à deux genoux, à deux mains, de tout mon cœur, de toute mon âme, de toutes mes forces, selon mon catéchisme ressuscité! [...] Quelle candeur d'enfant

¹²⁹ *Cellulairement*, ed. Brunel, 347.

de chœur, quelle gentillesse de vieux – et jeune! alors pécheur converti, d’orgueilleux s’humiliant, d’homme violent devenu un agneau! [...] Le grand jour, tant attendu, si impatiemment souhaité, de la confession, arriva enfin ... Elle fut longue, détaillée à l’infini, cette confession, ma première depuis celle du renouvellement de ma première communion. Torts sensuels, surtout, torts de colère, torts d’intempérance, nombreux aussi, ceux-ci, torts de petits mensonges, de vagues et comme inconscientes tromperies, torts sensuels, j’y insiste ... (314-315).

Verlaine continued his similar emotional outbursts in rediscovering his faith, religion, and God, and remains in awe of his transformation into a “redeemed criminal,” “converted sinner” and from a “proud” and “violent man” into a “child” and “lamb.” Here, his return is sealed and affirmed through the sacrament of confession (or penitence).

Verlaine portrays his religious reconnection in military terms, describing it as a trumpet’s “call to arms” on the “battlefield:” “c’est comme un appel aux armes / D’un clairon pour des champs de bataille” (198, vv. 5-6). Combined with the imagery of angels “carried on shields,” his vision is an allusion to the trumpets of the last judgement associated with the angels of the Apocalypse: “Des anges bleues et blancs portés sur des pavois” (198, v. 7). He reinterprets his misfortune as God’s act of grace where pleasure, pain, good, and evil become one and the same experience of divine election.¹³⁰ Verlaine’s return to Catholicism is also defined by conflicting and divided emotions. With a certain amount of guilt, he admits his imperfect self, a classic theme among repentant sinners in the Catholic rite of confession and he acknowledges Christ’s forgiving power: “Et me voici / Plein d’une humble prière [...]” (198, v. 12), “Je suis indigne, mais je sais Votre clémence” (198, v. 10). Yet the newly converted Verlaine heads into his renewed faith, and his life after imprisonment, with mixed and confused feelings of accepting Christ’s bountiful path while being aware of his sinful past: “encor qu’un trouble immense /

¹³⁰ Scott M. Powers, *Confronting Evil. The Psychology of Secularization in Modern French Literature* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2016), 85.

Brouille l'espoir que votre voix me révéla, / Et j'*aspire* en tremblant" (198, vv. 12-14). He intentionally italicizes "aspire" – to breathe in, but also "to aspire" in the English sense: to long for or to attain – as if he were jumping while shivering into the unknown waters of his new Christian path. Plunging into water also evokes the rite of baptism. The final verse, "Pauvre âme, c'est cela!" (198, v. 15), addresses the poem's lyrical subject ("poor soul") through an apostrophe, and it seems to confirm ("that is it") his intentions in prayer. This verse could imitate Verlaine's response to himself, but given the verse's indentation and new conversation marker, it most likely imitates divine voice, "votre voix" (197-198, vv. 2, 13), responding to the lyrical self's and subject's trepidations in response to the opening verse, "Ah! Seigneur! [...]."

Verlaine's poetic stylization of Christ, both as a conversational partner and as an image that infiltrates Verlaine's poetry, intimates an echo of the poet's return and conversion to Catholicism. Negrello remarks that rather than intimately journaling about the imprisoned poet's life, *Cellulairement* chronicles Verlaine's return to religion. It gradually appears as a Christian testimony of a sinner touched by grace while incarcerated. Verlaine's "new manner" of "ample and dense flows of words" in the "second part" of *Cellulairement* testifies to an existential and aesthetic stylistic shift.¹³¹ As Destruel notes, Verlaine's experience of conversion had brought out and woken an inner voice through the voice of Christ: "Unique issue, seul contournement. *Cellulairement* mettra un coup d'arrêt définitif à la volonté de forcer son talent. Il s'agira de donner voix, en soi, à un autre que soi, interlocuteur exigeant, une instance sacrée."¹³² Far from the chaos and loss that characterized his time with Rimbaud, Verlaine reclaims (and redeems) his identity through his return to Catholicism.

¹³¹ Negrello, "De la verve poétique," 35, 37-38.

¹³² Destruel, "D'un château ... l'autre ...," 262.

IV. Conclusion

The poems that I examined seek to address how Verlaine's poetry reconciled the status of prison, and the status of being a prisoner, with the question of identity. More specifically, these poems reveal how prison impacted Verlaine's feelings and self-perception. His identity, broken into pieces and thrown into crisis during his pre-prison years, was mended and rediscovered through his incarceration. Even if Verlaine seems to contradict Brombert's stipulations in finding comfort in imprisonment, the longing for freedom remains a driving force in his work. Verlaine's poetry exhibits a modern sensibility by experimenting with irregular meter and form to convey aspects of the physical world around him, as well as aspects of his psychological state as a prisoner. As Nicolas Valazza remarks, "cette modernité réside aussi bien dans les audaces métriques du poète que dans les fuites constantes du sujet lyrique en dehors des cadres successifs qu'il s'est fixés, ou que lui ont été imposés, telle la réclusion cellulaire."¹³³ While his experimentation in "Autre" follows a prescribed rhythm (one octosyllabic verse followed by three tetrasyllabic ones) to imitate the prisoners' footsteps around the prison courtyard, it is more noticeably irregular in his other poems such as "Sur les eaux." In this poem, Verlaine imitates the volatility of sea waves and wind gusts in its four, irregular-length stanzas (a sestet, quintain, an eleven-, and a thirteen-line one) and verses (thirteen-syllable – "tredecasyllabic" – ones that "puncture" the rhythm of the other five-syllable – also irregular – and ten-syllable ones). Odd-numbered verses are an important feature of Verlaine's poetry, which is referenced in another prison poem intended to be published in *Cellulairement*, "L'Art poétique." In this poem, Verlaine follows a tradition of defining his own poetic and artistic style (in contrast to his

¹³³ Nicolas Valazza, "L'en-vers de la cellule," *Revue Verlaine* 15 (2017): 98.

predecessors and contemporaries),¹³⁴ and he states his preference for irregularity (here capitalized as an entity): “De la musique avant toute chose! / Et pour cela préfère l’Impair / Plus vague et plus soluble dans l’air, / Sans rien en lui qui pèse et qui pose” (152, vv. 1-4). Verlaine combines asymmetrical verse forms (“tredecasyllabic” and five-syllable ones) with canonical French ones (octosyllabic, decasyllabic, and alexandrine verse) in a way that creates what Valazza terms as “des vers de l’entre-deux” that does not quite complete, nor surpass, the meter by being “un pied en moins ou un pied de trop.”¹³⁵ Verlaine’s poetry portrays his carceral universe as a privileged space that allows him to access his own unique voice.

¹³⁴ In choosing this title (and by adding a tréma accent to the “e” to create an antiquated effect), Verlaine echoes Boileau’s *Art poétique* and Horace’s *Ars poetica*. *Cellulairement*, ed. Brunel, 233-235.

¹³⁵ Valazza, “L’en-vers de la cellule,” 90.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation sought to bring attention to the relationships between constraint and literary creation and between poetic production and imprisonment in poetic works spanning from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries in France. It aimed to shed light upon poetic works composed under the limitations of prison, thus filling a gap in literary prison studies since they focus on prose writing for the most part. It also aimed to highlight the importance of prison experience in the development of these poets' lyrical and stylistic self-expression.

Our comparative approach allowed us to delineate contrasts among the different authors. With the exception of Charles d'Orléans and Paul Verlaine, imprisonment for these poets was cruel and oppressive. They depicted their prison cells via the traditional trope of the dark, filthy, and fatal dungeon as a site of physical and psychological decay. Less harsh conditions of imprisonment in the case of Charles and Verlaine resulted in inward meditation and introspection and a hermeneutic journey of self-discovery. In addition, religion features prominently in the circumstances of incarceration and experiences of these captive poets. To a greater extent, Charles's, Villon's, Marot's, Théophile's, and Verlaine's prison poems all name and evoke God, and to a lesser extent, Jesus and Mary, asking for their intervention and intercession in their ordeal. For poets such as Charles and Verlaine, religion became a source of meditation and consolation. Along these religious lines, these poets evoked the metaphorical prison of love or of the body. For Charles, love for his Lady is a source of longing and pain. Théophile laments his confined body in his prison cell and his inability to pursue pleasures of the flesh with his lover Cloris in the outside world of Paris. Verlaine alludes to the entrapment that he suffered from his previous corrupting, carnal desires, his prison of the flesh so to speak, and he expresses his desire to embrace spiritual renewal in his Belgian prison.

The context of the writing and publication of these poets' prison poetry also presents points of divergence. Apart from Paul Verlaine, each prisoner-poet addresses at least one named recipient in the text of their prison poems. These recipients are partly allies who are called upon for help, or pity: to a cousin and duke in Charles's case, to the authorities with power in Villon's case, to a friend in Marot's case, and to a brother and doctor in Théophile's case. With the exception of Charles, these recipients are also partly foes against whom the poets either express hatred or profess their innocence: to conniving figures of religious authority in Villon's, Marot's, and Théophile's cases. Their prison poems' exact moments of writing is also contentious. While it is reasonable to assume that each poet composed their poems during their imprisonments within the confines of their jail cells, only Charles, with his extant personal manuscript dated to the years of his captivity, and Verlaine, with his extant folios constituting his planned collection *Cellulairement* using food wrappings from his prison canteen as paper, stolen ink stored in a crack in the floor, and a small piece of wood as a pen, are attested to have done so.¹ In Charles's case, it is also possible that he called upon an English scribe to write some of his poems.² Villon's, Marot's, and Théophile's poems were all published after their imprisonments, outside of prison, and only posthumously for Théophile's *Œuvres* (and perhaps also for Villon's *Testament*), as he died shortly after being freed. All the collections of prison poetry of the poets in this study featured delays in publication and circulation. Charles's, Marot's, and Verlaine's

¹ In *Mes Prisons*, Verlaine recounts how he composed his poems: "Avec un peu d'encre soigneusement économisé d'après un encrier prêté par l'administration pour de strictes usages épistolaires, et conservé, au frais, dans un interstice de carrelage, j'écrivis, durant les huit jours environ qu'eut lieu cette peu douce prévention, à l'aide d'un petit morceau de bois, les quelques récits diaboliques qui parurent dans mon livre *Jadis et naguère*, - *Crimen amoris* [...] et quatre autres dont *Don Juan pipé* [...] sur du papier ayant servi à envelopper quoi déjà de la cantine, manuscrit mis au monde grâce au barbare procédé ci-dessus." *Mes prisons*, ed. Brunel, 292-293.

² For further information on the dating and authorship of Charles's personal manuscript that he brought back to France from England, see *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*, eds. Fox and Arn, trans. Palmer and *Charles d'Orléans in England (1415-1440)*, ed. Arn. For further information on the dating of Verlaine's extant copies of his poetry from his prisons in Belgium, see *Cellulairement, suivi par Mes prisons*, ed. Brunel.

poems were all published during their lifetimes. Charles's famous *ballades* in his personal manuscript were only diffused after his release and return to France. Marot's printed poems in *Adolescence Clémentine* possibly circulated among the French Protestant circles with which he and his protector, Marguerite de Navarre, associated. Verlaine's prison poems were dispersed in much later collections in 1881 (*Sagesse*), 1884 (*Jadis et naguère*), 1889 (*Parallèlement*), 1890 (*Dédicaces*), and 1896 (*Invectives*). The contrasts outlined by this study's comparative approach attest that no singular, overarching experience of imprisonment exists among these poets nor in their poetic interpretations of it. The varying realities of these poets' prison conditions, the importance of religion, and the writing and publishing of their poems serve to reaffirm that prison poetry is not a homogenous genre, but one that presents and affords infinite possibilities of personal aesthetic expression.

While the experience of incarceration and poets' recollection of it through poetry was not singular, this study also sought to underline the singularity of the poetic form as a privileged medium to convey prison writing and thereby foster the emergence of a poet's autobiographical "I" or "me." Diaries, journals, letters, and pamphlets in prose could have as well recounted a writer's suffering and oppression to a sympathetic reader and might effectively compel the reader to join forces with the writer to resist the oppressive authority. Théophile, for example, chose both poetic and prose forms. We can conjecture that these prisoner-poets opted for forms other than poetry during their imprisonment, but these texts have not survived. Our study strived to elucidate the singular appeal of the poetic form as a privileged way to express poets' personal experiences and self-reflection. It examined their rhetorical strategies of persuasion and auto-defense. We saw how Charles described his psychological torment through allegorical encounters with his personified, sobbing heart as part of a strategy to lobby for his ransom

payment and release. We also retraced how Villon illustrated his mortality and physical vulnerability through striking realism in recounting his torture and sustenance on dry bread and water as a strategy to gain pity from the authorities with power in Parisian society. Through a persuasive trial narrative clothed in allegorical allusions to hell (his prison) and the garden of Eden (his native Cahors), we took stock of the avenues along which Marot pleaded his innocence as a faithful Catholic against accusations of “Lutheran” (Protestant) heresy. We underlined how Théophile, too, employed allegorical depictions of his terrifying “prison-hell” to move his readers. However, he created such depictions with the goal of pleading his innocence against allegations of *libertin* blasphemy and affirming his faithful service the crown, as seen in his intimate, epistolary poems addressed to powerful protectors such as King Louis XIII himself. Finally, we examined the manners in which Verlaine emphasized the healing power of seclusion and the beneficial safety of his confinement in his Belgian prisons. To achieve this, Verlaine drew on a contrasting interplay of imagery between limitless (beyond the cell) and limited (within the cell) spaces, and also on a narrative of spiritual renewal linked to his return to Catholicism.

In comparison with other literary genres and forms, the poetic word or voice of the prisoner-poets offers an unparalleled singularity due to the constraints under which it was produced. This leads to the important relationship between physical confinement and creative fruition that I sought to investigate. In *Les Prisons du roman*, Berchtold stipulates that while imprisoned writers may resist or decry their imprisonment, the majority draw upon their carceral reality as a source of inspiration. They reflect on the arbitrariness of imprisonment, its unjustified and disproportionate duration, and its often harsh conditions.³ Poetic production allows prisoner-

³ Berchtold, *Les prisons du roman*, 20.

writers to temporarily forget the prison walls that surround them, to denounce the deceiving world that imprisoned them, and to dedicate their efforts to attaining their freedom beyond these walls. Incarceration is perceived in the modern era as an individualistic experience, possibly reinforced by Foucault's assessment that prison, both literal and symbolic, implies above all isolation. Foucault asserts that a prisoner is isolated from the outside world, and in some cases, from other prisoners: prison intends to make one feel, in a sense, singular.⁴ While the poems of prisoner-poets such as Verlaine allude on numerous occasions to other prisoners, each writer embraces a singular state, and this singularity contributes to the highly individualized creative output that prison helps produce.

The individuality and creativity uniquely found in the genre of prison poetry is also brought about by the heightened affectivity and intimacy that emanates from the poet's increasingly present autobiographical "I" or "me." To varying degrees, these poets melancholically lamented their fragile physical and psychological conditions in detention or clausturation. Pleas for help or other persuasive strategies and rhetoric destined for powerful protectors or family and friends in order to secure their release or freedom (and thus, to end their suffering) were also prevalent. Yet, in their verses, each poet made use of differing aesthetic strategies to communicate their emotive reactions to their imprisonments. Whether coded in chivalric language, that of students and thieves, that of Protestant or Catholic theology, or that of a fairytale castle or the endless landscape, their poems reflect the historical and personal context of their experiences of confinement.

⁴ "Isolement du condamné par rapport au monde extérieur, à tout ce qui a motivé l'infraction, aux complicités qui l'ont facilitée. Isolement des détenus les uns par rapport aux autres. Non seulement la peine doit être individuelle, mais aussi individualisante." Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, 239.

This dissertation opens up the topic of possible paths and fields of study of other prisoner-writers who also resorted to poetry. One could enlarge the corpus of prison poetry beyond the selected time periods. For instance, English King Richard I (the Lionhearted) (1192-1194), Philippe de Vigneulles (1490-91), and the anonymous *prisonnier desconforté du château de Loches* (15th cent.) represent enticing options for the medieval period. Twentieth century prisoners, such as Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) and Jean Genet (1910-1986), also wrote about their incarceration. The approach that we adopted in this study therefore entertains appealing future possibilities if extended to other prisoners who felt the urge to compose poetry in the French language within their prison walls and behind their cells' bars.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Works

Andrieu de La Vigne. *Le Mystère de Saint Martin*. Edited by André Duplat. Genève: Droz, 1979.

Artus Désiré. *Le deffensaire de la foy chrestienne, avec la mireor des fransc taupins, autrement nommez luthériens*. Paris: J. Ruelle, 1567.

Baudelaire, Charles. *Œuvres complètes*. Edited by Claude Pichois. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1975-1976.

Catullus, Gaius Valerius. "The Poems of Catullus. A Bilingual Edition." Edited and Translated by Peter Green. Berkeley and Los Angeles: the University of California Press, 2005.

Charles d'Orléans. *Poésies. I: La retenue d'amours, ballades, chansons, complaints et caroles*. Edited by Pierre Champion. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1923; 1982.

_____. *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle. A Critical Edition of BnF MS. Fr. 25458, Charles d'Orléans's Personal Manuscript*. Edited by John Fox and Mary-Jo Arn. Translated by R. Barton Palmer. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS) and Brepols, 2010.

_____. *The English Poems of Charles d'Orléans*. Edited by Robert Steele. Early English Text Society 215. Oxford: EETS, 1941.

Clément Marot. *Œuvres poétiques complètes*. Edited by Gérard Defaux. 2 vols. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014.

_____. *L'Adolescence clémentine*. Edited by Frank Lestringant. Paris: Gallimard, 2006.

Comptes de Louise de Savoie et de Marguerite d'Angoulême. Edited by Jacques Boulenger and Abel Lefranc. Paris: Champion, 1905.

Dante. *La Divine Comédie*. Translated by H. Longnon. Paris: Garnier, 1966.

Erasmus. *Opus Epistolarum*. Edited by H.M. Allen. Vol. 4. London: Clarendon, 1901.

Étienne Pasquier. *The Jesuits' Catechism or Their Doctrine Examined* (1602). Translated by Patricia M. Ranum. Edited by Robert A. Maryks and Jotham Parsons. Leiden: Brill, 2021.

François Villon. *Lais, Testament, Poésies diverses, avec Ballades en jargon*. Edited by Jean-Claude Mühlethaler and Eric Hicks. Paris: Champion, 2004.

_____. *Le Lais Villon et les poèmes variés. II. Commentaire*. Edited by Jean Rychner and Albert Henry. Geneva: Droz, 1977.

_____. *Poems. François Villon*. Edited by David Georgi. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013.

- _____. *Poésies complètes*. Edited by Claude Thiry. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1991.
- _____. *The Poems of François Villon*. Edited by Galway Kinnell. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1982.
- Garasse, François. *Apologie du P.F. Garassus [...] pour son livre contre les Athéistes et Libertins de notre Siècle et réponse aux censures et calomnies de l'Autheur Anonyme*. Paris: S. Chappelet, 1624.
- _____. *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps, ou pretendus tels. Contenant plusieurs maximes pernicieuses à l'Estat, à la Religion, et aux bonnes Mœurs. Combattue et renversée par P. François Garassus*. Paris: S. Chappelet, 1623.
- _____. *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps*. Edited by Jean Salem. La Versanne: Encre Marine; Paris: Belles Lettres, 2009.
- Guillaume de Machaut. *Œuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*. Edited by Ernest Hoepffner. Vol. 3. Paris, Champion: 1921.
- _____. *Prise d'Alexandrie ou Chronique du roi Pierre Ier de Lusignan*. Edited by L. de Mas Latrie. Genève: Fick, 1877.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin, 1996.
- Jean de Roye. *Journal, connu sous le nom de Chronique scandaleuse*. Edited by Bernard de Mandrot. t. 1. Paris: Renouard, 1894.
- Jean Froissart. *Chroniques: 1370-1377*. Edited by Gaston Raynaud. Vol. 8. Paris: Renouard and Laurens, 1888.
- _____. *Chroniques. Troisième livre: 1356-1388*. Edited by Léon Mirot. Vol. 12. Paris: Champion, 1931.
- _____. *Le Paradis d'amour, l'Orloge amoureux*. Edited by Peter Dembowski. Genève: Droz, 1986.
- Jean Lemaire de Belges. *Les Épîtres de l'Amant vert*. Edited by Jean Frappier. Genève: Droz, 1948.
- Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de. *Les Essais*. Edited by Pierre Villey and Verdun-Louis Saulnier. 3 vols. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965.
- Rimbaud, Arthur. *Œuvres complètes*. Edited by André Guyaux and Aurélia Cervoni. Paris: Gallimard, 2009.
- Théophile de Viau. *Œuvres complètes, ed. Guido Saba*, t. 1-3. Paris: Champion, 1999.
- _____. *Le Parnasse des poètes satyriques, ou dernier recueil des vers piquants et gaillards de notre temps*. Edited by Georges Bourgueil. Paris: Passage du Nord/Ouest, 2002.
- The Epistle of Othea*. Translated by Stephen Scrope. Edited by Curt F. Bühler. Early English Text Society 264. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

The English Poems of Charles d'Orléans. Edited by Robert Steele. Early English Text Society 215. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1941.

The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems. Edited by Mary-Jo Arn and Linne Mooney. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005.

Verlaine, Paul. *Cellulairement, suivi par Mes prisons*. Edited by Pierre Brunel. Paris: Gallimard, 2013.

_____. *La bonne chanson. Jadis et naguère. Parallèlement*. Edited by Louis Forestier. Paris: Gallimard, 1979.

_____. *Œuvres en prose complètes*. Edited by Jacques Borel. Paris: Gallimard, 1972.

_____. *Œuvres libres*. Edited by Jissey (Jean Texcier). Metz: Au verger des amours, 1949.

_____. *Sagesse. Amour. Bonheur*. Edited by Jacques-Henry Bornecque. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.

Virgil. *The Aeneid*. Translated by Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin, 2006.

_____. *L'Énéide*. Translated by J. Perret. Vol. 6. Paris: Belles Lettres, 1977.

William Marshal: The Flower of Chivalry. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Pantheon, 1985.

Dictionaries

Dictionnaire du Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales (CNRTL). <https://www.cnrtl.fr>

Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF). ATILF – CNRS and Université de Lorraine, 2015. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

Dictionnaire universel françois et latin. Tome III. Paris, La Compagnie des Libraires Associés, 1752.

Dictionnaire Larousse de la langue française. <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais>.

Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com>.

Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire universel contenant généralement tous les mots françois, tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts*. Arnout and Reinier, Rotterdam and La Haye, 1690.

Huguet, Edmond. *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*. Vols. 4-5. Paris: Didier, 1950, 1961.

Litttré, Émile. *Dictionnaire de la langue française*. Paris: Hachette, 1873-1874. Electronic version created by François Gannaz. <http://www.littre.org>.

Oxford Classical Dictionary. Oxford University Press, 2024. <https://oxfordre.com/classics/>.

Petit Larousse illustré: nouveau dictionnaire encyclopédique. Edited by Claude Augé. Paris: 1906.

Randle, Cotgrave and Howell, James. *A French-English Dictionary*. London: W.H., 1650.

von Wartburg, Walter. *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch: eine Darstellung des galloromanischen Sprachschatzes*. III, XXIV. Bonn: Klopp, 1928.

Secondary Works

Adam, Antoine. *Théophile de Viau et la libre pensée française en 1620*. Paris: Droz, 1935.

Adler, Emanuel. *Communitarian International Relations: the Epistemic Foundations of International Relations*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

Ahnert, Ruth. "Writing in the Tower of London during the Reformation, ca. 1530-1558." In *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2009): 168-192.

_____. *The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Ambühl, Rémy. *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Arikha, Noga. *Passions and Tempers. A History of the Humours*. New York: Harper Collins, 2007.

Arn, Mary-Jo. *Fortunes Stabilnes: Charles of Orleans's English Book of Love*. Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994.

Ashworth, Jr., William B. "Catholicism and Early Modern Science." In *God and Nature. Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, edited by David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, 136-166. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986.

Askins, William. "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers." In *Charles d'Orléans in England (1415-1440)*, edited by Mary-Jo Arn, 27-45. Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2000.

Bachelard, Gaston. *La poétique de l'espace*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1957.

_____. *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

Barthes, Roland. "L'effet de réel." In *Communications* 11 (1968): 84-89.

Beaujour, Michel. *Miroirs d'encre. Rhétorique de l'autoportrait*. Paris: Seuil, 1980.

Berchtold, Jacques. "Le poète-rat: Villon, Érasme ou les secrètes alliances de la prison dans l'Épître 'À son amy Lyon' de Clément Marot." In *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 50, no. 1 (1988): 57-76.

_____. *Les prisons du roman (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle). Lectures plurielles et intertextuelles de "Guzman d'Alfarache" à "Jacques le fataliste"*. Genève: Droz, 2000.

Bernadet, Arnaud. *Commentaire de Fêtes galantes, Romances sans paroles précédé de Poèmes saturniens*

- de Paul Verlaine. Paris, Gallimard, 2007.
- Beugnot, Bernard. "L'imaginaire de l'espace privé dans l'œuvre de Théophile de Viau," In *Théophile de Viau. Actes du Colloque du CMR 17. Offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, edited by Roger Duchêne, 111-122. *Biblio 17*. Paris; Seattle, Tübingen: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1991.
- Binski, Paul. *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Birge-Vitz, E. "Type et individu dans l'‘autobiographie’ médiévale." In *Poétique* 24 (1975): 426-445.
- Bivort, Olivier. "Éditer Cellulairement." In *Revue Verlaine* 7/8 (2002): 31-53.
- Bohne, Gotthold. *Die Freiheitsstrafe in den italienischen Stadtrechten des 12.-16. Jahrhunderts*. I-II. Leipzig: T. Weicher, 1922, 1925.
- Bombart, Mathilde. "'Des vers méchants et impies?' Questions sur une poésie en procès." In *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les Poésies*, edited by Guillaume Peureux, 63-78. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- Brombert, Victor. *La prison romantique. Essai sur l'imaginaire*. Paris: José Corti, 1975.
- _____. *The Romantic Prison. The French Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Buisine, Alain. *Paul Verlaine. Histoire d'un corps*. Paris, Tallandier, 1995.
- Burger, André. "La dure prison de Meung." In *Studi in onore di Italo Siciliano*, 145-154. 2 vols. Florence: Olschki, 1966.
- Cavaillé, Jean-Pierre. "La polémique anti-libertine et anti-libertaire contemporaine: catholiques, libéraux, libertariens." In *Les Dossiers du Grihl* (2009). Accessed January 28, 2022
<http://journals.openedition.org/dossiersgrihl/3495>.
- Cerquiglini-Toulet, Jacqueline. "Espèces d'espaces. Espace physique et espace mental dans la poésie de Charles d'Orléans." *Le Moyen Français* 70 (2012): 7-20.
- Champion, Pierre. "La dame anglaise de Charles d'Orléans." In *Romania* 49 (1923): 580-584.
- _____. *La vie de Charles d'Orléans*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1969.
- Champoillon-Figeac, Aimé. *Louis et Charles, ducs d'Orléans: leur influence sur les arts, la littérature et l'esprit de leur siècle*. Paris: Compteur des Imprimeurs Unis, 1844.
- Chevrier, Alain. "Rêves en vers: les poèmes oniriques de Verlaine." In *Revue Verlaine* 15 (2017): 99-115.
- Collani, Tania. "Du seuil fragile qui sépare la prose de la poésie – un aperçu des tendances au XXe siècle." In *Acta fabula* 11, no. 2 (2010). Accessed May 5, 2023.
<http://www.fabula.org/acta/document5507.php>.
- Crespin, Jean. *Histoire des martyrs persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l'Évangile*. Edited by Daniel Benoît. Vol. 1. Toulouse: Société des livres religieux, 1885.

- Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Dalla Valle, Daniella. *De Théophile à Molière aspects de una continuidad*. Santiago, Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1968.
- d'Angelo, Filippo. "Le poète, le roi, le jésuite et le juge: genèse et formation du *Je* lyrique de Théophile de Viau." In *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les Poésies*, edited by Guillaume Peureux, 217-230. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- Davies, Ioan. *Writers in Prison*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.
- de Angulo, Lucy. "Charles and Jean d'Orléans: An Attempt to Trace the Contacts Between Them During Their Captivity in England," In *Miscellanea di studi e ricerche sul quattrocento francese*, edited by Franco Simone, 61-92. Turin: Giappichelli, 1967.
- Debailly, Pascal. "Le lyrisme de la peur chez Théophile de Viau." In *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les Poésies*, edited by Guillaume Peureux, 95-112. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- Defaux, Gérard. "Rhétorique, silence et liberté dans l'œuvre de Marot: essai d'explication d'un style." In *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 46, no. 2 (1984): 299-322.
- _____. "Introduction. La vie et l'œuvre d'un 'Poète de Roy': Tityre et Melibée." In Clément Marot, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*. t. 1. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014.
- de Groot, Jerome. "Prison Writing, Writing Prison during the 1640s and 1650s." In *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2009): 193-215.
- de Izarra, Salomon. "L'écriture de l'enfermement: de la narration de l'incarcération aux perspectives et illusions d'évasion et de métamorphose." PhD dissertation, Université François Rabelais de Tours, 2017.
- DeJean, Joan. *Libertine Strategies. Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1981.
- _____. *The Reinvention of Obscenity: Sex, Lies, and Tabloids in Early Modern France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- _____. "Une autobiographie en procès. L'affaire Théophile de Viau." In *Poétique* 48 (1981): 431-448.
- Denommé, Robert. *The French Parnassian Poets*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972.
- Deonna, Waldemar. "La boule aux rats et le monde trompeur." In *Revue archéologique* (1958): 51-75.
- Destruel, Philippe. "D'un château ... l'autre ..." In *Revue Verlaine* 16 (2018): 255-280.
- Deyon, Pierre. *Le temps des prisons. Essai sur l'histoire de la délinquance et les origines du système pénitentiaire*. Lille: Éditions universitaires, 1975.

- Dickinson, Joycelyne Gledhill. *The Congress of Arras, 1435*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.
- Doubrovsky, Serge. *Fils*. Paris: Galilée, 1977.
- Dufournet, Jean. *Recherches sur le "Testament" de François Villon*. Vol. 1. 2nd éd. Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1971.
- Dupas, Solenn. *Poétique du second Verlaine: un art du déconcertement entre continuité et renouvellement*. Paris: Garnier, 2010.
- Eckhard, Alexandre. "L'Enfer et L'Inferno." In *Revue du Seizième Siècle* 13 (1926): 140-142.
- Expériences limites de l'épistolaire: lettres d'exil, d'enfermement, de folie*. Edited by André Magnan. Paris: Champion, 1993.
- Fakhry, Majid. *Averroes: His Life, Works, and Influence*. London: One World, 2001.
- Farge, James K. *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology, 1500-1536*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1980.
- _____. *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France: the Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500-1543*. Leiden: Brill, 1985.
- Favier, Jean. *François Villon*. Paris: Fayard, 1982.
- _____. *Les Plantagenêts. Origines et destin d'un empire, XIe-XIVe siècles*. Paris: Fayard, 2004.
- Fiction and Autobiography: Modes and Models of Interaction*. Edited by Sabine Coelsch-Foisner and Wolfgang Görtzschacher. Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2006.
- Fictions biographiques. XIX-XXIe siècles*. Edited by Anne-Marie Monluçon, Agatha Salha, and Brigitte Ferrato-Combe. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2007.
- Foreville, Raymonde. "Charles d'Orléans et le 'Vin de Saint Thomas'." *Cahiers d'Histoire et de Folklore* 1 (1955): 22-32.
- Foucault, Didier. *Histoire du libertinage: des goliards au marquis de Sade*. Paris: Perrin, 2007.
- Foucault, Michel. *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.
- Fox, John. *The Poetry of Villon*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig J. Calhoun, 109-142. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.
- Freeman, Thomas D. "Publish and Perish: The Scribal Culture of the Marian Martyrs." In *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700*, edited by Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham, 235-254. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- _____. "The Rise of Prison Literature." In *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2009): 133-146.

Galderisi, Claudio. "De la prison Dedalus à la mélancolie de la captivité anglaise. Charles d'Orléans en la prison de poésie." In *"Le loro prigionia: scritture dal carcere"*, edited by Anna Maria Babbi and Tobia Zanon, 97-116. Verona: Fiorini, 2007.

_____. *En regardant vers le pays de France. Charles d'Orléans: une poésie des présents*. Orléans: Paradigme, 2007.

Galvez, Natacha. "Écrivains en prison et écrits de prison: entre acte de création littéraire, survie personnelle et engagement social." In *Champ pénal/ Penal field* 24 (2021). Accessed July 13, 2022. <http://journals.openedition.org/champpenal/13385>.

Ganim, Russell. "Going through the trash: meaning in the cabaret and cabinet Baroque lyric." In *Intersections. Actes du 35e congrès annuel de la North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature (Dartmouth College, 8-10 mai 2003)*, edited by Faith Beasley and Kathleen Wine, 307-315. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2005.

Garnot, Benoît. *Justice et société en France aux XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. Paris: Ophrys, 2000.

Geltner, Guy. *The Medieval Prison: A Social History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Given-Wilson, Chris. "'The Quarrels of Old Women: Henry IV, Louis of Orléans, and Anglo-Chivalric Challenges in the Early Fifteenth Century.'" In *The Reign of Henry IV. Rebellion and Survival, 1403-1413*, edited by Gwilym Dodd and Douglas Briggs, 28-47. Suffolk and New York: York Medieval Press and Boydell and Brewer, 2008.

Godard de Donville, Louise. *Le libertin des origines à 1665: un produit des apologètes*. In *Biblio* 17, no. 51. Paris; Seattle, Tübingen: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1989.

_____. "Théophile et son milieu dans les années précédant son procès." In *Théophile de Viau. Actes du Colloque du CMR 17. Offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, edited by Roger Duchêne, 31-44. *Biblio* 17. Paris; Seattle, Tübingen: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1991.

Goffette, Guy. *L'Autre Verlaine*. Paris: Gallimard, 2008.

Goodrich, Norma L. *Charles d'Orléans. A Study of Themes in His French and in His English Poetry*. Geneva: Droz, 1967.

Gothot-Mersch, Claudine. "Sur l'unité du *Testament* de Villon." In *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune*. Vol 2., 1411-1426. Gembloux: Duculot, 1969.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare*. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Gregory, Brad. *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Griffin, Robert. *Clément Marot and the Inflections of Poetic Voice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Hall, James. *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction. Volume 1: Theory and Concepts. Edited by Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf. 3 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.

Hauser, Gerard A. "Prisoners of Conscience and the Counterpublic Sphere of Prison Writing: The Stones that Start the Avalanche." In *Counterpublics and the State*, edited by Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer, 35-58. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Higman, Francis M. *Censorship and the Sorbonne: a Bibliographical Study of Books in French Censured by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris, 1520-1551*. Genève: Droz, 1979.

Histoire des galères, bagnes et prisons, XIIIe-XXe siècles. Introduction à l'histoire pénale de la France. Edited by J.-G. Petit et al. Paris: Privat, 1991.

Historicizing Life-Writing and Egodocuments in Early Modern Europe. Edited by James R. Farr and Guido Ruggiero. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Institutions of Confinement: Hospitals, Asylums, and Prison in Western Europe and North America (1500-1900). Edited by N. Finzsch and R. Jütte. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Janowski, Caroline. "Présences médiévales dans la poésie verlainienne." In *Revue Verlaine* 11 (2013): 253-275.

Jefferson, Ann. *Biography and the Question of Literature in France*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Johnson, Barbara. "Gender and Poetry: Charles Baudelaire and Marceline Desbordes-Valmore." In *Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French*, edited by Joan DeJean and Nancy K. Miller, 163-181. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Kaeuper, Richard. *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Kasprzyk, Krystyna. "L'expérience de la prison et de l'exil chez quelques poètes de la fin du Moyen Âge," *La souffrance au Moyen Âge (France, XIIIe-XVe s.)*, edited by Nicole Taillade, 165-179. Warsaw: Éditions de l'Université de Varsovie, 1988.

Keen, Maurice. *Chivalry*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984.

_____. *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1965.

Kennedy, William J. "Iberian, French, and English Petrarchisms." In *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, edited by Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid, 210-218. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Kerrigan, Michael. *The Instruments of Torture*. London: Amber, 2001.

King, Russell S. "Verlaine's *Romances sans paroles*: The Inscription of Gender." In *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 27.1/2 (1998-1999): 117-131.

Knecht, Robert J. *Un prince de la Renaissance: François I^{er} et son royaume*. Translated by Patrick Hersant. Paris: Fayard, 1998.

- Korpiola, Mia and Lahtinen, Anu. "Introduction." In *Planning for Death. Wills and Death-Related Property Arrangements in Europe, 1200-1600*. Edited by Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- La Charité, Raymond C. "Courage et invention: Marot et le cycle carcéral." In *Clément Marot, "Prince des poètes français" 1496-1996. Actes du Colloque international de Cahors en Quercy 21-25 mai 1996*. Edited by Gérard Defaux and Michel Simonin, 249-268. Paris: Champion, 1997.
- Lachèvre, Frédéric. *Disciples et successeurs de Théophile de Viau. La vie et les poésies libertines de Des Barreaux (1599-1673)*. Paris: Champion, 1911.
- _____. *Le libertinage devant le Parlement de Paris. Le procès du poète Théophile de Viau (11 juillet 1623 - 1er septembre 1625). Publication intégrale des pièces inédites des Archives nationales*, t. 1. Paris: Champion, 1909.
- Langbein, John. *Torture and the Law of Proof. Europe and England in the Ancien Régime*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Langer, Ullrich. "Is There a Self in Renaissance Lyric?" In *Représentations de soi à la Renaissance. Representing the Self in the Renaissance*. Edited by Véronique Ferrer, Eugenio Refini, and Luc Vaillancourt. Paris: Hermann, 2023.
- Laurent, Emmanuelle. "Verlaine en prison: le roman du poète ou l'impossible confession." In *Revue Verlaine* 3/4 (1996): 143-153.
- Lea, Henry Charles. *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1888.
- Leblanc, Paulette, "Les sources humanistes du *Chant nuptial de Renée de France*." In *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 100 (1954): 64-74.
- Lejeune, Philippe. *Le pacte autobiographique*. Paris: Seuil, 1975.
- Les enJEux de l'autobiographie dans les littératures de langue française*. Edited by Susanne Gehrmann and Claudia Gronemann. Paris: Harmattan, 2006.
- Lewis, C.S. "On Realisms." In *An Experiment in Criticism*, 57-73. London: Cambridge University Press, 1961.
- MacCracken, Henry N. "An English Friend of Charles d'Orléans." In *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 26, no. 1 (1911): 142-180.
- Manly, John M. and Rickert, Edith. *The Text of The Canterbury Tales. Studied on the Basis of all Known Manuscripts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940.
- Mayer, Claude A. *Clément Marot*. Paris: Nizet, 1972.
- _____. *La religion de Marot*. Geneva: Droz, 1960.
- _____. "L'avocat du roi d'Espagne, Jean Bouchard, le Parlement de Paris, Guillaume Briçonnet et

- Clément Marot.” In *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 137 (1991): 7-24.
- McLeod, Enid. *Charles of Orleans, Prince and Poet*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1969.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. “The Savage Experiment: Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine.” In *The Kenyon Review* 33, no. 3 (2011): 167-180.
- Minahen, Charles D. “Homosexual Erotic Scripting in Verlaine’s *Hombres*.” In *Articulations of Difference: Gender Studies and Writing in French*. Edited by Dominique D. Fisher and Lawrence R. Schehr, 119-135. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Mitchell, Constantina. “Mythogenèse et métamorphose du *moi*: la Belgique imaginaire de Verlaine.” In *The French Review* 65, no. 6 (1992): 919-929.
- Modernism and Autobiography*. Edited by Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Monter, William. *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Moore, W.G. *La réforme allemande et la littérature française. Recherches sur la notoriété de Luther en France*. Strasbourg: La faculté des lettres à l’université, 1930.
- Morawski, Joseph. *Proverbes français antérieurs au XVe siècle*. CFMA 47. Paris: Champion, 1925.
- Morin, Edgar. *L’homme et la mort*. Paris: Seuil, 1970.
- Mortelette, Yann. “Corbière, Hugo et les poètes du Parnasse.” In *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France* 118, no. 1 (2018): 73-84.
- Mühlethaler, Jean-Claude. *Charles d’Orléans, un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité*. Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2010.
- _____. “Introduction,” In François Villon, *Lais, Testament, Poésies diverses, avec Ballades en jargon*. Edited by Jean-Claude Mühlethaler and Eric Hicks. Paris: Champion, 2004.
- Murphy, Steve. *Marges du premier Verlaine*. Paris: Champion, 2003.
- _____. “‘Pauvre Lelian’? Pour une découverte des richesses de Verlaine.” In *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 3-13.
- Murray, Molly. “Measured Sentences: Forming Literature in the Early Modern Prison.” In *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2009): 147-167.
- Mus, David. *La poétique de François Villon*. Paris: Colin, 1967.
- Negrello, Gilles. “De la verve poétique: le Verlaine seconde manière de *Cellulairement*.” In *Recherches et Travaux* 85 (2014): 31-46.
- Newman, Karen. “The Mind’s Castle: Containment in the Poetry of Charles d’Orléans.” In *Romance*

- Philology* 33, no. 2 (1979): 317-328.
- Nicholls, David. "Heresy and Protestantism, 1520-1542: Questions of Perception and Communication." In *French History* 10, no. 2 (1996): 182-205.
- Nivat, Georges. "Prose et poésie." In *Revue des études slaves* 67, no. 4 (1995): 685-691.
- Orwat, Florence. "Éthos rêveur et conscience d'auteur chez Théophile de Viau." In *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les Poésies*, edited by Guillaume Peureux, 131-144. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- Ost, François. "Préface." In Richter, Florence. *Ces fabuleux voyous: crimes et procès de Villon, Sade, Verlaine et Genet*. Paris: Hermann, 2010.
- Parmentier, Bérengère. "Poétique de la faveur: l'écriture de service chez Théophile de Viau." In *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les Poésies*, edited by Guillaume Peureux, 167-180. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- Pask, Kevin. *The Emergence of the English Author: Scripting the Life of the Poet in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Pearsall, Derek. *John Lydgate: a Bio-bibliography*. Victoria: English Literary Studies, 1997.
- Pedersen, John. "Images et figures dans la poésie de Théophile de Viau." In *Théophile de Viau. Actes du Colloque du CMR 17. Offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, edited by Roger Duchêne, 101-110. *Biblio* 17. Paris; Seattle, Tübingen: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1991.
- _____. "The Literary Milieu of Charles of Orléans and the Duke of Suffolk, and the Authorship of the Fairfax Sequence." In *Charles d'Orléans in England (1415-1440)*, edited by Mary-Jo Arn, 145-156. Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2000.
- Pernoud, Régine. *Richard Cœur de Lion*. Paris: Fayard, 1988.
- Petterson, James. "Théophile de Viau: *In turba clamor, in foro silentium*." In *Dalhousie French Studies* 42 (1998): 17-31.
- Peureux, Guillaume. "Avertissements aux lecteurs." In *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les Poésies*, edited by Guillaume Peureux, 9-26. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- _____. "Ce que le XVII^e siècle fait à Verlaine." *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 45-65.
- Pinkernell, Gert. *François Villon et Charles d'Orléans (1457 à 1461). D'après les Poésies diverses de Villon*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1992.
- _____. "Villon und Vegetius." In *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 90 (1974): 487-493.
- Pinon, Nicolas. "Métopsychoanalyse du mal. Paul Verlaine: entre alcool et religion." In *Caitale Echinox* 24 (2013): 197-208.
- Pintard, René. *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle*. Paris and Geneva: Slatkine,

1943, 1983.

- Planche, Alice. "Prison de prince, prison de vilain. Deux aspects de la prison au XVe siècle: Charles d'Orléans et Villon." In *Marginalité et littérature*, edited by Maurice Accarie, Jean-Guy Gouttebroze, and Eliane Kotler, 293-310. Nice: Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis, ILF-CNRS, 2001.
- Poirion, Daniel. "Création poétique et composition romanesque dans les premiers poèmes de Charles d'Orléans." *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 90 (1958): 185-211.
- Popkin, Richard H. *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Porteau-Bitker, Annik. "L'emprisonnement dans le droit laïque du Moyen Age." In *Revue historique du droit français et étranger* 46 (1968): 211-245, 389-428.
- Porter, Laurence. *The Crisis of French Symbolism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019.
- Powers, Scott M. *Confronting Evil. The Psychology of Secularization in Modern French Literature*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2016.
- Prade-Weiss, Julianne. "Finding a Tongue. Autobiography and Infancy in and beyond Joyce's *Portrait*." In *The European Journal of Life Writing* 6 (2017): 20-39.
- Preisig, Florian. "L'intertexte virgilien et ses enjeux dans *L'Enfer* de Marot." In *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 57, no. 3 (1995): 569-584.
- Pugh, Ralph B. *Imprisonment in Medieval England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Regalado, Nancy Freeman. "Effet de réel, Effet du réel: Representation and Reference in Villon's Testament." In *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986).
- Reeves, Albert C. "Sir John Cornewaille, Lord Fanhope," *Lancastrian Englishmen*, 139-202. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981.
- Reinhardt, Nicole. *Voices of Conscience: Royal Confessors and Political Counsel in Seventeenth-Century Spain and France*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016.
- Richard, Jean-Pierre. *Poésie et profondeur*. Paris: Seuil, 1955.
- Richter, Florence. *Ces fabuleux voyous: crimes et procès de Villon, Sade, Verlaine et Genet*. Paris: Hermann, 2010.
- Rigolot, François. *Poétique et Onomastique, l'exemple de la Renaissance*. Genève: Droz, 1977.
- Rizza, Cecilia. "Théophile de Viau: libertinage e libertà." In *Studi francesi* 20 (1976): 430-462.
- Robic, Myriam. "Verlaine et le saphisme: autour des *Amis*." In *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 200-211.
- Rosellini, Michèle. "Écrire de sa prison: L'expérience de Théophile de Viau." In *Les Cahiers du Centre*

- de *Recherches Historiques* 39 (2007): 17-37.
- _____. "La composition des *Œuvres poétiques* de Théophile de Viau." In *Lectures de Théophile de Viau. Les Poésies*, edited by Guillaume Peureux, 231-249. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- Rossman, Vladimir. *François Villon: les concepts médiévaux du testament*. Paris: Delarge, 1976.
- Saba, Guido. *Fortunes et infortunes de Théophile de Viau: histoire de la critique, suivie d'une bibliographie*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1997.
- _____. "Théophile de Viau pamphlétaire." In *Cahiers de l'AIEF* 36 (1984): 129-138.
- _____. *Théophile de Viau: un poète rebelle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Qu'est-ce que la littérature? Situations II*. Paris: Gallimard, 1948.
- Saunders, Max. *Self-Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Schultz, Gretchen. "Sexualités de Verlaine." In *Revue Verlaine* 5 (1997): 46-59.
- _____. *The Gendered Lyric: Subjectivity and Difference in Nineteenth-Century French Poetry*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999.
- Screech, Michael A. *Clément Marot: a Renaissance Poet Discovers the Gospel. Lutheranism, Fabianism, and Calvinism in the Royal Courts of France and of Navarre and in the Ducal Court of Ferrara*. Brill: Leiden, 1994.
- _____. *Marot évangélique*. Genève: Droz, 1967.
- Sherman, William H. and Sheils, William J. "Preface." In *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2009): 127-132.
- Schirmer, Walter. *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the Fifteenth Century*. Translated by Ann E. Keep. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961.
- Sheehan, Michael M. *The Will in Medieval England: From the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to the End of the Thirteenth Century*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1963.
- Siciliano, Italo. *François Villon et les thèmes poétiques du moyen âge*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1934.
- _____. "Il Testamento di Francesco Villon." In *Rassegna* 38 (1930): 1-26.
- _____. "Sur le 'Testament' de François Villon." In *Romania* 65 (1939): 39-90.
- Smith, Pauline M. *Clément Marot. Poet of the French Renaissance*. London: Athlone, 1970.
- Solal, Jérôme. "'Du jour suffisamment et de l'espace assez:' Verlaine en prison." In *Romanticisme* 126, no. 4 (2004): 29-37.

- Spirenborg, Pieter. *The Prison Experience. Disciplinary Institutions and their Inmates in Early Modern Europe*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
- Starobinski, Jean. *L'Encre de la mélancolie*. Paris: Seuil, 2012.
- St. Clair, Robert. *Poetry, Politics, and the Body in Rimbaud: Lyrical Material*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Steinmetz, Jean-Luc. "Verlaine par Verlaine." In *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 14-24.
- Strickland, Matthew. "Provoking or Avoiding Battle? Challenge, Judicial Duel, and Single Combat in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Warfare." In *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France. Proceedings of the 1995 Harlaxton Symposium*, edited by Matthew Strickland, 317-343. Stamford: Watkins: 1998.
- _____. *War and Chivalry. The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Summers, Joanna. *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Taylor, Helena. *The Lives of Ovid in Seventeenth-Century French Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- The Renaissance in the North*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987.
- Thomas, Solène. "Travailler à l'indécis. Étude littéraire et stylistique de Verlaine." PhD dissertation, Université Jean Moulin (Lyon 3), 2018.
- Thurston, Bonnie B. *Saint Mary of Egypt: a Modern Verse Life and Interpretation*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2021.
- Valazza, Nicolas. "L'en-vers de la cellule." In *Revue Verlaine* 15 (2017): 87-98.
- Van Damme, Stéphane. *L'épreuve libertine. Morale, soupçon et pouvoirs dans la France baroque*. Paris: CNRS, 2008.
- Villey, Pierre. *Recherches sur la chronologie des œuvres de Marot*. Paris: Leclerc, 1921.
- Vincensini, Jean-Jacques. "Prisons de Villon. Espaces et pathétique." In "*Le loro prigionieri: scritture dal carcere*", edited by Anna Maria Babbi and Tobia Zanon, 149-180. Verona: Fiorini, 2007.
- Viselli, Antonio. "Paul Verlaine et le langage fuyant des oiseaux." In *TRANS: Revue de littérature générale et comparée* 18 (2014). <http://journals.openedition.org/trans/1028>.
- Wahl, Élodie. "'On sait trop tout le prix du malheur pour le perdre en disert gaspillage,'" In *Revue Verlaine* 12 (2014): 223-241.
- Wanlin, Nicolas. "Verlaine au miroir de l'art." In *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 85, no. 936 (2007): 225-237.

War and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of J.O. Prestwich. Edited by John Gillingham and James Clark Holt. Cambridge: Boydell Press, 1984.

Whidden, Seth. *Arthur Rimbaud*. London: Reaktion, 2018.

_____. *Leaving Parnassus: the Lyric Subject in Verlaine and Rimbaud*. Rodopi: Amsterdam and New York, 2007.

Windish, Colette. "Une voie hors du silence: Verlaine entre sacré et profane." In *Revue Verlaine* 12 (2014): 81-90.

Wursten, Dick. "Dear Doctor Bouchart, I am no Lutheran: a reassessment of Clément Marot's Epistle to Monsieur Bouchart." In *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 70, no. 3 (2008): 567-578.

Zayed, Georges. *La formation littéraire de Verlaine*. Paris: Nizet, 1970.

Zim, Rivkah. "'La nuit trouve enfin la clarté': captivity and life writing in the poetry of Charles d'Orléans and Théophile de Viau." In *The European Journal of Life Writing* 2 (2013): 79-109.

_____. *The Consolations of Writing. Literary Strategies of Resistance from Boethius to Primo Levi*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014.

_____. "Writing Behind Bars: Literary Contexts and the Authority of Carceral Experience." In *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2009): 291-311.

Zink, Michel. "La prison et la nature de la poésie." In *"Le loro prigionieri": scritture dal carcere*, edited by Anna Maria Babbi and Tobia Zanon, 1-18. Verona: Fiorini, 2007.

_____. "'Mis pour mourir ou feindre de prison': le poète, leurre du prince." In *Guerre, pouvoir et noblesse au Moyen Âge. Mélanges en l'honneur de Philippe Contamine*, edited by Jacques Paviot and Jacques Verger, 677-685. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000.

Zumthor, Paul. "Charles d'Orléans et le langage de l'allégorie." In *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune*, vol. 2, 1481-1502. Gembloux: Duculot, 1969.

_____. *Essai de poétique médiévale*. Paris: Seuil, 1972.

_____. *Le masque et la lumière. La poétique des Grands Rhétoriciens*. Paris: Seuil, 1978.