CHAPTER ONE

Persistent Presence

Verse after Prose

The purpose of the following three chapters is to examine the circumstances that enabled poetry, despite the pretensions of prose, to take on this second life as a medium of knowledge in the later Middle Ages. We do not set out to map knowledge as a content of texts, nor to analyze how verse texts shape this knowledge, since these issues are addressed in the final three chapters. Instead we seek to explain how and why knowledge and verse are associated and what this means for each of them. In part we do so by paying attention to the historical contexts in which verse was produced. But also, as these chapters develop, we uncover other aspects of the ways verse situates itself in this period and what connotations it thereby comes to bear. As the scope of each chapter is potentially vast, we have been obliged to be sparing in our choice of examples.

Concentration on the spread of prose has diverted the attention of literary historians away from the persistence of verse and the mutations it underwent in the face of the competition posed to it by prose. In particular, scholarly concern with *mise en prose,* a process defined by *dérimage* or the loss of the distinctive features of verse, has tended to obscure the importance of another process affecting late medieval verse: that of *mise en scène,* or at least of *mise sur scène,* the act of staging in which the structures of verse are preserved, sometimes via a generic mutation from a narrative form to a more theatrical one. The "persistent presence" of this chapter's title refers both to the ongoing importance of verse after the advent of prose and to the inventive reaffirmation of live performance as a means by which verse works were made physically present to an audience.

The "Rise of Prose" and the "Rise of Literacy"

Godzich and Kittay's anthropological-semiotic study has the most to say about the impact of prose on verse. Verse is initially effective, they contend, as an oral performative medium in which deixis, or reference to the world, is realized through the person of the performer. The semiotics of verse texts remain indexed to performance even when the texts themselves are written down; the absence of oral performance is a factor precipitating the collapse of confidence in the capacity of verse adequately to convey knowledge of the world. When verse survives alongside prose in later medieval texts, according to Godzich and Kittay, its values remain traditional; the semiotics of personal presence and authority cannot instantly be jettisoned. But verse continues to be regarded as inferior to prose when it comes to rendering reality in the way that social changes increasingly require, namely as impersonal and objective, and as no longer dependent on reference to what is immediately present. In the longer term, therefore, verse finds itself "at the mercy of prose" and is forced to discover ways to "rebel and resist" (203). Given that prose has overtaken verse in affording its readers the sense of communicating to them the world as it really is, the only option open to verse is to offer something not of this world. The solutions that it contrives, they propose, are to stress the value of poetry as an autonomous tradition, to promote lyric poetry, and to revive the association between poetry and myth, by which they mean the legacy of the Greco-Roman world. All of these modifications to the role of verse, as Godzich and Kittay frame them (203–5), postdate the Middle Ages. In short, on their account the continued use of verse in the Middle Ages is solely conservative; its mutation to confront the challenge posed by prose comes with the Renaissance.

While suggestive on matters of detail and seductive as a broad-brush narrative, Godzich and Kittay's account does not always stand up against the very texts they adduce as evidence. Their reading of Jean Molinet's *Ressource du petit peuple* (1481) is symptomatic.[1] A *prosimetrum* allegory reflecting on the difficulties facing the Burgundian Netherlands after the death of Duke Charles the Bold, the *Ressource* is presented as the vision of a first-person witness-narrator, identified in the text as the *acteur*. The *acteur* sets the scene by recounting the suffering that Tirannie (Tyranny) and her followers inflict upon Justice and the Petit Peuple (Ordinary People); Verité (Truth) and Justice deliver invectives, laments, and pleas in verse, interspersed with narrative

1. Godzich and Kittay, *Emergence of Prose*, 46–76.

elements and with didactic prose discussions between Verité and Conseil (Counsel); in a final verse section, the *acteur* hopes for an end to the current disorder. Godzich and Kittay propose a variety of ways in which the successive speakers of the *Ressource* lay claim to authority. While verse remains tied to specific contexts of utterance, they contend, prose represents itself as independent of such contexts. It lays claim to be "that which is out of quotes, that which is not for attribution, that which frames [the discourse of another, in either verse or prose] but is not framed itself" (72). It thus "does not need to formulate a claim to authority as such," for "more is to be gained by leaving the determination of the source of authority suspended" (65).

These claims for the differing status of verse and prose are vitiated in a number of ways. Most important, the figure of the *acteur* has been misinterpreted. The term had long been used to denote first-person narrators, in verse as well as prose, whether or not these narrators played a significant role as protagonists within the stories they told. It was also ambivalent, potentially denoting a text's author as well as its narrator. Many late medieval narratives play on precisely this ambivalence, encouraging but not authorizing readers to conflate author and narrator.[2] Besides displaying no awareness of this standard usage, Godzich and Kittay are led astray by the edition they use, which is based on a manuscript that uses headings to identify the narrator's voice as *l'acteur* everywhere except the opening prose section. Consequently, they assume that the heading *l'acteur* denotes a voice different from that of the opening prose, which they identify as "Molinet" (seemingly assuming the author's direct presence in his allegorical fiction). On this fragile basis they characterize the *acteur* as a factitious voice, a device that ascribes written prose to a speaking subject that is not present but must nevertheless be assigned (60–65). The *acteur*'s insubstantial quality, it is alleged, leads Molinet's audience to suppose "that it is the recipient of an immediate, rather than mediated, semiotic matter" (66). On the contrary: the *acteur* was a perfectly familiar figure to the late medieval audience and was often represented in manuscript illustrations even when he was little more than a passive witness of events.[3] As such, the *acteur* makes mediation of the allegorical action an *overt* rather than *covert* process.

The misdiagnosis of the *acteur* is exacerbated by a limited understanding of the different roles that prose and verse may play, even within the modest

2. Studies include Chenu, "Auctor, Actor, Autor"; Winn, "In Pursuit of the *Acteur*"; Brown, "Rise of Literary Consciousness." *L'Acteur* is frequently used in manuscript rubrics to identify the first-person narrator of the *Roman de la rose*, sometimes in contrast with *L'Amant*, which designates the fictional protagonist; Huot, "'Ci parle l'aucteur.'"

3. Armstrong, *Technique and Technology*, 46–48, discusses the *acteur*'s presence in the illustrations of another *prosimetrum* by Molinet, *Le Naufrage de la Pucelle*.

corpus of Molinet's six *prosimetrum* compositions. Certainly the *Ressource* is typical of these works in that verse is primarily employed where one or several characters "speak," or in some cases "sing," within the fiction. But Molinet uses verse for narrative as well as direct speech, both in the *Ressource* and in all but one of his other *prosimetrum* pieces.[4] Verse also has a set of important functional roles in these texts: it may condense arguments made in the preceding prose section, or convey particular kinds of affective intensity, whether pathos, righteous anger, or exultation.[5] This example is indicative of the extent to which the binaries that Godzich and Kittay seek to map onto verse and prose—oral/written, personal/impersonal, situated/decontextualized—are sometimes overly schematic and insufficiently contextualized themselves.[6]

Overall, Godzich and Kittay's contention that verse lingers through the late medieval period as the remainder of a declining episteme parallels traditional accounts of the decline of orality in favor of literacy. Indeed, it presupposes such accounts insofar as they envisage verse as belonging truly to an oral culture, even though eventually it is committed to writing. These accounts have, however, been successfully countered by Joyce Coleman who, in her book *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France,* argues forcefully against recognizing any "decline" of the phenomenon of orality consequent on the "rise" of literacy. Deliberately leaving out of account the large swathes of literature (such as theater) that were expressly composed for live performance, Coleman shows how, far from superseding orality, the spread of writing instead generated new forms of it. Regardless of their ability to read, people regularly had texts read to them (for example, at mealtimes); rather than read privately, they might choose to read aloud to one another in small groups.[7] This culture of reading aloud, which she terms "aural" to distinguish it from earlier kinds of orality, was a social staple of the later Middle Ages. Not all late medieval verse, of course, needs to be seen as

4. The exception is *L'Arbre de Bourgonne* (Molinet, *Les Faictz et dictz,* 1:232–50, Molinet's only other *prosimetrum* piece to be cited by Godzich and Kittay (161–68); Armstrong, "Prosimètre et savoir," 131.

5. Thiry, "Au carrefour." *Le Prosimètre à la Renaissance,* ed. Dauvois, documents the variety of *prosimètrum.*

6. They further see Verité's use of invective as incongruous, since in their view truth "ought to . . . speak dispassionately" (59). For Molinet and his contemporaries, however, rhetorical ornament and affect do not compromise truth, and may enhance it; Thiry, "La Poétique des grands rhétoriqueurs"; Cornilliat, *"Or ne mens."* Eulogies in medieval French literature were not normally reserved for the dead, as Godzich and Kittay claim (70); nor was the *Ressource* composed during "the 95th year of the Hundred Years War [1337–1453]" (47).

7. Bouchet, *Le Discours sur la lecture,* 55, considers that aural reception and silent reading coexisted during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with the latter becoming predominant after 1400.

exclusively associated with oral (or aural) reception. In response to the spread of writing, it develops specific new literary forms. This is precisely the argument of Sylvia Huot's influential *From Song to Book,* for example, which explains the rise of the "lyrico-narrative" mode as one in which formerly oral song comes to be "performed" by the written page. But in this chapter we develop Coleman's insight to show how, just as forms of aurality arose in the context of the spread of literacy, so the growth of prose as a written medium created new environments in which to exploit and redefine the "presentness" traditionally associated with performed verse. The "persistence" of verse is to be understood as its constant reinvigoration and restaging, not merely as its survival as some pallid remainder in the face of the triumph of prose.

Conservation and Transformation of Verse

Instead of assuming that a rise in prose entails a decline in verse, let us instead begin by asking what kinds of verse texts survive alongside prose and may be seen as responding to it. There are several verse genres that, despite their formal innovations, remain in some sense "the same" from the early to the later Middle Ages in France. The most obvious are drama and lyric, both of which elaborate a plethora of new forms while at the same time maintaining the essentials of French (or Occitan) versification: rhyme schemes, stanzaic forms, and standard line lengths. There will be very little prose theater composed in the medieval period (and none before the fifteenth century) and no prose lyric whatever until very much later (unless the prose in *prosimetrum* can be regarded as a form of prose poetry; see chapter 5). Verse also persists in texts on nonfictional, nonnarrative topics from a wide variety of domains (scientific, moral, philosophical, devotional, historical, satirical). While verse on such topics is more strongly challenged by prose than are lyric or theater, it is still thriving at the end of our period, for example, in the hands of the *grands rhétoriqueurs.* When, however, authors from the late thirteenth century onward choose to write such texts in verse, even if they do so in imitation of a model or in conformity with local custom, they are making a very different choice from their predecessors in the late twelfth century—one whose conservatism needs to be reread in the light of the new context(s) that surround(s) it.

Authors often, not surprisingly, choose to write in the same form as the texts they take as their models, and in this respect antecedent tradition is bound to exercise a conservative effect. The *Roman de la rose,* for example, is responsible for attracting huge swathes of late medieval literature to adopt the form of verse. There is nothing remarkable in Guillaume de Lorris's love allegory

being in octosyllabic couplets: so are many early-thirteenth-century texts that experiment with the verse narrative traditions of the twelfth. Guillaume's *Rose* is, among other things, a playful variant of the verse quest romance, in which the hero's adventures are crowned (or not) by social integration and love. Maintaining this romance association by prolonging the quest for the rose, Jean de Meun's continuation shows how continuity can at the same time be utterly transformative. In his hands the octosyllabic couplet takes on an altogether different content, that of lively philosophical exchange. The figures encountered on the quest reveal themselves to be mouthpieces of contrasting intellectual traditions engaged in dialogue with one another as much as (indeed more than) with the protagonist. Jean's fictional plot and, as David Hult has shown, often punning rhymes make his text a dynamic—or explosive—fusion of the world of university thought with vernacular literary form.[8]

Without precedent, the *Roman de la rose* did not fail to inspire emulation. The same loci, personified abstractions, and dream-vision framework are used repeatedly over the next two and a half centuries to couch more or less serious reflection in the medium of verse. Texts that imitate the *Rose,* even when devoted to subjects that might have been expected to use prose, nonetheless continue the tradition of octosyllabic couplets. The expanded *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* of Guillaume de Deguileville is a case in point. Deguileville's original poem of 1330–1332 recasts the *Rose* as an allegory of the Christian life in which the pilgrim is assailed by sins but finds salvation in the Church. Even though the revised redaction of 1355 is much more critical of the *Rose* than the earlier one, and even though the third poem of the new trilogy is essentially a life of Christ (a topic far more commonly worked in prose), the text remains formally in the shadow of the *Rose;* it is not until much later, in 1464, and with the intervention of new revisers, that parts of the trilogy are de-rhymed.[9] The formal attraction exerted by a model maintains the identical versification in octosyllabic rhyming couplets from Guillaume's *Rose,* to Jean's continuation, to Deguileville's first redaction, to the expanded trilogy, despite the radical transformation of subject matter and ethos between the beginning and the end of the chain. The *Rose* itself is not de-rhymed until 1500 by Molinet, and Molinet's work is not so much a *mise en prose* as a "moralization," as Molinet

8. Hult, "Poetry."
9. Boulton, "Digulleville's *Pèlerinage de Jésus Christ.*" Most explanations for Deguileville's *mise en prose* assume it to be part of the general movement into prose of verse romance, overlooking how far from romance the second redaction had moved. Stephanie Kamath (personal communication) points out that a better model might be Evrart de Conty's *Eschez amoureux moralisés,* which also belongs in the tradition of the *Rose* but adopts the form of scholastic prose.

contributes exegetical material on the model of Evrart de Conty's *Eschez amoureux moralisés.*[10] Molinet's reworking did not inhibit the *Rose* from continuing to circulate as a verse text at least until the end of our period; Clément Marot, for example, edited the verse *Rose* for publication in 1526.

It may also be the case that some regions are more likely to retain verse than others, and might in this respect be described as more conservative; this seems to be the case with Anglo-Norman and Occitania, the linguistic areas that were most innovative in the twelfth century. Yet their late-thirteenth-century verse encyclopedic works are highly creative (see chapter 4), while the establishment of lyric poetry as an object of study by the Consistori de Gai Saber at Toulouse is less an instance of the persistence of verse than of its utter transformation by the contemporary institutions of scholasticism (see the discussion later in this chapter and chapter 5).

Whether the conservative impulse is generic or regional, throughout the later Middle Ages we find repeatedly that traditional verse forms exercise a powerful influence on writers, but that the meaning associated with them is liable to change. In our introduction we used the analogy of the development from black and white to color film to suggest how an older medium (black and white photography, verse literature) can take on new meanings when a new one (color, prose) develops alongside it. This analogy is useful for grasping how apparent continuity may be better described as a shift toward self-consciousness or reflexivity. Modern black and white photography can summon up the memory of an earlier style (such as 1930s urban realism) while also reflecting the distance between those days and the present, a dual focus that is all the more visible because black and white is no longer the "default" photographic medium. Similarly, the form used by Deguileville both recalls the *Rose* and takes the measure of his distance from it, a distance made explicit in his repudiation of Jean de Meun in the second verse redaction of the 1350s.[11]

Verse and Its Institutions

Previous discussions of the "rise of prose" have looked for connections between it as a literary phenomenon and its historical context. For Godzich and Kittay, prose is the medium appropriate to the emergent modern state. By contrast with this account, which forms part of a Hegelian grand narrative

10. Dupire, *Jean Molinet,* 72–78. On the moralization, see Devaux, "De l'amour profane à l'amour sacré"; Regalado, "Le *Romant de la Rose moralisé.*"
11. Huot, *Romance of the Rose,* 225–29.

about the development of Western culture, Gabrielle Spiegel in *Romancing the Past* situates the "rise of prose" as a response to quite specific political circumstances: the resistance of the northern barons to the erosion of their privileges in the latter part of Philippe Auguste's reign. As a result of their successful ideological manipulation, in her view, the medium of prose became accepted as the form for truthful historical narration and was taken up by royal historiographers in a bid to counterassert Capetian legitimacy.

We have reservations about Spiegel's account. As Ian Short pointed out in his review of *Romancing the Past,* there is a potential circularity in her argument, not least in the assumption that "reality" shapes "literature" more than the other way around (a prejudice that Kittay and Godzich, to their credit, avoid). The sharpness of Spiegel's focus enables her to examine in depth a limited set of texts and their context but also binds her to explain one in terms of the other without reference to the broader literary scene. If prose is an effective tool of propaganda to the northern barons, why do the anti-centralizing epics of revolt continue to be written in verse, and why are many early prose works (the Occitan *vidas* and *razos,* for example) lacking in any dimension of propaganda? Short also critiques Spiegel for taking the pronouncements of prose writers at face value. The earliest known denunciation of verse historiography—Nicolas de Senlis's much-quoted "nus contes rimés no est verais" (no rhymed tale is true)—may, Short suggests, more properly be interpreted as stigmatizing the reliability of the tale in question rather than the use of verse as such. Nevertheless, Spiegel's interest in the ideological investment of particular historiographical texts certainly prompts, as its converse, a questioning of the institutional affiliations of verse. If we suppose that prose is associated with the "will to power" of certain groups, what are the politics of continuing to compose in verse?

The persistence—by which we also mean the transformation—of verse belongs simultaneously in numerous different and seemingly incompatible contexts. The period of the later Middle Ages in France culminates in the consolidation of central authority and the decline in prestige of regional courts. There is, however, no sign of an exclusive linking between the epistemic use of verse and either the French monarchy or rival centers of patronage.[12] The careers of Machaut, Froissart, and Christine de Pizan, to take just three examples, show that there was a rich culture of patronage available, including various royal houses, dukes, and other magnates. Poetry could equally be supported by urban communities, whose assorted professional organizations

12. Though major centers did sustain a significant volume of verse production. Later Capetian courts, for instance, generated the *Roman de Fauvel* (see chapter 6), the verse chronicle of Geffroy de Paris, and the vast epic and romance compositions of Girart d'Amiens. See Dunbabin, "The Metrical Chronicle"; Girart d'Amiens, *Escanor,* ed. Trachsler, 1:8–10, 27–29.

(jongleurs, trade guilds, lawyers) were responsible for the majority of theatrical works. The works of Pierre Gringore, at the very end of our period, attest to his own multifunctionality and to a corresponding diversity of audience. Commissioned by the Duke of Lorraine and probably also by the royal court, associated with various branches of Parisian civic officialdom, he worked with numerous guilds in the production of royal entries and entertained popular audiences in Paris and the provinces.[13] Another instance of social adaptability were the authors and aspiring intellectuals who entered the Franciscan order in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries because of the opportunities it offered, precisely for contact with a great diversity of potential audiences; indeed, John Fleming goes so far as to suggest that Franciscans were largely responsible for the institution of literature in medieval Europe.[14] In short, consumers of verse range from the most noble to the most popular.

While all these milieus have different interests, two features are common to a very large proportion of their verse production in the later Middle Ages. They all foster "live" performance of various kinds—public readings and enactments. And while these clearly retain affinities with older models of performance, such as that of a troubadour poet singing *cansos* before a court or a jongleur reciting *fabliaux* at a fair, they develop new frameworks and institutions of performance such as the ten-week-long public reading by Froissart of his romance *Meliador,* the lyric poetry competitions staged by the Puys of northern cities, the cycles of Passion plays that occupied whole urban populations for weeks at a time, or the political pageantry of royal "entries." The emergence of these institutions means that verse retains into the later Middle Ages an association with physical presence that it possessed in the twelfth century. The visibility of performance serves, at least potentially, as a correlate of veracity, while the communal dimension of performance can appear to guarantee the epistemic value of what is thus made present. At the same time, the competition from prose and the formal elaborateness of some of these new institutions make the claims of verse to be a vehicle of truth and knowledge more ambitious and self-aware than they had been in the early Middle Ages.

Public Reading

Reading aloud in the later Middle Ages is the object of Joyce Coleman's already mentioned *Public Reading and the Reading Public.* She calls it "prelection," a

13. See Brown's introduction to her edition of Gringore, *Œuvres polémiques,* especially 9; and her introduction to Gringore, *Les Entrées royales,* especially 22–23.
14. See Fleming, *Introduction,* 15.

calque on the Latin term *praelectio,* used by John of Salisbury to refer to the reading of a written text to one or more listeners, and distinguished from *lectio,* the reading of a work to oneself.[15] Among the French evidence cited by Coleman (111, 114) for the practice of vernacular prelection are the *dits* of Machaut and Froissart, which have also been scrutinized for evidence of modes of medieval reading by Deborah McGrady in her book *Controlling Readers.* The remarks that follow are indebted to both these scholars, our contribution being to differentiate the public reading of verse from that of prose, and to underline the potential epistemic dimension of such reading. We concentrate on the most ambitious of Machaut's *dits,* the *Voir dit* of 1363–1365, which describes the elderly narrator's rather pathetic courtship of a young girl, Toute-Belle. An aspiring poet, Toute-Belle places herself under the tutelage of the Machaut persona, who is an established writer, and the two exchange lyric verses and prose letters until eventually their relationship founders. The text of the *Voir dit* preserves these exchanges and insets them into the frame narrative, which, as befits a descendant of the *Rose,* is composed in octosyllabic rhyming couplets.

The mosaic of different kinds of writing that composes the text gives rise, as McGrady has shown, to a veritable survey of the different practices of reading that were available in Machaut's day: intimate, solitary consumption by the narrator or Toute-Belle of each other's letters and verses; reading aloud to another individual or a small informal group; court performances at the behest of a patron. As the *Voir dit* advances, texts that were intended to be kept private are divulged, and work as yet unpublished leaks prematurely into the public domain.[16]

Attentive primarily to the way the *dit* thus documents the author's lack of control over the reception of his work, McGrady does not linger over the different treatment accorded to the performance of verse and prose. Nevertheless, it is apparent from her analysis that prose is more closely associated with private reading and verse with reading, or singing, in public. Prose risks indiscretion; too late in the day, Toute-Belle recommends that the lovers exchange messages only in verse, the publication of which would do less harm (*Voir dit,* 782; *Controlling Readers,* 67). Although Toute-Belle is at fault in reciting the narrator's songs without his authorization, when she flaunts (*flajole*) his letters to her friends she commits an act of radical betrayal (*Voir dit,* 7366; *Controlling*

15. Coleman, *Public Reading,* 35.

16. Ibid., 92, shows that in the later Middle Ages, a first public reading of his own work by an author constituted a form of what we would call publishing, in which the work's reception could be gauged instantaneously.

Readers, 59–60). The premature performance of verse texts is undesirable because it presupposes a proper time for their public release, whereas for the prose letters no such publication is anticipated, at least within the fiction. Analogously, although the performance of verse can result in a humiliating reception for the poet, he is eager for it to be acclaimed by the right audience, whereas no general public is envisaged for the letters. It seems that readers should have forever been denied this aspect of the *dit* were it not for Toute-Belle's scandalous indiscretion and the narrator's bid to outdo her by attempting to control the public reception of the letters himself (cf. *Controlling Readers,* 67).

Froissart's *Prison amoureuse,* composed around 1372–73 in imitation of the *Voir dit,* echoes and confirms this distinction between verse and prose messages (*Controlling Readers,* 176–88). Wishing to communicate a *virelai* to his lady, the narrator of the *Prison* does not send it to her directly but instead encourages it to circulate freely, confident that it will eventually reach her ears. Even though public performance here, as in the *Voir dit,* is not necessarily gratifying to the poet (Froissart's lady publicly mocks his *virelai* with one of her own), general appreciation by an audience remains his goal where verse is concerned. When Froissart's prose letters are stolen by a group of ladies, however, the sense that this constitutes a violation of his privacy is conveyed by the sexual nature of the places occupied by the letters—whether the pouch hanging from his belt from which they are taken, or the ladies' bodices in which they are subsequently concealed. The episode concludes when the ladies return the letters on condition that they can keep the verses attached to them, a transaction that confirms the free circulation of verse as contrasted with the privacy reserved for prose. (The knowledge of poetry conveyed by the *Prison amoureuse* is explored in chapter 5.)

The poet Eustache Deschamps, one of Machaut's great admirers, offers another window onto reading in the *Voir dit.* His *Ballade* 127 describes his presenting a copy of the *dit* to Louis de Mâle, Count of Flanders, at Bruges, and being invited to read from it to the assembled court. Deschamps identifies the passage he selects as the one: "Ou Fortune parla si durement, / Comment l'un joint a ses biens, l'autre estrange" (Where he spoke so harshly to Fortune about how she unites some with the good things that she brings and holds others at a distance from them, 21–22). Coleman and McGrady both discuss the reasons why Deschamps lit on this passage, which would appear to begin at around line 8171 of the *Voir dit.* Placing the emphasis on the *fortuna* topos, Coleman proposes a political subtext;[17] McGrady focuses

17. Ibid., 115–17; "Text Recontextualized."

instead on the fact that the excerpt describes Machaut's own reading of Livy and suggests that Deschamps's choice seeks to "explore the important overlap between public and private reading practices" (*Controlling Readers,* 162). The full import of the passage in surviving manuscripts of the *Voir dit,* she argues, requires unmediated access to the book as material artifact, in particular to the rubrics, illustrations, and inscriptions that accompany the text describing Machaut's act of reading. By the very fact that he mediates this act, Deschamps denies any such contact to his audience, and instead monopolizes access to Machaut's text just as Machaut claims access to that of Livy. As a consequence, while Deschamps's enactment of Machaut's role is presented in the *ballade*'s refrain as a tribute ("en vostre louenge," in praise of you), it is also a usurpation.

Our contribution to this debate is simply to underline that Deschamps's choice fell on one of the most erudite passages of the *Voir dit.* We will see in chapter 3 how far-reaching were the implications of the *fortuna* topos for philosophical verse influenced by the *Roman de la rose* and by Boethius. Machaut's narrator presents himself as encountering it in Livy, as excerpted in the work of Fulgentius, the couplet conspiring to give the impression that this makes his source more rather than less learned, since it places both Latin names at the rhyme in the nominative form (Fulgentius: Tytus Livyus, 8185–86). The narrator performs an elaborate ekphrasis of the depiction of Fortune that includes Latin quotations; the original Latin appears in the illustrations in some of the manuscripts. The passage is generalizing rather than autobiographical, moralizing rather than affective, and that it is eminently excerptable is borne out by the fact that there are two manuscript copies that contain only this section of the *Voir dit.* It portrays Machaut as his various friends and protectors within the *Voir dit* wish him to appear: as a cleric occupied with the state of the world and with learned texts, rather than as a *faiseur* who fritters away his time on girls and love poems (see *Voir dit,* 7232–7557).[18] The refrain of the stanzas commenting on the various circles of Fortune makes explicit that he is now writing his book according to their preferences: "S'il est voirs ce qu'on m'en a dit, / Autrement ne di je en mon dit" (Thus it is true what they have said about her, and I don't say otherwise in my tale, 8269–70, repeated 8285–86 and so on). Deschamps's choice to highlight the Fortune passage is, from this perspective, at once a decision to direct a critical eye toward the amorous, lyrical aspects of the *Voir dit* and to promote Machaut as a learned poet. In short, however else Deschamps may have envisaged his performance, his

18. We thank Deborah McGrady for help with this section.

choice of this particular excerpt showcases an association between the institution of prelection, poetry, and *savoir.*

As Coleman has argued, public reading was a means not of compensating for illiteracy but of intensifying the impact of a written text (*Public Reading,* 85). This could be beneficial to bodily health, to emotional well-being, and to the mind. Performance, she proposes, facilitates learning and the transmission of knowledge more than private reading does. She quotes Radulphus Brito, for whom "we learn more by being taught than we find through our own efforts" (*Public Reading,* 90). When works of a political nature, such as treatises on government and mirrors for princes, were read to a group, audiences must have benefited from the seminar-style discussions that ensued (*Public Reading,* 97). Far from being a throwback to earlier modes of oral performance, the aural culture of prelection ushered in new forms of sophistication.

When we consider the *dits* of Machaut and Froissart, we at once see how this change is registered in the new form of the textual first person. In twelfth-century works, the textual *je* is usually that of a performer or narrator who is carefully distinguished from the author. In the works of Machaut and Froissart, by contrast, it invites confusion with the historical author, whose persona is that of a clerk: limited and even comic in some respects, perhaps, but undeniably well educated. When such works are read aloud by the poet himself, or by a fellow author, his physical presence endorses the reliability of whatever knowledge might be unfolded by the text. The institution of prelection in the later Middle Ages in France existed in tandem with changes in literary composition. Although verse could be performed at the wrong time by the wrong person, it could also confirm an association between public performance, verse, and knowledge that did not extend to all forms of prose—certainly not to prose letters.[19]

The Puys

These related qualities of later medieval poetry—the public nature of performance, the institutional infrastructure that frames it, and the epistemic value of verse—are particularly strikingly intertwined in the Puys. These competitions in devotional (usually Marian) poetry seem to have been initiated as early as the late twelfth century. From there, the impulse to institutionalize and professionalize the production of lyric poetry spread to other northern cities,

19. Bouchet, *Discours sur la lecture,* 98–109, 310, relates developments in late medieval prose to the increasing incidence of private rather than public reading.

and the Puys were at their most successful in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They are a distinctively urban and collective phenomenon, and also a regional one, extending no farther west than Caen and no farther south than Paris.[20] They were organized by *confréries,* mutual and/or professional associations with a pronounced charitable and devotional character, whose emergence has been regarded as reflecting the rise of corporatism in medieval cities.[21] The oldest known *confrérie* is the Carité de Notre Dame des Ardents of Arras, in which *jongleurs*—professional entertainers of all kinds—played an important if sometimes contentious role. Though unusual in many respects (not least the social diversity of its members), the Carité set the tone for subsequent associations in its interweaving of poetic ambitions and civic interest. Collectively controlling the city's means of communication, it was able to mediate between conflicting interest groups.[22] The *confréries* that staged Puys had all the necessary institutional apparatus of statutes and archives; surviving documents indicate that their membership was generally dominated by social élites such as municipal officials, lawyers, clerics, and rich bourgeois.[23] To belong to a *confrérie* was highly prestigious, and in some cases entailed religious and secular privileges in return for a substantial subscription fee.[24] The Puys themselves were normally held on an annual basis, as part of a day of religious and secular celebration that also involved a mass and a banquet.[25] In short, they formed part of a collective ritual not only of poetic devotion to the Virgin but also of the *confrérie*'s self-definition and self-advertisement. The Puy of the Immaculate Conception at Rouen, attested from 1486, was even more socially involved: the presentation and judging of poems took place before the general public rather than among the *confrérie* alone, binding the association together with the wider urban population.

In the Occitan-speaking area, the Consistori del Gai Saber of Toulouse (founded ca. 1323) may have been established in emulation of the early French Puys.[26] As in the Puys, candidates for the prizes offered by the Consistori were required to compose and perform poems on religious subjects, primarily devotion to the Virgin, and the Consistori's ceremonies in her honor overlapped

20. This account draws on Hüe, *Poésie palinodique,* 223–357, and Gros, *Poète,* 30–106.
21. Gros, *Poète,* 30.
22. Symes, *A Common Stage,* 80–126, 206.
23. On the membership of *confréries* and the role of Arras, see Symes, *A Common Stage,* 115–18; Hüe, *Poésie palinodique,* 224, 229–36; Gros, *Poète,* 33–34, 39–40, 50.
24. E.g., Hüe, *Poésie palinodique,* 232–36; Gros, *Poète,* 40–44.
25. E.g., Symes, *A Common Stage,* 216–26; Hüe, *Poésie palinodique,* 281–89; Gros, *Poète,* 44, 51.
26. See Léglu, "Languages in Conflict."

with other forms of civic pageantry in Toulouse.[27] The situation of Toulouse differed from that of the northern cities, however, because of the aftermath of the Albigensian crusade, which submitted its Occitan culture to French influence, left it under a cloud of heresy, and established the Inquisition at Toulouse University. In this complex institutional context, staging annual poetry competitions in Occitan on religious themes was tantamount to an act of cultural resistance.[28] In order to reinforce the symbolic value of these competitions, the Consistori commissioned regulations—the *Leys d'Amors*—to be drawn up, which were for the most part compilations from Latin sources, and which set out formally to teach and examine poetry within a structure modeled on that of the university. In his second prose redaction of the *Leys* of 1356, Guilhem Molinier includes verse degree certificates as well as abundant information on judging standards and criteria. It seems that there was a gradual convergence between the competitions staged by the Puys and the Consistori in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[29]

It is hardly surprising that all these competitions, so tightly woven into the intellectual life of their host cities, should exhibit a certain particularism: each had its preferred poetic genres and formal strictures, even if they were also influenced by one another.[30] The case of Rouen is examined by Denis Hüe in *La Poésie palinodique à Rouen.* On the one hand, many competing poets elaborate an imagery of Marian devotion that draws on site-specific metaphorical fields, important local activities such as navigation or the textile industry (714–26, 805–84). On the other, the Rouen Puy came to develop a prestige that stretched far beyond the city. After an initial period in which the winning poets tended to be local figures unknown to modern literary historians, poets of national standing began to compete there: André de La Vigne, Guillaume Cretin, Jean Marot (*Poésie palinodique,* 238–39). The value of prizes at Rouen was also considerable: the most exalted prize, for the winning *chant royal,* was worth one hundred sols tournois (290–91). This sum was four times the annual subscription to the *confrérie* in 1520 (232), and equivalent to over a week's wage for Jean Molinet in his capacity as Burgundian *indiciaire* (on which position see chapter 2).

Over and above their rootedness in specific urban societies, the Puys generate a form of poetry that insistently lays claim to conveying knowledge and

27. Léglu, "Performance and Civic Ritual."
28. Léglu, "Languages in Conflict."
29. Dauvois, "Évolution."
30. Gros, *Poète,* 31, 37, 98–99. Gros, *Poème,* 187–92, notes differences between the formal prescriptions of the Puy of the Immaculate Conception at Rouen and those of the Puy of Our Lady at Amiens.

truth. This is not simply because the Puy poets are heavily indebted to the authoritative discourse of theology.[31] It is partly because they articulate shared urban identities, common understandings of the world and of one's place in it; it is partly because their literary production is inseparable from practical acts of devotion, which hence ground the poetry both in everyday urban life and in an eschatological perspective. But it is also because the poetry of the Puys creates its own religious metaphors: it is apt to take ordinary objects and activities, not yet consecrated as figurative by preexisting religious usage, and transform them into tokens of a transcendental order. Hence in a number of poems the minting of coins, a privilege of Rouen, comes to stand for the redemption of humanity. Alloyed metal is first purified, then used to produce a coin of impeccable quality and value, whose traditional name also bears symbolic connotations: the *salut* (salutation), for instance, is a coin whose name evokes the Annunciation.[32]

Combining literary emulation, religious edification, and local urban solidarity, the activities of the Puys (in the north) and the Consistori (in the south) manifest, in the physical presence of performance, the potential for lyric poetry to shape and transmit knowledge in a way that far surpasses the courtly diversions of twelfth-century troubadours and *trouvères*.

Late Medieval Theater

Similar developments occur in late medieval theater, which, like lyric poetry, maintains continuity with the twelfth century while also renewing itself in many different institutional forms and embracing ever more ambitious subject matter. Among its manifestations, the great mystery cycles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are not only the largest-scale poetic texts of the later Middle Ages in France but also among its most successful literary legacies, since they continued to be performed until late in the sixteenth century.[33] Intended for live performance, theatrical texts are difficult to interpret, and the theatrical experience to which they relate is difficult to reconstruct. Not all

31. This discourse was not itself monolithic. For the most important Puy in Rouen, for instance, privileging the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was not ideologically neutral. Not only did the doctrine have political implications, but also the Puy's insistence on it seems to have dissuaded Jean Bouchet from taking part; Hüe, *Poésie palinodique,* 85–216, 362–71.

32. Ibid., 867–69. Other examples cited by Hüe include the Milky Way in a *chant royal* by Pierre Gaultier (628–30), and printing in a piece by Nicole Lescarre (695–700). On the role of analogy more generally in this period, see Randall, *Building Resemblance.*

33. Runnalls, "Mystères."

manuscript records are of complete texts; they include notes and prompts, and the roles of individual actors. More than the texts of any other genre they bear witness to constant revision, since the "same" play could be performed in different ways on different occasions; as Graham Runnalls puts it, "the history of French Passions could be said to be a virtually uninterrupted succession of reworkings of reworkings, of revisions of revisions."[34] Yet although their often provisional and fragmentary quality makes the transmission of theatrical texts somewhat marginal to the main literary tradition, at least until the advent of printing gave them a more stable form,[35] in other respects theatricality is central to the medieval concept of literature. Helen Solterer reiterates Paul Zumthor's salutary reminder that live performance and dramatic enactment "animated so many different forms of communication and expression that it is more telling to ask what was not characterized theatrically than to identify what was theatre."[36]

The later Middle Ages, far from marking a decline in theatricality, instead witnessed the migration of various previously narrative forms into theater. The most impressive examples of literary material following this path of *mise en scène,* as opposed to *mise en prose,* are in religious drama. Take, for example, the recasting of the miracle stories featuring the Virgin Mary that existed in octosyllabic rhyming couplets in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in the work of Adgar, Gautier de Coinci, and others. The *Miracle de Théophile* composed by the innovative Rutebeuf in 1264 is an experimental work that adapts one such miracle to the stage. The Virgin saves Theophile's soul by retrieving from the devil the contract the ambitious cleric had unwisely made with him, in which, in a precursor of the Faust story, he exchanged clerical preferment in this world for salvation in the next. Rutebeuf's isolated miracle play was followed in the fourteenth century by the *Miracles de Notre Dame par personnages,* a cycle of some forty plays that recast the earlier narrative poems wholesale. These *Miracles* were performed by the goldsmiths' guild on the right bank of the Seine between around 1339 to 1382: a successful run by any standards. Other popular saints' lives, which had previously existed only as narrative texts in verse, likewise made their way onto the stage. Jean Bodel's *Jeu de Saint Nicolas* of the turn of the thirteenth century, which has a verse narrative antecedent in Wace's *Vie de Saint Nicolas,* is an isolated early precursor of what was to prove a significant body of theatrical production in

34. Ibid., 470.

35. Ibid., 516.

36. Solterer, "Theatre and Theatricality," 181, citing Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale,* 37–39.

the late Middle Ages.[37] Petit de Julleville records nine theatrical adaptations of the life of Saint Catherine, one from the fourteenth, seven from the fifteenth, and one from the sixteenth century.[38] There are also mystery plays dramatizing the lives of Saint Lawrence, Saint Martin, and Saint Denis, one version of the *Mystère de Saint Martin* being by André de la Vigne.[39]

The Bible is an even greater source of stories that get dramatized; it is unclear whether they are taken directly from the Vulgate or from existing vernacular translations. The story of Susanna and the Elders furnishes the material for at least two plays of which numerous performances are attested from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; the variations in composition and performance style between the various versions may reflect regional and/or local conditions.[40] The story of Judith and Holofernes attracts no less a virtuoso than the redoubtable *rhétoriqueur* Molinet.[41] Cycles of mystery plays covering the whole of salvation history are the largest-scale instances of adapting narrative to the stage. As with the Puys, the northern French cities were host to the most ambitious of these, Valenciennes, for instance, having two such cycles, one lasting twenty days and the other twenty-five.[42] The transition from narrative to theater often resulted in extremely elaborate verse forms, emphasizing the formal distinctness of dramatic texts from prose. The mystery plays of the later fifteenth century often exhibit particularly ambitious and varied versification.[43]

At the opposite end of the scale from the vast mystery cycles, the texts of royal entries condense into the form of short poems complex historical and political scenarios. Cynthia J. Brown describes pageantry devised by Pierre Gringore for the entry in honor of Mary Tudor in Paris in 1514. A *rondeau* was exhibited describing the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon, and a seven-line decasyllabic stanza was recited to bring out the analogy between this and Mary's peace-bringing arrival at the court of Louis XII. When the dramatic events of the entry were subsequently committed to book form, prose makes

37. Symes, *A Common Stage,* 27–68.
38. See also Bouhaïk-Gironès, "Théâtre."
39. *Le mystere de Saint Laurent,* ed. Söderhjelm and Wallensköld; Runnalls, "Langage"; Runnalls, "Un Siècle." This play was performed in the first half of the sixteenth century. André de la Vigne's *Mystère de Saint Martin* (ed. Duplat) was performed in Seurre in Burgundy in 1496; see Runnalls, "Staging of André de la Vigne's *Mystere de Saint Martin.*"
40. Knight, "Stage as Context."
41. Jean Molinet, *Le Mystère de Judith et Holofernés,* ed. Runnalls.
42. Runnalls, "Mystères," 497, 505.
43. E.g., Henri Chatelain, *Recherches sur le vers français,* 253–61; *Le Mystère de Judith et Holofernés,* 49–54.

its reappearance among the poems in order to transform back into a narrative the experience of performance.[44]

Claude Thiry has explored the ambiguous interface between narrative and theater with reference to another group of verse texts: didactic debates and morality plays. Citing numerous examples from the fifteenth century, Thiry demonstrates that many texts which adopt the form of a debate would have lent themselves to live performance even if they were not intended actually to be staged.[45] He observes of George Chastelain's *Paix de Péronne* (composed at the end of 1468), for instance, that it can be reckoned a "dramatic work" even though it is "not theatrical," qualifying as a "staged debate" rather than as a "debate on the stage."[46] Debate poems slide toward morality plays or vice versa, depending on the extent to which they exploit visual effect, variety of location, or the presence or absence of a narrator: a controlling *acteur-témoin* (author-witness) pulls a work in the direction of the debate poem with an overall narrative framework; in his absence a text drifts toward theater. Rather than seeing such features as criterial of generic difference, however, Thiry shows how important it is to recognize the *entre-deux* between narrative and drama. Many dialogue works seem to have been intended not for staging, nor yet for private reading, but for some kind of performance that was dramatized without being fully theatrical. The erasure of the boundary between narrative and theater is illustrated by Gauvain Candie's *Advisement de Memoire et d'Entendement* of 1504. Composed in a mixture of verse and prose, and with the role of *acteur* distributed among the characters who ensure the forward momentum of the action, it can be viewed as either a didactic *prosimetrum* or a play, or as both simultaneously.[47] (The *prosimetrum* is by definition a mixture of verse and prose on the model of Boethius's *Consolation,* exhibiting more or less variety in the metrical forms deployed. While the insertion of prose letters in verse *dits* such as the *Voir dit* and the *Prison amoureuse* makes them similar to *prosimetra,* we reserve the term for texts that observe, like Boethius, a more regular alternation of the two forms; see chapter 5.)

Morality plays and saints' lives are as didactic on stage as are their narrative equivalents,[48] while large-scale mystery plays and political pageants clearly manifest a concern for history that, as chapter 2 will show in more detail, remains consistently associated with verse throughout the late Middle Ages,

44. Brown, "From Stage to Page."
45. Thiry, "Débats."
46. Ibid., 208.
47. Ibid., 224–42.
48. Knight, *Aspects of Genre,* chaps. 3–4, discusses knowledge in morality plays.

despite authors of mainstream historiography adopting prose. In mystery cycles, the whole of salvation history is unfolded over weeks of performance time,[49] and plays may also include engagement with topical concerns.[50] Even farce, a form of late medieval theater widely regarded as simply entertaining, could advance knowledge in particular ways, typically through satire.[51] In the tableaux created for royal entries, and the somewhat similar pageantry adopted for festive events by the court of Burgundy, it is the sense of history being made in the here and now that is important. Such entries were at the same time cultural events and political acts, "a means of manifesting and dramatizing political concepts."[52] For example, many of Pierre Gringore's works have as their common purpose to "win French approval for [Louis XII's] political offensive in France during the period 1499–1513."[53] Entries represent a particularly novel and interesting form of "presence" for verse, given that their texts were characteristically not spoken but displayed, typically in an allegorical setting.[54] All these texts are thus involved in communicating what, in chapter 6, we term "ideological knowledge." Our objective here is not to analyze this knowledge but to stress that the public, physical performance of dramatic texts is in itself a means of manifesting their status as vehicles of such knowledge.

It is a commonplace of the criticism of late medieval theater to stress its communal nature. Actors and audiences were all drawn from the same community, and the action on stage thus represents the community back to itself. Such recursion in the legitimation of knowledge is described very exactly by Lyotard in *La Condition postmoderne* (42), except that he envisages narrative rather than theater: "A collective finds the substance of its social cohesion not in the meaning of tales but in the act of their recital. Narrative reference may appear to be to the past, but is in fact always contemporary with this act." For example, the fact that *sotties* are played before a large public means that, as Jean-Claude Aubailly says of them, each play "takes on, in some sense, the voice of public opinion."[55] Political drama makes public *to* the public the notion of what it might mean to *be* the public. In royal entries,

49. Ibid., chap. 2.
50. Longtin, "Chercher l'intrus."
51. Beam, *Laughing Matters;* and, more generally, Doudet, "Statut et figures." The *Farce de Maître Pathelin,* widely regarded as the masterpiece of the genre, has been read as an allegory of the deadly sins; *Maistre Pierre Pathelin,* ed. Smith.
52. Gringore, *Les Entrées royales,* ed. Brown, 20.
53. Ibid., 1; also Brown, "From Stage to Page"; and Hindley's introduction to his edition of Gringore's *Jeu du Prince des Sotz,* 32. On Burgundy, see Planche, "Du Tournoi au théâtre."
54. Blanchard, "Conception"; Brown, "From Stage to Page."
55. Aubailly, *Le Monologue,* 413.

the unfolding of the playlets and tableaux at different stations throughout the city dramatizes the urban community's relation to its sovereign in such a way as to constitute an evolving and embodied series of *miroirs des princes.*[56] Alan Knight explains how the involvement of the whole population of Lille in its annual procession, which ran for more than five centuries beginning in 1270, played out the tension between the wholeness of the community and its diversity.[57] Robert L. A. Clark's study of the *Miracles de Notre Dame* is perhaps the most sustained and sophisticated investigation of how enactment as such, rather than the ostensible content of what is performed, serves as a vehicle of social knowledge. These plays rehearse stories of individual fragility, the specific and labile configurations of sexuality and class of every erring protagonist whom Mary saves, while at the same time stressing the existence of an overarching community to which they can be restored. But whereas the early miracle narratives on which the plays are based are about the salvific role of the Virgin and the Church, Clark argues that the essential frame in which to interpret the action in these plays is the goldsmiths' annual banquet at which they were staged. A sense of group identity was not only reinforced through the opulence of these occasions but actively policed as well, insofar as attendance was mandatory and delinquent members were fined. For Clark, however, the miracle plays are truly bourgeois not in highlighting the assets of the community as a whole but in making the case for the individual's ownership of his or her own sexuality and transgression.[58] Each individual member of the audience thus witnesses, by enforced presence at the plays, the drama of his own relation to the group and to its corporate concerns. In all these cases, it is not the representation of ideology *within the text* that is significant as much as the realization of that ideology *by means of its staging.*

The remarkable oeuvre of Pierre Gringore unites many of the features we have observed in the latter part of this chapter. Composed in a range of genres for many different kinds of audience, his works exhibit permeability between verse drama and nondramatic verse since didactic material finds its way into works such as the *Jeu du Prince des Sots et Mere Sotte.* The *tableaux vivants* and *mistères* deployed in Gringore's various royal entries also show how the category of the "staged" extends beyond the theater strictly speaking. The Moralité in the *Jeu du Prince des Sots* illustrates the capacity of medieval drama to embrace serious subject matter, the threat of divine punishment if the political order is overtaken by abuses such as simony and hypocrisy. The

56. Gringore, *Les Entrées royales,* ed. Brown, 21, 23–25.
57. Knight, "Processional Theatre," 99.
58. Clark, "Community versus Subject."

fact that the whole French people is compromised by France's shortcomings is manifested by performances staged for the people's benefit. At the same time, Gringore's versification is extremely varied with regard to both line length and rhyme scheme. At the very end of the period covered in this book, the presence of verse is here emphatically persistent, both as performed text and as a transformed version of early medieval theatrical modes.

This chapter refutes the misconception that the "rise of prose" entails a decline in verse, any more than the "rise of literacy" results in a decline in orality. It demonstrates that, on the contrary, the association between verse and orality is reactivated and recontextualized throughout the later Middle Ages in France. While not all verse relies on oral performance, new institutions emerge with the specific purpose of enabling verse texts to be performed. There is next to no prose that is intended to be performed in this way. Indeed, it looks as though "prose" and "the stage" are cultural antonyms in this period; and while some verse texts are recast as prose, others are adapted to these new forms of staging. Most forms of late medieval staged verse engage with serious subject matter including classical learning, theology, history, or politics. In all cases, the fact of performance to an audience becomes a factor shaping the knowledge content of the texts concerned. The late French Middle Ages, in retaining the association between verse and presence, forge new connections between verse and knowledge that were not available prior to the establishment of prose.

CHAPTER TWO

Poetry and History

The last chapter showed that the public performance of verse which characterized the early medieval period continues throughout the later Middle Ages, and that new institutions and practices are invented that highlight the value of poetic texts as shared knowledge. In this chapter we address another determining characteristic of late medieval verse: its association with history. In the twelfth century, historiography explored various verse forms, often innovatively. Seemingly decisively severed in the early thirteenth century by promoters of prose historiography, the link between poetry and history was in fact reaffirmed in a number of ways in the later Middle Ages—so successfully, indeed, that multiple connections emerge between history writing (broadly conceived) and verse throughout the period. True, prose now enjoys undisputed ascendancy in the canonical historiographical genres; only a few writers continue older forms such as verse chronicle and *chanson de geste*. But most major authors of the late Middle Ages compose both lyric and historiography of some kind and also experiment with the late medieval lyrico-narrative forms of the *dit* and the *prosimetrum,* which tend to occupy an intermediary position between the two. With lyrico-narrative poetry as a bridge, tropes of *poetrie* such as personification, mythography, and allegory make their way into historiography, and the narration of history crosses back into lyric poetry.

These exchanges have important implications both for the kinds of knowledge that are transmitted in verse and for the status of verse itself as a mode of *knowing*. In the first place, they ground awareness that verse can transmit