

A Miracle Through an Ymage: Gautier de Coinci's Retouched *Legend of Theophile*

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This article examines the use of the Old French word “ymage” in Gautier de Coinci’s early thirteenth-century Legend of Theophile. Gautier is the first author to write a version of the legend that includes an ymage, designating a material representation of the Virgin. Far from a subtle insertion, he mentions the term ten times, during every pivotal moment of the story, when terrestrial and celestial spheres collide. Critics acknowledge the centrality of Gautier in representing this revolutionary French period, during which time attitudes concerning ritualistic images were in a state of flux; yet, Gautier’s repetitive and groundbreaking use of the word ymage in this legend has not been fully explored. In both a diachronic and synchronic analysis, I demonstrate how this author represents a changing cultural context by evolving a popular legend with the incorporation of a mere detail, but one that transforms a key Christian ritual: prayer. His ymage, a material object, thrusts the entire momentum of the legend in a new direction, because the relationship between Heaven and Earth moves from inward communication to outward adoration of an ymage.

An image plays a central role in Gautier de Coinci’s thirteenth-century *Legend of Theophile*: this visible material object, a statue of the Virgin Mary, wields the power to reveal the invisible divine realm. Within the tapestry of Christian worship, where materiality prevails, the presence of an image may initially seem unremarkable. However, Gautier’s introduction of an image with a performative role entirely breaks from the established written tradition of the legend. None of the other early authors invoke the word “image” even once, whereas Gautier employs the word ten times. Though this may seem like a superficial lexical embellishment, its recurrence at every pivotal juncture along the protagonist’s journey makes it notable. An image is mentioned when Theophile first veers towards the Devil, and it reappears as he reorientates himself towards the path of God, through his prayers to the Virgin. The Virgin herself invokes the image repeatedly in her dialogues with Theophile, and it assumes a dominant role in the climactic scene: Theophile’s death and the sub-

sequent ascent of his soul to Heaven. Remarkably, in the moments of communication between the human and the divine, it is only “images” that bear witness to these encounters--be it the animated statue of the Virgin, or the initiation of Theophile’s inner image, his *imago*. For Gautier, could the presence of these images be the harmonizing force between these two distinct spheres--the corporeal and the spiritual? In the course of this argument, I will propose that Gautier de Coinci modernizes a well-established story to highlight that the miracle it chronicles materialized not solely through Theophile’s broader acts of penitence, his introspective contemplation or the intervention of the Virgin, but also through the presence of these images.

Even though critics already acknowledge the centrality of Gautier de Coinci in representing this revolutionary period, his repetitive and revealing emphasis on the Old French word “ymage” in the *Legend of Theophile* has not been fully explored. Originating from the Latin *imago* and *imaginem*, *ymage* appears in the vernacular from about the twelfth-century and increases in prevalence parallelly to Gautier’s writing of his *Miracles of the Virgin*, in which resides the *Legend of Theophile*. I will use *ymage* throughout this paper when specifically talking about Gautier, or about this precise term. I will use *image* when generally denoting artistic representations and material objects and their history and presence within the Middle Ages. I put forward the Gautier legend as unique evidence of the shifting status of the *ymage* for two reasons. One, his fixation with, and repetition of, the word furnishes us with a case study of the complex term within one text. Two, because he follows a long line of authors of the legend, Gautier’s version can be compared with those before him. This comparison sheds light on how this single word can dramatically alter the presentation of the relationship between Earth and Heaven, anchoring it around a tangible, material object.

Images were central to the theological shift during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which beliefs behind ecclesiastical rituals, spiritual communication and the process of vision increasingly re-centered around material objects.¹ Given that Gautier writes his

¹ As discussed in greater detail below, see Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, Sansterre, “Vivantes ou comme vivantes,” and Baschet, *L’Iconographie médiévale*.

Miracles surrounded by this cultural evolution, it is first essential to situate this analysis, on his treatment of the word “ymage” in the *Legend of Theophile*, within the broader discussions on images during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

First, quite simply, what is an *ymage*? A. Tobler and E. Lommatzsch, Michael Camille and Jean-Marie Sansterre are among some notable authors who propose a tangible definition. The Tobler-Lommatzsch dictionary succinctly illuminates the wide-ranging physical possibilities, from artistic representations, such as figures, portraits, paintings and sculptures, to the more abstract manifestations of visions, apparitions, reflections and mirrors.² Its limitless multiplicity is thus the key characteristic; an *ymage* can traverse the borders between concrete and abstract. Indeed, in Gautier’s *Legend of Theophile*, the word *ymage* seems to refer to a physical statue of the Virgin, but one that has the potential to animate.³ Camille separates this *ymage* from ordinary cult objects precisely because “it had miraculous powers and performed, breaking out of the ornamental and ritual encasement that kept it separate from the onlooker.”⁴ Rather than the object itself being supernatural, it acts as the earthly receptacle for divine powers. Sansterre elaborates on the ability of the Virgin’s, or indeed other celestial beings’, prototype to temporarily enter the material boundaries of an *ymage*, provisionally modifying its nature and animating its appearance.⁵ While a heavenly power does not continuously

2 A. Tobler and E. Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, 1339-42.

3 Gautier’s *ymage* most likely signifies a statue of the Virgin, as demonstrated by the illuminated manuscript Besançon; see Root, *The Legend of Theophile*, Chapter 3, “The Intervention of the Virgin,” 105-163. I will use either statue or *ymage* to specifically name this object when referring to Gautier’s text.

4 Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 230.

5 Sansterre, “Vivantes ou comme vivantes,” 168-69. Sansterre analyzes effigies of the Virgin from the Middle Ages up to the eighteenth-century, examining contemporary beliefs towards the prototype and the image. The term “prototype” refers to the original form or being. Jerry Root elaborates on the Virgin’s identity as prototype in relation to her earthly *ymages*: “The legend (of Theophile) fuses his quest for his *imago* with the Virgin’s own capacity to incarnate herself as “*ymage*,” representation, alongside her identity as *imago*, image of God, and her identity as a prototype capable of infusing and informing her earthly manifestation” (105).

inform its representation, an *ymage* always holds this possibility for the human worshipper: the potential to transform and become a spiritual, communicative bridge. Thus, the adoration of a material *ymage* means to revere its animation potential, to worship the real divine being who may reside there at any time. This careful clarification separates the justified place of images within the church from idolatry practices; a distinction between simple material representation and earthly receptacle for a divine power may seem slight to modern readers, but it was crucial in maintaining worship towards the real being instead of human-crafted similitudes.⁶ The general consensus on the definition of an *ymage* helps situate this investigation into the specific employment of the term within the *Legend of Theophile*.⁷

There has equally been much discussion on the role of the *ymage*: why did its presence become increasingly predominant during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? The changing status of images in the theory of vision, as well as in ritualistic practice, primarily explains its new significance. Cynthia Hahn broadly describes the development in the religious practice of seeing as passing from a “glance” to a “gaze.” From the thirteenth-century onwards, the belief in how sight entered the brain changed from instant, surprising and temporary strikes to a progressively interactive process, augmenting the responsibilities of both the viewer and object. This “gaze” requires that “the informed and disciplined eye lingers on the image and allows its visible details to arouse feeling” and that “a receptive and active soul cleansed and trained, constructed in solitary contemplation” approaches an image in order to reach a spiritual and intellectual vision.⁸ Camille expands on this development by comparing early and later ways of seeing in the Middle Ages as the gradual swing from the extramission to the intromission theories; “in earlier medieval image making and in the extramission theory of

6 See Russakoff, “Imaging the Miraculous,” 15-17, and Faur, “The Biblical Idea of Idolatry,” 10-15. For Baschet, images were not worshipped as an “object” but as a “sign” for what (or who) they represented (*L'Iconographie médiévale*, 44).

7 Other authors have also discussed this question; Root, *The Legend of Theophile*, details its physical possibilities and meanings (117). Avilés, “Imágenes vivantes,” further explores its dual nature, as the material *ymages* of the Virgin, principally as busts or statues, often appear parallelly to her *ymage* as an apparition (331-33).

8 Hahn, “Visio Dei,” 183; 169.

their apperception, the notion of likeness (similitude) was not strong because the object was always to some extent produced by the gaze. But the intromission model took the emphasis away from vision and onto the power of images themselves, whose eyes, as in cult statues and devotional images, could stare back.⁹ This duality in the source of the vision increases its potential and strength. For Jérôme Baschet, an image becomes a *transitus* (passage), or the tool that inspires sight to transcend the visible world to the invisible. These are not ordinary images, but ones that hold an intimate relationship with a saintly figure, whose prototype can both inhabit and desert it, initiating and removing the higher plane of sight.¹⁰ This brief contextualization of the evolving concepts behind the production of vision designates a new importance to objects, elucidating why images were increasingly incorporated in written and visual works, and how their role interacted with the larger legend, story or message.

Caroline Walker Bynum cautions against the dangers of exclusively attributing the importance of images to their role in facilitating vision and visual transcendence. In doing so, she contends, we overlook their fundamental state, their materiality. During the Middle Ages, the concept of materiality, *matter*, was far from inanimate and lifeless; it was vibrant and living. It served as “the locus of change,” the very creation of God through which He could act. As Bynum remarks, “in their insistent materiality, images do more than comment on, refer to, provide signs of, or gesture toward the divine. They lift matter toward God and reveal God through matter.”¹¹ In fact, devotional objects from the Middle Ages celebrated rather than concealed their matter, emphasizing the materials that made them over mere mimetic likeness.¹² Their material nature infused them with power and imbued them with devotional significance, given that “the distinction between materiality and spirituality was, in itself, porous.”¹³ When initiating a

9 Camille, “Before the Gaze,” 207.

10 Baschet, *L'Iconographie médiévale*, 30, 42-43.

11 Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 25, 35.

12 Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 20-21 & 41. An early version of object veneration can be seen with relics. As extensions of the saints themselves, medieval attitudes towards relics differed from those towards human-crafted images.

devotional ritual with an image, the worshipper's senses first engaged with the tangible presence before them, awakening and stimulating the senses. Subsequently, this interaction would lead them towards internal contemplation and spiritual imagery.

Medieval objects were porous loci between material and divine, inherent in their very existence as *matter*, and such understanding of objects persisted, more or less, throughout the medieval period. For the purpose of a discussion around a corpus of the *Legend of Theophile*, it is important to recognize that other changes likely occurred around the thirteenth-century. Gautier de Coinci, in the early 1200s, introduced a material object to the tradition of story. This raises the question: why did this shift occur at this particular time? While delving into a comprehensive historical examination of various images and their evolving significance in medieval Christianity runs the risk of diverting our focus from Gautier de Coinci, it's essential to briefly acknowledge some theological transformations that occurred across multiple disciplines, as previously discussed in the context of visual practice. This broader perspective helps to conceptualize the contemporary circumstances that enabled this author to integrate an *ymage* into a church ritual.

There was an inherent paradox within the medieval theology of images. It would be impossible to point to one or two figures and declare that is when images and their animation became acceptable in the church. Some scholars may consider Gregory the Great, who advocated for images as visual aids to guide supplicants toward divine vision, communication or clarity, as laying the foundation for their acceptance.¹⁴ However, divisive debate followed, and it wasn't until thirteenth-century when authoritative theologians came to some consensus, legitimizing the use of images in Western Christianity. For instance, Thomas Aquinas played a pivotal role in their endorsement, as tools to stimulate the senses in the pursuit of transcendent sight and communication.¹⁵ Nonetheless,

13 Laugerud, Ryan, and Skinnebach, *The Materiality of Devotion*, 3-4.

14 Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 51-52.

15 Justification for ritualistic images appeared in theological discussion in the sixth-century. However, this was strongly denied over the next few centuries. Freedburg, *The Power of Images*, presents a detailed doctrinal history of images within the church, establishing that a more-or-less agreement over their use didn't arrive until the thirteenth-

Bynum maintains that “theorists, church authorities, spiritual advisors, and the ordinary faithful were all ambivalent about exactly the materiality they utilized and venerated.”¹⁶ Gautier positioned himself within this ongoing discussion, drawing upon prevailing ideas of the time, that images possessed power, rooted in the divinity of their *matter* and their visual function as signs.

Mariology was equally in the throes of development and transformation during the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. This religious theory directly coincides with that of animated images, since during this period, they most popularly depicted the Virgin Mary, as exemplified by Gautier’s statue. The question arises: why did Gautier, and many others, prioritize the animation of Marian images?¹⁷ Most scholars connect the two themes through the Assumption and Incarnation theories. Robert Maniura differentiates the cult of Mary from that of saints generally by highlighting the absence of her body under the Assumption theory.¹⁸ This absence complicated the implementation of relic worship, since there were no bodily remains.¹⁹ It remains intriguing that Mary, who left no physical remnants, emerged as one of the primary symbols for the connection between Earth and Heaven. Incarnation theology helps to breakdown the paradox. During the Incarnation, “Jesus made flesh” becomes conceivable thanks to the

century under influential writings from those like Saint Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas (162-6). Sansterre also chronicles the western European history of animated images in texts (“Vivantes ou comme vivantes,” 163-66).

16 Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 267.

17 A full response to this question would intersect various academic disciplines, including Mariology, the significance of the body, gender studies and material studies and is beyond the scope of this paper. See, Freedburg, *The Power of Images*, 299, Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 300, Sansterre, “Vivantes ou comme vivantes,” 167, and Russakoff, “Imaging the Miraculous,”¹⁰.

18 Maniura, “Persuading the Absent Saint,” 263.

19 Warner establishes that the Marian cult had long used images but “there were no tangible relics of her person for early Christians to venerate” (*Alone of All Her Sex*, 296-7 & 300). Gertsman notes the contradiction in “Marian statuary coming to life” when her “living body has no wondrously transforming signifier on earth to begin with” (*Worlds Within*, 105).

mother who bestowed her son with flesh and humanity.²⁰ Through Mary's very body, the divine became accessible. As such, the veneration of Marian material representations celebrated her corporality and aimed to initiate a similar type of inter-realm communication. In an extension of the Incarnation, Mary assumes the role of *mediatrix*, uniquely positioned as an intercessor between humankind and Christ due to her maternal status.²¹

The context presented thus far establishes the framework for comprehending Gautier's lexical contribution to the *Legend of Theophile*, scaffolding his writing in a dynamic theological evolution of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, an evolution driven by visionary theories, medieval attitudes toward living matter, the endorsement of ecclesiastical images by influential Christian theologians and the remarkable proliferation of images within the sphere of Mariology. One additional noteworthy aspect is the explicit appearance of the word "ymage" in the corpus of medieval literary works. The introduction of this word in vernacular, Old French, texts seems to align with the theoretical evolution during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as it did not widely emerge before this period. A quick search in the Anglo-Norman dictionary primarily yields results from these centuries. This coincides with the surge in animated imagery and the expanded use of devotional icons, as discussed earlier in Bynum's study.²² The corpus of the *Legend of Theophile* itself offers valuable evidence of the chronological progression toward the adoption of this term, seeing that no author prior Gautier employs the word "ymage."

In fact, Gautier de Coinci is one of the central early authors in dem-

20 Loth and Michel, "Incarnation," 1145. In *Fragmentation and Redemption*, Bynum establishes the importance of Mary's body in Incarnation (210).

21 Warner centers the Virgin's "wonder-working" intercession on the mother-son relationship (291-92). In "The Persuasive Power," Ryan says, "the role of Mary in the late medieval period is clearly that of Advocate who pleads for mercy on behalf of humanity," (66).

22 *Anglo-Norman Dictionary (AND2 Online Edition)*, s.v., "image." See Sansterre, "Vivantes ou comme vivantes," 163-66, and Tobler-Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, 1339-42.

onstrating the arrival of the word in vernacular texts. Marie-Laure Savoye meticulously compares the prevalence and the treatment of the word *ymage* across Gautier's larger body of work, the *Miracles of Nostre Dame*, with the slightly earlier collection of *Le Gracial* by Williams Adgar.²³ Savoye finds that, across Adgar's whole collection, the noun only appears six times, and when it enters the text, it normally has to be accompanied by the religious place to which it belongs, or specificized with 'de...(person)' in order to further explain its position and purpose in the story.²⁴ It is a sporadic addition, and the syntax considers the *ymage* of the Virgin as a rare and unique object.²⁵ Whereas, some fifty to sixty years later, Gautier frequently uses the term across his miracles to an extent that "devant l'ymage Nostre Dame" becomes a metric rhythm.²⁶ Jerry Root and Anna Russakoff equally highlight the word in Gautier's work, as well as acknowledge his general predisposition to a multitude of terms denoting the ritualistic and visual role of material items.²⁷ The research establishes Gautier as a forebearer in written preoccupation with images and as an important participant in the new cultural context of the thirteenth-century.

This research leads to crucial questions regarding Gautier's work: Does his portrayal of the *ymage* align with the theological currents underpinning emerging visionary practices, ecclesiastical rituals and Marian devotion? How does his departure from the lexical conventions employed by previous authors of the same legend impact the broader message of Theophile's contrition and absolution? Does Gautier stand as an anomaly, or do his contemporaries echo his in-

23 Savoye, "De fleurs," 71-8, studies the importance of the term given to a statue or an icon.

24 Savoye, "De fleurs," 72-3.

25 Savoye, "De fleurs," 90-1.

26 Savoye, "De fleurs," 74.

27 Russakoff, "Imaging the miraculous," 15, 40, and Root, *The Legend of Theophilus*, 159. Russakoff says: "The term most commonly used in Gautier de Coinci's text to refer to panel paintings, altar pieces, sculptures, and other physical representations of the Virgin, as well as to dreams and visions, is the Old French *ymage*;" she also discusses other terms that he uses: *tavlete*, *ymagete*, *ycone* and *ymage*. Root demonstrates the widespread interest of Gautier in terms similar to an *ymage*: *tavlete*, *iconye*, *mariole* and *imagete*.

sistence of the *ymage* as a vehicle for transitus?

In constructing a comparative analysis, I put five versions of the *Legend of Theophile* in dialogue with each other, from Paul the Deacon (9th century), Fulbert (1025), William of Malmesbury (1130), William Adgar (c.a. 1170-90) and Gautier de Coinci (1220-35), revealing that, whereas the first four authors never mention an *ymage*, or indeed any significant material object, Gautier incorporates the word ten times. He primarily includes it in two pre-existing events: the first and last prayer to the Virgin, or, the moments of penitence and atonement. For his final inclusions, he creates two original quotes from two different characters. Just as Elina Gertsman uses the Shrine Madonna as a *punctum*: “a wound, a point of entry into the late medieval visual culture,”²⁸ I propose that the word *ymage* in Gautier’s text becomes a gateway into thirteenth-century image culture. As one of the earliest Western authors to place such textual emphasis on a material, devotional and animated image, he exemplifies a contemporary evolution, as his Theophile initiates divine contact through devotion centered on an exterior, human-crafted statue, rather than simply his own interior dedication. The repetition of the position of this object draws the whole penitential process and dialogues with the Virgin outwards, more tangible to reader of the legend.

A Comparative Analysis: Theophile’s Prayers

Gautier de Coinci inserts the word *ymage* in two moments that appear consistently across all versions of the *Legend of Theophile*: his two prayers to the Virgin, during his penitential rituals and before his death. These instants are striking as side-by-side comparisons between the older legends and Gautier’s text, as they are otherwise exactly the same. Gautier has simply added one extra lexical element, but one that unlocks multiple implications.

Theophile’s penitence is remarkably consistent amongst all four pre-thirteenth-century legends, from Paul, Fulbert, Malmesbury and

28 Gertsman, *Worlds Within*, 8.

Adgar. William of Adgar pens the earliest vernacular rendition. As the most concise and chronologically the closest to the central text under discussion, Gautier's, his text serves as an optimal reference point for comparing the pre-1200 *Legend of Theophile* corpus to Gautier's version. Adgar states:

El temple Nostre Dame ala/ E humblement s'agenuilla,/ Requist de ses mesfaiz pardun;/ Urat od grant devotiun./ Jor e nuit sanz definement/ Urat a la dame humblement.²⁹ [He went into the Chapelle of Our Lady and humbly knelt. He asked to be pardoned of his crimes. He prayed devotedly. Day and night, without stop, he humbly prayed to Our Lady.]

Adgar summarizes the physical and emotional attributes to a successful prayer. He explicitly twice mentions "urat" (pray), and the word "*s'agenuilla*" (knelt) provides the mental imagery of this position. Furthermore, he emphasizes the internal prayer conditions. One, to do so with great intent, purpose, and passion, or "od grant devotion." Two, to "humblement" lower one's own importance to the divine being. Three, to demonstrate commitment, praying "jor e nuit," neglecting the corporal body's needs in favor of the soul's quest for salvation. Thus, the image of a man in prayer is both directly described three times, and three necessary characteristics for it are given; within a few sentences, Adgar has underlined the importance of a prayer in at least six different manners.

While Adgar's linguistic imagery might strike with particular impact, in truth, he merely echoes the contemporary literature concerning the stages of penitence, imagery that resounds throughout the versions of the legend from Paul,³⁰ Fulbert³¹ and Malmesbury.³² In his quest for redemption, Theophile embarks upon a meticulously crafted series: enter the church, prostrate, pray, pray some more,

29 Adgar, "Miracle 26," v. 493-98; translation mine.

30 Paul the Deacon, "Miraculum S. Mariae," 491; Paul the Deacon, "A Miracle of the Virgin Mary," 67.

31 Fulbert, "Sermones Ad Populum," Col 323 C-D. Fulbert, "Fulbert de Chartres," 46.

32 Malmesbury, "Theophilus," 17-18.

demonstrate corporal punishment through vigil, fasting or another form of self-infliction. The text swiftly moves through each action, lending the impression that Theophile conscientiously checks off some prescribed list that a sinner must follow. Indeed, Andrea Hopkins confirms that penance was a highly ritualized practice during the Middle Ages. Medieval confessional manuals were abundant, offering systematic instruction that emphasized private and introspective prayer.³³ For Eric Palazzo, each interior action was carefully designed to engage the five senses, empathetically mirroring Christ's crucifixion.³⁴ Under each author, Theophile's penitence demonstrates Palazzo's successful prayer. Cries, fasting, vigils, each deliberate penitential step, heighten the sensory experience, drawing Theophile's entire being into the process and goal of his prayer. However, a significant distinction between the pre-1200 corpus, as represented by Adgar, and Gautier's portrayal of penitence is the balance between inner contemplation and a more externally-focused prayer. None of the earlier authors describe Theophile as praying 'to' or looking 'at' a thing, an item belonging to the material world. This drastically changes under Gautier de Coinci's early thirteenth-century legend, where prayer as a form of inner contemplation significantly diminishes.

Gautier has Theophile say:

A son saint temple m'en irai,/ Toute ma vie i gemirai./ Et nuit et jor entier corage/ Li prièrai **devant s'ymage**/ En souspirant a nus genouz/ Qu'a son chier fil, qui tant est douz,/ Me face ma pais et m'acorde.³⁵ [I will go to her holy temple and there I will moan for the rest my life. Night and day, with all my heart, I will pray before her statue, sighing on bare knees, that she reconcile me and bring me to peace with her dear son.]

33 Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights*, 58-62.

34 Palazzo, *Peindre c'est prier*, 13. In "La Culture de l'ymage," Schmitt also insists upon the gravity in worshipping the material representation in order to reach the prototype, because they became inextricably linked to the spiritual being that they represented, and they became important in stimulating the interior mind of the devotee (8, 20).

35 Gautier de Coinci, *The Legend of Theophilus by Gautier de Coinci*, v. 847-53; emphasis mine.

Under Gautier, prayer, which was previously an internal, subjective action taking place within the supplicant's own mind, is transformed into a tangible outward act with a specific external focus. In the phrase, "I will pray before her statue," he could have easily ended it with "li priërai," I will pray, as seen under the earlier authors. Yet, the seemingly superfluous "devant s'ymage" alters the meaning of the phrase, because it suggests that he focuses his action on the statue, the Old French *ymage*, itself. The imagery of Theophile kneeling before it creates the impression that he directs his communication towards the *ymage*. The statue becomes the physical destination on Earth, rendering the monumental task of contacting the spiritual domain more attainable and visible.³⁶

Whilst this lexical addition intrigues in its originality, Savoye proposes that the presence of a statue of the Virgin within the church would have been a given,³⁷ hence the lack of specificity with this detail in the texts of Paul, Fulbert, Malmesbury and Adgar. However, whilst this could be a legitimate explanation for a shortened genre of writing, like Fulbert's sermon, where the whole legend is condensed to a page, it seems unlikely that the other, more detail-orientated authors would leave out not just the specific word *ymage* from their longer texts, but also any clue that such an item was in the church. For example, Adgar dedicates 22 verses to describe comprehensively Theophile's first prayer to the Virgin (v. 491-513). If the statue was so essential to the author in initiating contact with her at this point, one would expect there to be some indication of that, especially since the other characteristics of prayer (fasting, on the knees, in the church, etc.) were equally, if not more so, a given for contemporary readers. The transformation from a widespread lack of an *ymage* amongst these initial writers, to the sudden preponderance

36 The choice of words is important in its nuance; Gautier doesn't say he prays "to" the statue but rather "before" it. The former preposition would suggest a worship of an *ymage*. Instead, "devant" simply specifies the place of the prayer. The *ymage* becomes the precise location to carry out the ritual, and the overarching presence that he likely contemplates as mental imagery, enhancing and sustaining Theophile's concentration on the Virgin herself.

37 Savoye, "De fleurs," 74.

of the term and its encompassing ideas in Gautier's writing, rather suggests that something drastic has changed contextually to allow this to happen.

Within Gautier's version of the legend, the Virgin herself validates Theophile's employment of her material copy in his prayer:

Mais tante larme en as plore/ Et m'**ymage** as tant aoree/ Que toz li cuers
de toi m'apite./ Por ce que tant par est parfite/ Et tant vraie ta repentance/
Et qu'en moi as tele fiance./ A mon douz fil ta pais querrai."³⁸ [But you
have cried so many tears and so adored my statue that I feel pity for you
with all my heart. Because your repentance is so complete and so true
and because you have such faith in me, I will ask my son to forgive you.]

While Paul and Adgar mention that Theophile's tears pleased Christ, Gautier delves much deeper into the visible components of penitence. Through the rhyming actions, *plore* and *aoree*, Gautier's Virgin emphasizes the tears and the worship of her *ymage* as evidence of successful contrition, even over that of interior prayers and bodily punishment. Theophile's tears demonstrate sincere "repentance," which aligns with medieval contrition theory; Hopkins asserts, "the state of mind of the penitent was all-important; the tears were therefore essential outward signs of genuine interior grief,"³⁹ and the symbolism of penitential tears predates Gautier's era, as evidenced in the works of Paul and Adgar. Unique to Gautier's text, the Virgin (and not Christ, as Paul and Adgar specify) is pleased about Theophile's behavior towards her statue, because its adoration enables her to perceive Theophile's "fiance" (faith). It is as though Mary believes that, while Theophile's tears are physical manifestations of the torment of his soul, his adoration of her *ymage* proves his unequivocal belief in her, most likely as *mediatrix*.

Gautier's inclusion of the *ymage* implies three conclusions thus far: Theophile clearly directs his prayers to the statue, as the earthly receptacle for spiritual communication; an object assists in sharpening

38 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v. 1131-37; emphasis mine.

39 Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights*, 51.

the sight of the worshipper; and, the ritualist inclusion of an *ymage* serves as tangible proof of devotion. The tangibility of the *ymage* encompasses its influence within Theophile's penitential actions. Gautier consistently mentions words such as prayer and repentance within the same breath as the *ymage*, extracting the internal belief from the confines of the mind, as an exterior object heightens, directs and reveals the otherwise invisible act. The entire communication between terrestrial and spiritual domains becomes more concrete, linked to a real object. As he looks up from his position of prayer, one can imagine that both the Virgin and her *ymage* occupy his line of sight, as demonstrated in illustrations of Gautier's manuscript.⁴⁰ Thus, not only has the prayer become more external, but so has the apparition, and it is the presence of the *ymage* that remains consistent across both of these changes. Gautier's *ymage* has solidified the communication between the Virgin and Theophile into a perceptible event, and it becomes the bridge between the two worlds.

Gautier de Coinci incorporates an *ymage* to expand on another pre-existing event within the *Legend of Theophile*: the protagonist's return to the church at the end of the legend to die. Neither Fulbert nor Malmesbury explicitly mention the location of the death, but both Paul and Adgar provide similar accounts, to which Gautier differs with his five-time repetition of the word *ymage*. Another comparative analysis of the three descriptions reinforces the implications of the term.

Paul places Theophile's death "to the venerable temple of the mother of God [...] where he saw the blessed vision."⁴¹ Adgar adds some detail:

Theophle i fud, li honorables./ Li honuret Theophle estut/ El liu u la
dame lui aparut./ La u il vit l'avisiun/ Declina sei li saint barun./ Treis

40 See the Besançon manuscript for illustrations of Theophile, the Virgin and her *ymage* all in a visionary line (*fols* 13, 14, 15). She even points to her *ymage* in *fol.* 13 as if to praise and underline Theophile's inclusion of it within his prayer (Root, *The Theophilus Legend*, 129). See Root, 128-131, for a more detailed analysis of the power behind double "images" of the Virgin in a single folio of a manuscript of this legend.

41 Paul the Deacon, "Miraculum," 493. Paul the Deacon, "A Miracle of the Virgin Mary," 75.

jurs i esteit abeissez/ Ensement cum il fust fichez.”⁴² [Theophile, honorable and honored, stood where the Lady appeared to him. He bowed where the apparition took place and the holy man remained on the spot, for three days, as if he had been planted there.]

Adgar essentially reiterates the same declaration: Theophile takes up his humbly lowered stance on the exact spot of the Virgin’s apparition. Thus, he selects his prayer position according to interior directions, via a memory of a spiritual occurrence privately shared between a divine being and the suppliant. Theophile’s deliberate placement originates from his internal vision. In contrast, Gautier de Coinci draws the significance of the location of death outwards, repeatedly and insistently connecting Theophile’s position with the *ymage*, an object of both material and spiritual domains. The initial two mentions of the term add a layer of precision to the climatic finale.⁴³ Theophile did not simply enter the Virgin’s church; he prostrated before her *ymage*. He orientated himself via material, rather than internal, markers. This richer mental imagery, closely associated with the physical world, becomes more replicable for readers looking to the legend as a sort of guide to spiritual communication.

Reminiscent of Gautier’s penitence, the *ymage* then assumes a significant role in the ritual:

Trois jors demora toz entiers/ En orison devant s’*ymage*./ Tant la pria d’entier corage,/ De chaut cuer, d’ardant et d’engrez/ Qu’ainc en trois jors ne plus qu’uns graz/ Ne se crolla ne ne se mut.”⁴⁴ [He stayed three full days in prayer in front of her statue. He so prayed with all his heart, with a warm, ardent, and fervent heart, that not once in three days did he stir or move, not more than a stone.]

Success requires a prolonged combination of Theophile’s positioning before the Virgin’s statue and his earnest interior intention, and

42 Adgar, “Miracle 26,” v. 1056-1062; translation mine.

43 Gautier twice repeats Theophile’s position, in front of the *ymage*. Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v. 1718-21, v. 1726-27.

44 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v.1752-57; emphasis mine.

neither his corporal positioning nor his concentration moved as much as a 'stone.' A fruitful prayer depends upon both physical and mental dedication. Here, the text suggests that the *ymage* aids both sides of the coin, in qualifying correct physical placement and in sharpening the content and destination of the prayer; Theophile purposely places his body "devant s'ymage" so that his prayers become that much more "ardent," directed towards her *ymage* right in front of him. In fact, Gautier's phrase, "ne plus qu'uns graz," implies more than corporal stillness, inferring that Theophile is himself becoming like a statue. In an inversion of the Pygmalion myth, Theophile morphs into stone, using the *ymage* as verbatim inspiration and guidance to reach the spiritual world.

Gautier's next incorporation of the *ymage* in this sequence expands its role from a guide towards a higher vision, to a component of the sight itself: "Puis ne lor dit ne plus ne mains, / Mais vers **l'ymage** estent ses mains" (Then he said no more but stretched out his hand toward the statue).⁴⁵ The author provides insight into the beliefs of his protagonist, because this is not a gesture that one would give to an ordinary object. It is almost as though he is trying to communicate with it. He speaks no more, stops his own actions, and signals to the statue, as if to say, your turn. Then, a few lines later: "La bouche ovri et rendi l'ame/ Devant **l'ymage** Nostre Dame" (his mouth opened and his soul issued forth, in front of the statue of Notre Dame).⁴⁶ For the reader of Old French, these verses flow out of the mouth, as the rhythm glides through the intentional language, *ame*, *ymage*, *Dame*, gracefully pausing over the perceptible rhymes bookending the sequence. A musical emphasis draws the senses to the key progression between these three nouns, from the soul to the statue of the Virgin to the Lady herself. Gautier textually displays Baschet's idea of *transitus*: the soul travels through the *ymage*, the bridge to another spiritual plane.⁴⁷ Consequently, the *ymage* does

45 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v. 1767-68; emphasis mine.

46 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v.1775-76; emphasis mine.

47 Baschet, *L'Iconographie médiévale*, 29-30, 47-48.

not simply help situate Theophile to communicate with Heaven, but it is part of the communication itself.

Gautier de Coinci's introduction of the *ymage* within Theophile's death convincingly alters the appearance and underlying meaning of this culminative communication between the two realms. This is not a subtle modification. Rather, the five-time repetition of the *ymage* strikingly drives the legend towards new meaning. Firstly, a physical representation helps guide the corporal positioning of the suppliant, as well as crystalizes the continuous mental imagery of the content and direction of the prayer. Secondly, the *ymage* and the Virgin's apparitions are lexically mentioned together, mirroring contemporary theory, that the *ymage* is not merely a lifeless object, but contains an essence of the divine and is the required receptacle for spiritual communication. Finally, Theophile's actions present a highly interactive prayer ritual, both his own comportment and an interplay with the *ymage* complete the rite. Gautier does not tediously nor purposelessly repeat himself in the final prayer of Theophile, as each inclusion underlines a nuance in the relationship between worshiper and the heavenly recipient.

Gautier de Coinci: The *Ymage* and *Imago Dei*

A comparison across two consistent moments within the *Legend of Theophile* demonstrates Gautier's lexical introduction of an *ymage*, a material object that completes the penitential rituals. His text indicates that, by the beginning of the thirteenth-century, it has become a key component in focusing prayer and demonstrating sufficient adoration of the Virgin herself. The *ymage* quickly transcends its physical role, becoming essential in the spiritual communication between Earth and Heaven. The Virgin appears, helps Theophile and welcomes his soul in large part because of his adoration of her *ymage*. Then, in lines unique to his version, Gautier firmly elevates its spiritual dimension by linking it to the idea of resemblance, or, *imago dei*.

Originating from Genesis 1:26, *imago* is the idea that man is made

in the likeness of God. According to Robert Javelet, the ideas around the Latin *imago* and *similitudo* often converge, in the cases where they emphasize the importance of image and resemblance.⁴⁸ The ultimate example of both is in man's successful mirroring of God, and this denotes an interior, rather than exterior, reflection.⁴⁹ As such, embarking on the motions of prayer rituals will not on its own lead to atonement. The sinner must also look inwards, recognize himself as an image of God and behave accordingly.

The concept of *imago dei*, man's likeness to God, seems inconsequential to the *ymage* as a material object, a connective support or even as animated by the prototype. However, Javelet indicates the importance of resemblance in divine communication and atonement, the key destination of Gautier's *Legend of Theophile*; such an orientation is a similarly essential prerequisite as penitential rituals. Gautier equally highlights these dual conditions, by linguistically connecting both the ritualistic object and the concept of *imago dei* with the same word. He textually nudges a comparison between the two manifestations of an *ymage*, and, indeed, in both senses the term conveys the key characteristic: spiritual potential. Gazing, considering and recognizing the material *ymage* as well as Man's inner *ymage* become two demonstrations of *transitus*, raising the suppliant to a higher existence and abilities, as commented on by the Virgin:

Theophilé, Theophilé,/ Or ont dyable tot filé,/ Or ont dyable tout perdu,/ Or sont il mat et esperdu/ Quant reconnois d'entier corage/ Le roi qui te fist a s'**ymage**.⁵⁰ [Theophilus, now the demons have fled, now the demons have lost, now they are beaten and in disarray because you recognize with all your heart the king who made you in his image.]

This declaration by the Virgin follows Theophile's credo, his profuse affirmation of his belief in God, Christ and the Holy Mother, undoing his previous denial of all of the above under the Devil. Interestingly, the Virgin seems to be crediting his realignment with his *ymage*, *imago*, as much as his exteriorly proclaimed credo in

48 Javelet, *Image et ressemblance*, XXIII, 46.

49 Javelet, *Image et ressemblance*, 179.

50 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v.1241-46; emphasis mine.

vanquishing evil. His sincere and devoted penitential actions help align him closer with his existing potential *imago*, two key factors in earning this recognition from the Virgin and in reaching his most spiritual existence

In this vein, we can view the series of penitential steps within the legend as a progression through different images towards resemblance; sincere and devoted contemplation of each represents a *transitus* process, elevating Theophile to a new spiritual sight and existence. He uses the material *ymage*, or statue, of the Virgin to focus his prayer, successfully calling upon her through this contemplation. Her prototype appears before him, a type of image slightly closer to her true form. His adoration of, and communication with, her prototype, eventually urges her to truly look upon him in acceptance and recognition. Theophile himself admits that “ne sai que dire ne que faire/ Se ta douceurs ne me regarde” (I know not what to say or do if you do not look at me with your kind regard).⁵¹ Her “regard” was his aim all along.

The Jew, the Earthly intermediary and representative for the Devil, distrusts the Virgin’s “regard:”

Jamais de li ne te souviengne/ Seur totes riens de ce te garde/ Que nes s’ymage ne regarde:/ Ne t’en porroit nus biens venir.”⁵² [Never think back on her. Above all, avoid looking at her statue. No good can come from doing that.]

Instead of the *ymage*’s physical form, the Jew specifically suspects its “regard,” its gaze, likely because it signifies the presence of the Virgin herself and the commencement of her intervention. Adrienne Williams Boyarin explains: “Theophilus is the archetype sinner of Marian literature, and Mary is, in this story, a powerful legal advocate with particular power over the written word and with a special ability to intercede where Jews are concerned.”⁵³ Mary’s interces-

51 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v. 918-19.

52 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v. 486-89; emphasis mine.

sory power in the *Legend of Theophile* is partially derived from her believed control over legal and textual affairs. Consequently, she occupies a unique position capable of dismantling the pernicious legal authority that holds sway over Theophile, providing insight into the Jew's apprehension. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the Jew's mistrust stems from a material statue and its initial display of animation, its "regard." Using the ideas of both Bynum and Baschet as context, this quote suggests a belief in the power of an *ymage*, which derives from its material existence, as well as from its role as sign directing towards the signified. It acts as an earthly receptacle that can be imbued with life by the prototype, with the first indication of this animation being the exchange in the "regard."

The specific animation of the Virgin's gaze holds great significance in the discourse of *imago*. As an *imago* of God herself, the Virgin possesses the spiritual authority to illuminate Theophile's own *imago*, as like calls to like, and her direct gaze symbolizes the recognition of the goodness, or godliness, within him.⁵⁴ Root says, "it is not sufficient for Theophilus to look at the Virgin's image, the real magic happens when the image looks at him."⁵⁵ Her "regard" marks the start of forgiveness, paving way for Theophile to progress along the path towards complete resemblance. In order to move through the series of images, Theophile must sustain sincere and profound devotion. As analyzed during his prayer, he humbly directs his pleas towards the statue of the Virgin, in order to access, or 'see,' the object begin to animate, as the prototype increasingly inhabits its representation. Logically, we can suppose that he must apply the same worship towards himself; with genuine interior contemplation,

53 Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin*, 42. Boyarin analyzes the Miracles of the Virgin generally, with emphasis on the Theophile text, as a literary genre that presents shifting cultural concerns. Studying the inherent antisemitism in the legend, Boyarin views Mary as a means to address the Jewish figure (62-3, 73-4). Gautier's choices in the *Legend of Theophile* are as much influenced by antisemitism, as by other key factors such as visual and material theology, especially in his representation of the Virgin.

54 Javelet, *Image et ressemblance*, 363-67. Javelet discusses the hierarchy in resemblances, in which the Virgin finds herself at the summit (after Christ), explaining her role as mediator, and as guide towards successful *imago*.

55 Root, *The Theophilus Legend*, 160.

Theophile has the potential to expose his inner *ymage* and achieve the highest possible state of resemblance. Thus, the ritual of prayer directs Theophile through a series of images that progressively move closer to the spiritual plane, starting from the material statue, then the prototype, and on to the Virgin considered as an *imago*, eventually leading to himself.

Both the Jew and the Virgin allude to the possibility of Theophile re-orientating himself along the path to resemblance and finding his *imago*. The Jew fears the reciprocal gaze of the Virgin's *ymage*, as the first animated response from the prototype and a significant step along the route towards resemblance, realizing his potential as an *ymage (imago)* of God, as ultimately commended by the Virgin. Consequently, Gautier's term *ymage* represents the stages along this progression and the ability to spiritually transit between them. The *ymage* as a material statue, the *ymage* in the process of animation by a divine power and the *ymage* as man's alignment with God become pointers on the journey from the physical world towards the divine.

Synchronic Cross-Genre Analysis: *Le Roman de la Rose*

A diachronic comparison between Gautier de Coinci's *Legend of Theophile* and its larger corpus spotlights the repetitive addition of the word *ymage* and expounds on the consequential impacts to the larger legend. The *ymage* in Gautier is most striking for its requisite presence in church ritual as an enhancive tool for sight and memory and for its role as the potential bridge to spiritual communication and resemblance (*imago*). Shifting our analytical view, a synchronic exploration of how "*ymage*" is used outside of ecclesiastical contexts could provide insights into how religious doctrine was being interpreted and integrated into broader cultural and linguistic settings.

By examining contemporary theological beliefs and considering miraculous accounts from various authors, we can gain valuable insights into Gautier's writing and the creative choices he made within it. However, this contextualization can be expanded further.

To what extent did the elevated status of images in the thirteenth-century permeate society? Were objects revered for their inherent material power beyond the confines of religious settings? Did they function, as Baschet suggests, as signs that guided viewers towards transcendent ideas or visions, even in other literary forms? One way to address these questions and broaden our understanding is to cast a wider analytical net by comparing a religious work, such as Gautier's, with one from a different genre, like Guillaume de Lorris' *Le Roman de la Rose*.

One of the principal works of literature from the early thirteenth-century is *Le Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris.⁵⁶ Written in roughly the same time period as Gautier's legend, between 1225-35, the courtly love poem presents an opportunity to delve deeper into the contemporary French ideology, as both writers experienced a similar cultural atmosphere that helped form the realm of possibility encircling their texts. Despite the vastly different genres, themes and characters explored across the two literary pieces, the word *ymage* appears frequently within the Roman (fifteen times), principally to denote the painted figures on the wall of the enclosed garden, in which unwinds the tale. Furthermore, Baschet's key definition of the *ymage*, a material support for spiritual *transitus*, strikingly emerges in the form of another object: the fountain of Narcissus. An analysis of both the explicit appearance of the noun to denote the painted figures, and the implicit expression of the key characteristics of an *ymage*, in the form of a fountain, corroborates how Gautier uses the term.

Ymage: Paintings and Personifications

The story starts as the narrator walks through an idyllic natural setting until he discovers a garden enclosed by a high and decorated wall. It is within the descriptions of these painted decorations that the reader encounters the word *ymage* thirteen times. They are pic-

56 There are 250 known surviving manuscripts of the poem from the Middle Ages (British Library). Two authors completed the full poem, in two different stages: Guillaume de Lorris (ca. 1230) and Jean de Meun (ca. 1275). This analysis only includes the first part of the poem, by Guillaume, as this author writes during the same time period as Gautier.

torial representations of the antipathetic human conditions to love; the first of several groups of personifications through which the narrator, alongside the reader, must progress, in an amorous allegorical development.

Accordingly, in *Le Roman de la Rose*, the term *ymage* most commonly signifies a personification. It is evident that this concept differs from Gautier's *ymage*, which refers to a statue of the Virgin. However, what stands out in Guillaume's use of personifications is that they initially appear as works of art; they possess a tangible, material form. Logically, it follows that they derive at least some of their power from their materiality, aligning with Bynum's argument regarding medieval images. Additionally, an exploration of personifications by Katharine Breen reveals intriguing similarities in their role to what Baschet argues for devotional images: they serve as bridges between the tangible, often material, and the abstract or difficult-to-conceptualize ideas. Breen notes that "although the goal is spiritual transcendence, the means of elevation are strikingly concrete and mechanical." Personification "mediates between individuals or particulars on the one hand and universals or concepts on the other."⁵⁷ Both personifications and devotional images functioned as tools facilitating the transition between the visible and the invisible, and interestingly, both Gautier and Guillaume refer to these two ideas with the same term: *ymage*.

The narrator in *Le Roman de la Rose* presents this first group of personifications in the following passage:

Les **ymages** et les peintures/ Le mur volentiers regardai;/ Si conterai et vous dirai/ De ces **ymages** les semblances/ Si cum moi vint en remembrances."⁵⁸ [I gazed with pleasure at the images and the paintings on the wall, and I shall tell you what they were like, as far as I can remember.]

In striking fashion, the text introduces the concepts of material *ymages* and memory simultaneously, rhyming the "semblance" of the *ymages* with the narrator's "remembrance." The narrator details

⁵⁷ Breen, *Machines of the Mind*, 6, 13.

⁵⁸ Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. and trans. Dufournet, v. 134-38; emphasis mine. Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. and trans. Horgan, v. 134-38.

their appearance from his memory, where they have resided for the five years since his dream. Memory “is crucial for understanding the power of images in devotional strategies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries;”⁵⁹ the purpose behind their creation wasn’t so much to achieve realistic accuracy or to demonstrate creativity, but to ensure the object was powerful enough to imprint itself on the memory. The role of a material object within the recollection process equally recalls Palazzo’s argument that images provided tangible support in better implicating the senses in prayer ritual.⁶⁰ Guillaume associates *ymages* with both the visual sensory system and successful recollection, as his protagonist draws an exact description of all ten representations precisely because the powerful visual images imprinted in his mind. The visually stimulating *ymages* in *Le Roman de la Rose* corroborate Gautier’s *yimage* which equally works as a sensory and memory support. The statue helps Theophile to crystallize his prayer to the Virgin and to eventually *see* her, and the text repeatedly informs us that Theophile returns to the church based on a memory of her apparitions, which is guided by the statue, as the symbol that stimulates remembrance. For both authors, the *yimage* provokes a potential for strong vision and memory, via contemplation and ritual.

Guillaume’s introduction of these figures interestingly sets the *yimage* apart from regular artistic and material representations. The connective “et”, between “ymages” and “paintures,” linguistically separates the words; the conjunction becomes an impermeable barrier between two noninterchangeable concepts. Perhaps the author wishes to differentiate between art mediums, as in ‘some are carved and some are painted.’ However, the text disproves this, as it repeats the ‘painted’ quality to these portraits.⁶¹ Rather, the author carefully selects the term *yimage*, because it carries weight in the physical and abstract planes; the painted personifications not only exist on this wall, but also as an idea, a deeper meaning, of the conditions

59 Camille, “Before the Gaze,” 215.

60 Palazzo, *Peindre c’est prier*, 17, 135.

61 For instance, “mout sot bien **paintre**” (Guillaume, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v.163; emphasis mine); “après fu **painte** Convoitise” (Guillaume, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v.169; emphasis mine).

they depict. Like Gautier who decides on the word *ymage*, instead of various other possibilities,⁶² Guillaume establishes the distinction between this word and the inanimate ‘paintings.’ The two authors purposefully select a term with the power to convey, initially, a material work of art, but one that then holds animation potential.

In meticulously describing each personified *ymage*, Guillaume continues to employ the word as a denotation of two existences. He comments on both their physical descriptions and their dynamic personalities: artistic paintings on the surface level, real characters underneath. “Une **ymage** ot après escrite,/ Qui sembloit bien estre ypocrite;/ Papelardie ert appellee” (the image that was represented next certainly looked like a hypocrite, and her name was Religious Hypocrisy).⁶³ Rather than simply describing her physical attributes, or the quality of the painting, the text primarily presents the *ymage* as a real character, who effuses an emotive atmosphere. Whilst the narrator gazes at the *ymages*, lending his full concentration, they begin to move in a type of visionary development, recalling Theophile contemplating the statue with such dedicated devotion that the real Virgin animates the vessel. Guillaume remains consistent in this dualistic description of his *ymages*:

Une **ymage** qui Vilonnie/ Avoit non revy devers destre,/ Qui estoit auques d’autel estre/ Cum ces deus et d’autel feture;/ Bien sembloit male creature,/ Et sembloit bien estre outrageuse/ Et mesdisans et ramponeuse./Mout sot bien paindre et bien portraire/ Cis qui sot tel **ymage** faire,/ Qu’el sembloit bien chose vilaine.”⁶⁴ [Then, looking to the right I saw an image called Baseness, not unlike the other two in form and kind. She seemed indeed an evil creature, wild and cruel, an immoderate and insolent scandalmonger. The man who could create such an image knew well how to paint a portrait; it seemed a most villainous thing.]

The text praises the painter’s abilities precisely because the *ymage*

62 Root lists the diverse terms that Gautier uses across his writing: *tavlete*, *iconye*, *mariole* and *imagate* (*The Theophilus Legend*, 159). Yet, within the *Legend of Theophile*, Gautier only choses to use *ymage*.

63 Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v. 407-09; emphasis mine.

64 Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v.156-65; emphasis mine.

is alive, having a villainous, cruel, immoderate and insolent air. The artist is so skilled because their work transcends that of a portrait; it becomes an *ymage*, originating as skilled material representation that breathes life the more the viewer gazes at it. The carefully selective use of the word *ymage* becomes even more apparent in view of the whole poem, which solely designates this first group of personifications with this noun. Their premier form, as artwork, categorizes the only difference between this group and the other personifications in the text, who solely manifest as actors in the narrative (and never as paintings, statues or other physical representations). Therefore, just as Gautier purposes the term to denote a material statue that holds the potential to animate, Guillaume's *ymages* first present themselves as static and lifeless art, before the figures progressively animate with prolonged examination, metamorphosing into lifelike postures and expressions. To be nominated an *ymage*, two stages seem to be required: inanimate art and emerging visions.

The Fountain as Transitus

The fountain scene in *Le Roman de la Rose* represents the plot's turning point, shifting the beginning scenes of wondrous discovery towards questing purpose, as the aqueous substance discloses the protagonist's objective: the recipient of his love, a perfect rosebud. Although never directly referred to with the word *ymage*, an analysis of this scene reveals an object working in a remarkably similar manner to Gautier's *ymage*, the statue of the Virgin, because both items act as an intermediary between a viewer and expanded clarity and sight.⁶⁵

The narrator comes upon a marble fountain, with a description designating it as the very same of the story of Narcissus. What follows is a meticulous description of an almost ritualist approach, contemplation and interaction with the object. To start, the protagonist re-

65 Trivellone argues that many different images can possess power for people of the Middle Ages: "Les images qui ne figurent pas le Christ, la Vierge ou les saints peuvent également posséder un pouvoir: c'est le cas des enseignes médiévales aux sujets les plus variés" ("Images, Rites," 776).

counts:

De la fontaine m'apressai / Quant je fus près, si m'abessai/ Por veoir
l'iaue qui coroit,/ Et la gravele qui paroit/ Au fons, plus clere qu'argens
fins."⁶⁶ [I drew near to the spring and, on reaching it, bent down to see
the running water and the gravel, brighter than fine silver, that seethed in
its depths.]

Then, he reveals:

Ou fons de la fontaine aval/ Avoit deus pierres de cristal/ Qu'a grant
entente remirai."⁶⁷ [Down at the bottom of the spring were two
crystals, which I gazed at most attentively.]

How Guillaume's narrator approaches the fountain bears a striking likeness to Theophile's integration of the Virgin's statue within his prayer ritual. Drawing near, the narrator inclines, for practical access and to display a respectful attitude towards the fountain. He then studies its contents, giving a plethora of details demonstrating his serious contemplation. This is not a brief glance, but a serious 'gaze,' recalling the language of Cynthia Hahn, in which the viewer dedicates full concentration, and the material item returns its image in a dual exchange.⁶⁸ Most strikingly, the narrator-lover's first two actions towards the fountain are the exact same as Theophile with his *ymage*, seeing that both characters humbly kneel before the material object before profoundly gazing at it.

The fountain then reveals its depths:

Quant li solaus, qui tout aguiete,/ Ses rais en la fontaine giete,/ Et la
clartés aval descent,/ Lors perent colors plus de cent."⁶⁹ [When the all-
seeing sun sends down its rays into the spring, and the light descends into
its depths, more than a hundred colours appear in the crystal.]

66 Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v. 1523-27.

67 Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v. 1537-39.

68 Hahn, "Visio Dei," 169, 183.

69 Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v. 1543-46.

The narrator perceives:

Ou miroër, entre mil choses/ Choisi rosiers chargiés de roses/ Qui estoient en un destour,/ D'une haie clos tout entour."⁷⁰ [In the mirror, among a thousand other things, rose-bushes laden with roses in a secluded place completely enclosed by a hedge.]

The narrator gazes into the fountain for long enough to be granted a “merveilles” (marvel)⁷¹ in the form of sunlight richly lighting up the crystals and the aqueous depths. The manipulation of the fountain by the sun can be compared to the Virgin acting through her *ymage*, as similar exterior, celestial forces wondrously performing through the material object, breathing life into its borders in order to share a divine vision with the viewer. The fountain eventually clears but does not return to its physical interior (water, gravel, and crystal); rather, the colorful light shifts to expose a different vision, that of the rosebush containing perfectly beautiful rosebuds. Before the fountain scene, the lover seemed to search for lovely things and the general idea of love, but it was not until the fountain showed him the ideal rosebuds that he could perceive the object of this faith and realize the path to reach it. Similarly, Theophile experiences a crisis of consciousness, comprehending that he needs to change course, make penitence and contact the Virgin. However, it is her *ymage* that provides the link to the spiritual world, allows her to appear before him and sets Theophile on the path towards his true desire, salvation. Therefore, both material objects, Guillaume’s fountain and Gautier’s statue, perform as Baschet’s *transitus* between the visible world and the desired divine communication; the *ymages* guide the viewers to new spiritual visions.

A synchronic study of *Le Roman de la Rose* with Gautier’s *Legend of Theophile* presents a strikingly similar treatment of the word *ymage* and of significant material objects. Guillaume’s personified *ymages* on the wall of the garden demonstrate the uniqueness of this specific word amongst multiple others to denote art and representations.

70 Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v. 1615-18.

71 Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v. 1541.

Guillaume refers to them primarily as *ymages* because they exist in two planes, as their physical paintings and as the conditions that they represent; the more one considers them, the more their first existence metamorphosizes into human figures. Likewise, Gautier denotes the material representation of the Virgin as an *ymage*, because this particular word translates its animation potential. Secondly, like the *ymage* of the Virgin, Narcissus' fountain acts as the most significant object within *Le Roman de la Rose*, turning the plot towards a clear direction, and both Guillaume's and Gautier's protagonists take the same ritualistic steps to approach, consider and use these objects. They then share a common role: they provide an elevated sight and purpose through spiritual intervention.

Conclusion

The version of the *Legend of Theophile* by Gautier de Coinci breaks from the literary tradition, because Gautier introduces an *ymage* into every key moment of the legend: the initial turn towards the Devil, Theophile's penitence and communication with the Virgin, and Theophile's return to the church at the end of the story to die. The author insists upon the importance of an object in directing the legend towards the conclusion of the ascension of Theophile's soul to Heaven. Although unnecessary even half a century earlier under Adgar, Gautier considered an *ymage* as the essential component in spiritual communication, seeing that his legend repeatedly mentions the word in both prayers. The statue of the Virgin acts as the receptacle of Theophile's pleas, as the vessel through which the Virgin appears and, finally, as the welcoming site of his soul. Her *ymage* becomes the bridge. The significance of this transformation to the legend cannot be overstated, because Gautier essentially changes the nature of one of the most sanctified and prescribed ecclesiastic rituals; prayer moves from an internal event to an external phenomenon, centered on a physical object. Indeed, the entire progression of the legend becomes a development through increasingly spiritual *ymages*, from the Virgin's statue, to its animation, to her apparition, to Theophile's ascent to Heaven and full alignment with his *imago*,

the highest manifestation of an *ymage*. Thus, the *ymage* changes the relationship between Earth and Heaven, as the prayer ritual, the apparition and the forgiveness of the Virgin, and the ability to find one's own *imago* all originate around the presence of a material object. The *ymage* is both physical and spiritual, literal and abstract, and it connotes the most miraculous and divine events visible to a worthy human.

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