

© 2020

Susan Lord Kenney

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PLEASURE AND THE “BIEN SOUVERAIN”
IN GABRIELLE DE COIGNARD’S *ŒUVRES CHRETIENNES*

By

SUSAN LORD KENNEY

A dissertation submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in French

Written under the direction of

François Cornilliat

And approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October 2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
PLEASURE AND THE “BIEN SOUVERAIN”
IN GABRIELLE DE COIGNARD’S *ŒUVRES CHRESTIENNES*

by Susan Lord Kenney

Dissertation Director:

François Cornilliat

The main question we set out to answer in this dissertation is: can Gabrielle de Coignard’s outlook, as perceived through her *Œuvres chrestiennes*, be described as hedonistic and, if so, to what extent?

In Chapter I, we explore “hedonism” as a concept and philosophical tradition, as well as various conceptions of the nature and meaning of pleasure. Chapter II provides an overview of Coignard’s life as well as preliminary considerations on her ethical outlook and her sense of “calling” as a Christian poet. In Chapters III, IV, and V, a series of comparative readings assess Coignard’s conception of the sovereign good and the roles played by pleasure therein. By comparing the content and form of Coignard’s poetry – especially of Sonnet XXV, in which we find the sole occurrence of the expression “bien souverain” – with pieces written by some of her male and female contemporaries (some secular others religious), we come to appreciate specific ways in which Coignard assimilates and also rejects what her counterparts wrote on love, suffering, pleasure, and the highest good. In Chapter IV, we demonstrate how Coignard is more reticent than Anne de Marquets when making rhetorical use of the supreme “bien” and the pleasurable

effects it is believed to contain. In Chapter V, a similar reticence is demonstrated with respect to Luis de Granada's *Vray chemin*, from which Coignard borrows directly when writing *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle*.

Our conclusion is not only that Coignard's implied ethical system cannot be described as hedonistic, but that she actively fights this very possibility: she explicitly names God the "seul bien souverain," isolates the concept in its own category, makes sure to prevent any reduction of it to pleasure, and upholds this same position throughout her œuvre. She seems acutely aware that poems purporting to describe celestial bliss might both reduce it to ordinary human pleasures *and* make those a goal to be coveted under the guise of beatitude. That is why, when she dedicates an entire poem to the topic of "félicité," she does not give herself full expressive license to treat this subject.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is from the bottom of my heart and with the deepest sense of gratitude that I would like to address my thanks to all who guided and supported me throughout the development and completion of this doctoral thesis.

To Professor François Cornilliat, my gratitude remains infinite. Words cannot express the privilege it has been to work with an advisor as intelligent, articulate, respectful, compassionate, and encouraging as him. I would like to thank him for persevering with me on this long journey, consistently seeking to affirm my ideas, even in those moments when he needed to point out errors; and for all that he helped me appreciate about Gabrielle de Coignard and her contemporaries. Discussing my readings with him and receiving feedback and even push-back on my interpretations proved, without fail, stimulating and rewarding. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to him for so beautifully modeling for his students, advisees, and colleagues alike how humility and humanity can thrive within the realm of academia.

To the members of my dissertation committee, Professor Mary Shaw, Professor Jennifer Tamas, and Professor Nathalie Dauvois, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for so graciously and enthusiastically accepting to read and discuss my work. Their meaningful questions, attention to and validation of details, constructive feedback, and abundant words of encouragement are deeply appreciated.

I would like to acknowledge Professor Mary Shaw for reinforcing, through her seminar on 19th-century French poetry, my enchantment with the genre and its forms, thus shaping my commitment to focus on works of poetry for this thesis. In addition to

thanking her for her instruction on analyzing poetry and for her guidance in the honing of my writing skills, I want to thank Professor Shaw for collaborating with me on the organization of our own *Jeux Floraux* for Rutgers students taking our 16th- and 19th-century poetry classes. That unique, celebratory banquet and poetry contest brought to life much of the content that I had been researching for this dissertation and encouraged me to push forward toward its completion. The event also provided me with a genuinely delightful glimpse of how future generations of students can come to enjoy and be inspired by subjects as seemingly obscure as early modern French poetry.

I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Jennifer Tamas for her vigilant and passionate reading; and, in particular, for her keen interest in and sensitivity to Gabrielle de Coignard's role not only as a female poet but also as a widow and a mother; it renewed and deepened my own attention to this crucial aspect of her endeavor.

To Professor Nathalie Dauvois, I am deeply indebted for her assistance, particularly at the onset of this research project, in identifying resources that would help me better understand the historical and literary contexts within which Coignard wrote. Furthermore, I am extremely grateful to Professor Dauvois for inviting me to attend her doctoral workshop series "Formes et idées de la Renaissance aux Lumières: Méthodes, objets, pratiques de la recherche sur la première modernité" through the Centre d'Études de la Renaissance (Sorbonne Nouvelle). It was a true privilege to spend a semester learning from Professor Dauvois' expertise as well as learning from and exchanging with such high-caliber and engaged doctoral students specializing in 16th-century literature.

To Professor Alan Williams, the current Director of the Graduate Program in French at Rutgers University, I would like to give heartfelt thanks for going beyond the

call of duty to help ensure my completion of this work. His faithful check-ins, his enthusiasm about my progress, and his dedicated efforts to help me develop strategies to overcome dissertation-related obstacles were decisive in helping me reach the finish line.

To all of the faculty and staff in the Department of French whom I have had the pleasure of knowing, I would like to express my gratitude for their care, instruction, and generous assistance over the years. Every one of them has contributed significantly to making the Department not merely efficient but also intellectually stimulating and convivial. I am forever grateful to them for welcoming me into their diverse community, for cultivating my knowledge of the French language and Francophone literatures, for facilitating unique ways for me to thrive in research and teaching, and for helping me attend to a variety of administrative tasks. Without them, I would not have been able to envision and work on, let alone complete this thesis.

I wish to thank my colleagues and friends Jenifer Branton-Desris, Flora Champy, Francesca Cinelli, Maren Daniel, Ellen Delvallée, David Franco, Lesley Hoffman, Mina Khavandi, Marie Larose, Claire Ménard, Georgette Mitchell, Baï Yunfei, and the late Joseph Pierre-Antoine. The insightful questions they raised and the expertise they shared in our seminars, their intellectual drive, their kind words of advice, and their delightful camaraderie not only inspired and nourished my work but also enriched my overall experience in this doctoral program. In particular, I am indebted to Joseph Pierre-Antoine, whose exceptional dissertation served as a model for my own. Words fail to express the privilege it was to befriend a fellow aficionado of 16th-century poetry, especially one as sweet, generous, joyful, creative, and intelligent as him.

I am also grateful to Marie-Laurentine Caëtano for generously providing me with a copy of her Master's thesis on Gabrielle de Coignard. The work that she carried out and the rich analyses that she provides were extremely valuable to my own understanding of the *Œuvres chrestiennes*.

To Elyse Rivin, I extend special thanks; her customized walking tour of Toulouse made me visualize and appreciate, like never before, the physical, political, and cultural contexts within which Gabrielle de Coignard existed.

To my dear friend Jamison Standridge, I am wholeheartedly and forever grateful. His faithful companionship, refreshing humor, deep empathy, and remarkable intellect made the graduate student existence inestimably more bearable and even rewarding. It is impossible to imagine having completed this dissertation without his friendship and support from start to finish.

I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to my friends Jiewon Baek, Faith Anne Barnhill, Maria Cochrane, Alena Green, Hannah Teague, the Sampons, the Shaws, and the Stevens. Their unwavering friendship, wise advice, words of encouragement, interest in my research, and, most importantly, their prayers, were powerful forces of support as we all patiently awaited the completion of this project.

Finally, it is with the utmost gratitude that I would like to thank every member of my family for their endless prayers, their overflowing love, and the infinite ways they contributed to the conception, development, and completion of this thesis. I am particularly grateful to my father, Tom, for first introducing me to the notion of “Christian hedonism” and for cultivating within me a desire to question and discover what my own *summum bonum* is. I am deeply indebted to him, to my brother-in-law

Andrew, and to my sister Caroline for reading this dissertation, enthusiastically discussing its ideas, providing invaluable feedback, and helping me make the work more coherent and accessible. I am also beyond grateful to my mother, Mabel, not only for willingly taking on the tedious task of proof-reading large portions of my text, but also for tirelessly attending to my physical, intellectual, and spiritual well-being, as only a mother can. To my sister Grace, I would like to express my thanks for her compassion and empathy when, at times, I felt discouraged working on this project; but also for her sincere delight when breakthroughs occurred. I also thank my brother Curt and my sister-in-law Catherine for their kind words of affirmation. Last but not least, it is a privilege to thank my nieces Caroline, Isla, Julia, Hazel, Elizabeth, and Frances, for the rays of joy, creativity, and laughter they have brought into my life, especially during some of the more challenging moments I faced while working on this project.

DEDICATION

To all my students, past, present, and future, I dedicate this dissertation. While you may never read or even come to be aware of this work, it was completed out of a long-standing desire to enjoy the privilege of continually discovering and exploring, with you, the French language and the abundant treasure-trove of Francophone literatures and cultures. Thank you for bringing your curiosity, enthusiasm, compassion, creativity, temerity, hard-work, integrity, and even your struggles and weaknesses to our “class,” regardless of its form – be it a traditional classroom, a banquet hall, a library, a grassy field, city streets, a museum, a study-abroad trip, or an online platform. May your studies in French and the skills and experiences you gain along the way serve you such that, in turn, you will be better equipped and motivated to responsibly engage with, contribute to, and enjoy the flourishing of local and global communities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I: Doctrines of pleasure.....	24
Three meanings of the word “plaisir”: activity, affective state, and causal object.....	24
Three varieties of hedonism: folk, philosophical, and general.....	31
Two meanings of the word “ <i>eudaimonia</i> ”.....	35
Pleasure, happiness, and the highest good (1): various traditions.....	39
Philosophical hedonism.....	39
Stoicism and Neo-Stoicism.....	45
Aristotelianism.....	47
Platonism(s).....	49
Pleasure, happiness, and the highest good (2): Augustine.....	52
Pleasure, happiness, and the highest good (3): Aquinas.....	80
A Christian hedonism?	84
Valla’s <i>De voluptate</i>	86
Erasmus’ <i>Epicureus</i>	88
CHAPTER II: The life, faith, and calling of Gabrielle de Coignard.....	103
Elements for a portrait.....	104

Origins.....	104
A poet's education.....	108
A devout Catholic.....	110
A lay woman (and poet) from Toulouse.....	115
A poet's ambition (or lack thereof).....	122
A feminine "je"?.....	130
A hurting widow, an anxious mother.....	134
Illness and death.....	139
Coignard's moral outlook: the problem of "vouloir"	143
CHAPTER III: Celestial rewards and the <i>summum bonum</i> in the <i>Sonnets</i>	155
The logic of "loyer".....	157
Sonnet XXV and the sovereign good: a case study (1).....	173
The place of pleasure.....	176
The problem of "profit" in Luis de Granada's <i>Vray chemin</i>	188
Sonnet XXV and the sovereign good: a case study (2).....	202
Secular versions: a catalog of beauties and torments.....	208
Toward the sovereign good.....	225
Addressees and desires (chart).....	248
CHAPTER IV: Anne de Marquets, Gabrielle de Coignard and the "souverain	
bien": a comparison.....	250
The promise of "vray plaisir".....	254
Suffering and chastisement.....	261
Suffering according to Marquets.....	264

Suffering and chastisement according to Coignard.....	270
Excitement and humility.....	280
Back to the “bien souverain”.....	294
CHAPTER V: Expressing the inexpressible: the choice of simplicity in	
<i>De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle</i>	305
On the two parts of the <i>Œuvres chrétiennes</i>	305
From prayer to epic.....	306
The sonnets as “exercices”.....	311
<i>De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle</i> : the title and the form.....	320
Ronsardian echoes.....	325
Within and beyond Nature: two visions.....	340
Enjoyment, suffering, and the “souverain bien”.....	360
The art of limiting expression.....	376
CONCLUSION.....	382
Forms and roles of pleasure.....	385
Earthly pleasures as means to an end – and their limits.....	386
Perfect pleasure on earth.....	390
Meditating on heavenly pleasures.....	394
Virtue, beatitude, and love.....	396
APPENDIX.....	408
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	417

INTRODUCTION

In 1533, the final colloquium of Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Colloquia familiaria* is published for the first time. Entitled *Epicureus* (*The Epicurean*), it presents a dialogue between two fictional characters, one of whom is named Hedonius, the other Spudaeus. Throughout the colloquium, Hedonius develops a case in support of his claim that "In plain truth, there are no people more Epicurean than godly Christians"¹ (Erasmus, *The Colloquies* 538)².

Attributing Epicurean or hedonistic tenets to the lifestyle of "godly Christians" may come as a surprise, even to readers today. However, in reformed Protestant circles of the 21st century, the notion of "Christian hedonism" is far from foreign. In fact, for many within those communities, it has been embraced as an essential part of Christian doctrine. Such is the case for Rev. John Piper who, in his 1986 book *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, attempts to counter Kantian morality with something he provocatively calls "hedonistic biblical morality":

Christian Hedonism aims to replace a Kantian morality with a biblical one. Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher who died in 1804, was the most powerful exponent of the notion that the moral value of an act decreases as we aim to derive any benefit from it. Acts are good if the doer is "disinterested." We should do the good because it is good. Any motivation to seek joy or reward corrupts the act. [...] The Kantian notion says that it's O.K. to get joy as an *unintended result* of your action. But all these people [Jonathan Edwards, C. S. Lewis,

¹ "*Quod si de veris loquamur, nulli magis sunt Epicurei quam Christiani pie viventes*" (Erasmus, Desiderius. *Epicureus*. In *Colloquia familiaria. ad optimarum editionum fidem diligenter emendata, cum* 5/http://www.stoa.org/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Stoa:text:2003.02.0006:colloquium=63>). Henceforth, all Latin excerpts from this work will come from this same source. The French translation reads as follows: "il n'y a pas plus Épicuriens que les Chrétiens qui vivent pieusement" (Erasme. *Œuvres choisies*. Trans. Jacques Chomarat. Paris: Le Livre de poche, 1991, p. 795).

² Erasmus, Desiderius. *The Colloquies of Erasmus*. Trans. Craig R. Thompson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. Henceforth, all English quotations from *Epicureus* will come from this source.

Flannery O'Connor] (and myself included) are *aiming* at joy. We repudiate both the possibility and desirability of disinterested moral behavior. It is impossible, because the will is not autonomous; it always inclines to what it perceives will bring the most happiness.³

This declaration needs to be clarified if not corrected, however:

By Christian hedonism, **I do not mean that our happiness is the highest good**. I mean that pursuing the highest good will always result in our happiness. But *all* Christians believe this. Christian hedonism says more, namely, that **we should pursue happiness with all our might**. The desire to be happy is a proper motive for every good deed, and if you abandon pursuit of your own joy you cannot please God. (*Ibid.*; *emphasis ours*)

This posits that we may pursue happiness (as the motive and goal of our good deeds) even though it is *not* the highest good. It seems that we may be able to do so without *mistaking* happiness for the highest good; and even if we do make this mistake (because our will is “not autonomous”), it may not be a sin, but something that “pleases” the true highest good (*i.e.*, God); as long as we do not mistake the happiness we seek in this way for other pleasures of a kind that may not please God.

A similar move and a similar ambiguity can be detected in the 16th century, during what is known as the “Counter-Reformation.” There we observe a certain toning down, if not suppression, of the call to *disinterestedly* perform good works, and a clear embrace of “how we feel” about them and the happy reward they promise; that is, of human sentiment – including a certain prioritization of our psyche’s penchant for pleasure. We will study this phenomenon, and the ethical and spiritual problems it raises, in the religious poetry of late Renaissance France, and more specifically in one particular corpus: Gabrielle de Coignard’s *Œuvres chrestiennes*⁴ – a posthumously-published

³ Piper, John. “Christian Hedonism: Forgive the Label, but Don’t Miss the Truth.” *Desiring God* (Jan. 1995): n. p. <<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/christian-hedonism>>.

⁴ First published in 1594 (Toulouse: Pierre Jagourt et Bernard Carles), then reprinted in 1595 (Tournon: Jaques Faure). We will use (and, unless otherwise indicated, quote from and refer to) the modern edition by Colette H. Winn (*Œuvres chrétiennes*. Geneva: Droz, 1995), based on the Toulouse original, of which Winn reviews three copies “du même tirage” (see pp. 118-123), presenting minor material differences (as

collection comprising 129 sonnets and 21 longer poems of various forms,⁵ all of which were composed between the end of 1573 (upon the passing of Coignard's husband) and her own death, which occurred on November 29, 1586⁶.

In his landmark study *Devotional Poetry in France*⁷, Terence Cave explains that the second half of the 16th century⁸ saw a “universal need for ‘consolation’ at a time of national affliction,” which made way for a devotional revival (Cave 9). In addition, evils (calamities and afflictions) “were seen as punishment for sin” (*ibid.*), the remedy consisting of orison (*i.e.*, prayer) and meditation to appease God's wrath through “penitence and devotion” (*ibid.*)⁹. In her dissertation on Coignard, Renée-Huguette Kaiser points out that both Catholic and Protestant reformers fought to “insuffler une nouvelle vigueur à un Christianisme décadent” (Kaiser 37)¹⁰. For Cave, the devotional trend was “an attempt to rediscover an inner, personal value for a religion which had become too concerned with externals on the one hand and an abstruse, impersonal

well as distinct ex-libris and handwritten annotations). We have examined another 1594 print (not listed by Winn but located at the Bibliothèque universitaire de l'Arsenal de Toulouse (Resp Pf XVI-63) and available online (<<https://tolosana.univ-toulouse.fr/fr/notice/075570165>>)); it shows Jesuit insignia on the title page and an “*Ex libris Petri Lafauriani et amicorum*” near the end, followed by a few handwritten notes that we could not decipher.

⁵ Winn identifies six genres (Coignard 104-111): 2 *hymnes*, 3 *discours*, 4 *stances* (of which two are not thus labeled), 2 *complaintes*, 2 *noëls*, 1 *épopée*. Seven poems are not identified with a particular genre.

⁶ In the opening dedication “Aux femmes devotieuses,” Coignard's two daughters state that the poems were written by their mother “durant son vefvage” (Coignard 129).

⁷ Cave, Terence. *Devotional Poetry in France c. 1570-1613*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U. P., 1969.

⁸ “Most historians agree in placing the beginning of the vogue of religious lyrics in the 1570s: Jacques de Billy's *Sonnets spirituels* were first published in 1573, in 1574 appeared the Geneva *Poèmes chrestiens*, and from 1575, the works of Desportes were beginning to include religious poems. Several important devotional works were published in the years immediately preceding the accession of Henri III, so that 1570 seems to represent a significant moment in the rise of vernacular devotional literature” (Cave xii).

⁹ Consider Coignard's interpretation of the cause of the whooping cough epidemic, in Sonnet XXVIII: “je vous feray sçavoir / Comme je sçay punir la lascheté publique” (7-8, Coignard 173). She appears to believe that God sent the whooping cough to punish the Catholics for being too cowardly in their religious battle against the Protestants.

¹⁰ Kaiser, Renée-Huguette, *Gabrielle de Coignard: poétesse dévote*. Ph.D. thesis. Atlanta: Emory University, 1975.

theology on the other” (Cave ix)¹¹. Even for Catholics, this development, therefore, arose in response to a previous failure of a Church that had largely prevented its members from personally and intimately experiencing their God.

In its fight against the Reformation and in an effort to combat the spiritual alienation of its flock, the Catholic Church, therefore, allowed figures like Ignace de Loyola and Louis de Grenade (Fray Luis de Granada)¹² to engage and rehabilitate the interior life of “tous ‘rudes et petits’ dans le chemin de la dévotion” (Kaiser 37, quoting a

¹¹ While the two sides of the religious conflict approach this differently, Cave does identify parallels between Catholic and Calvinist devotional literature, however (due in part to their common dependance on patristic sources such as Augustine). A convergence appears, for example, in the poetic treatment of penitential themes: according to Cave, “the demands of poetry” minimize the chasm “between the Calvinist and the Catholic view of sin and redemption” (Cave 23); one notes a common focus on “death and God’s mercy” and “the contrast between God and the sinner” (*ibid.*). Differences abound nonetheless, such as the near absence of meditations on the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and worship of the Saints among the Protestants. Cave also explains what separated a work like Calvin’s *Institution de la religion chrestienne* from the handbooks produced later by the Jesuits and others. Calvin’s goal was to present a coherent doctrine based on proper interpretation of Scripture, while making the latter accessible for personal reflection (Cave 20). The idea of arousing devotional fervor via the sort of devices found in the Catholic handbooks could not be more different. Poetry serves the latter purpose well, in that it “speaks to the senses” by relying on rhythm, sounds, and symbolic language to paint vivid “tableaux” representing ineffable mysteries. Calvin too had valued the role that poetry could play in spiritual and pastoral life, but on an other basis altogether: suffice it to think of the immensely influential translation of the *Psalms* by Clément Marot (and, later, Théodore de Bèze), which created a French equivalent of the God-inspired simplicity attributed to King David (see Olivier Millet, “Marot et Calvin: chanter les psaumes.” In *Clément Marot* “Prince des poètes français.” Eds G. Defaux and M. Simonin. Paris: Champion, 1997, pp. 463-476). The duty of direct, unadorned expression, conveying the remorse, hope, and joy of the faithful, is the core principle of the “poésie pour ainsi dire antipoétique” that Calvin recommended exclusively (Véronique Ferrer, “Pour une poétique réformée: l’influence de Calvin sur les poètes des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles.” *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France*, 110.4 (2010): pp. 883-899; see p. 888). In the years 1560-1580, this model virulently fought the Pléiade’s (notably Ronsard’s) “Pagan,” heavily aestheticized, pleasure-oriented poetics; but was also shaped in part by its appeal (hence, *e.g.*, a growing use of the sonnet). By the end of the century, Ferrer shows that Calvinist poetry was drifting further away from strict Scriptural models, presenting instead “itinéraires spirituels” and “tableaux” of its own (hence the convergences noted by Cave), “sous l’influence probable du modèle dévot catholique, ignatien et salésien” (Ferrer 897). On the spiritual poetry of the late 16th century, see also Michèle Clément’s *Une poétique de crise. Poètes baroques et mystiques (1570-1660)*. Paris: H. Champion, 1996.

¹² Luis de Granada’s *Libro de la oración y meditación* (known in French as *Le vray chemin*, in English as *Of Prayer and Meditation*) was first published in its original Castilian in 1554, but was accused of containing heretical teachings. A new edition came out in 1555, but it was not until 1566 that a sufficiently-revised one would be considered acceptable by Catholic authorities. In her edition of Coignard’s *Œuvres chrestiennes*, Winn points out that the first published French translation of Granada’s work appeared as early as 1575, after which “il n’est guère passé d’année sans qu’un des ouvrages de Louis de Grenade n’ait été traduit ou réédité dans une ville en France (*cf.* Jean Dagens, *Bibliographie chronologique*)” (Coignard 46, n. 47). Winn uses the 1608 edition of François de Belleforest’s translation, revised by the Toulousain Jean Chabanel; we will refer to the 1579 edition, which appeared during Coignard’s lifetime (see below).

preface to the translation of Granada's *Le vray chemin*¹³), thereby assigning a new place for individual subjectivity as the proper "site" for spiritual progress, so long as the subject is not too enamored of itself. While our goal is not to assess the ways in which Coignard's *Œuvres chrestiennes* carry out their devotional mission, we will keep in mind what Cave and Kaiser, in particular, have written on this subject. Cave shows that devotional *methods* were common to a wide range of spiritual treatises and, likewise, to the poems they inspired. Thus one finds a specific "division into thematic categories" allowing meditation to progress in a manner that "mirrors the twofold nature of the Bible," from a consideration of "the fallen nature of man in general" and of the 'dévot's' "own sins" in particular, "to the contemplation of Christ's redemptive act" (Cave 25). First comes a "penitential sequence" ("a downward movement into a consideration of the sinner's corruption, of [her] death, and the torments of Hell," 26); and then, through "a Passion sequence," follows an upward movement "towards absolution, redemption, and the all-embracing love of God" (*ibid.*).

We find this two-step structure at work within some of Coignard's poems, or from one poem or group of poems to the next; and perhaps even in the division of the *Œuvres chrestiennes* themselves between the *Sonnets spirituels*, of which many are penitential and reflect a struggle with worldly passions (literary ambition included) and the longer

¹³ "Advertissement au lecteur, sur la traduction du present livre," paragraph 1 (n. p.). Granada, Fray Luis de. *Le vray chemin et adresse pour acquerir et parvenir à la grace de Dieu, et se maintenir en icelle, par le moyen et compagnie de l'Oraison et Contemplation en la Loy et amour de Dieu. Avec trois discours de l'efficace des principales œuvres de Penitence, l'Aumosne, l'Oraison, et le Jeusne. Fait en espagnol par Reverend Pere, F. Louïs de Grenade, docteur en Theologie, Provincial de l'ordre de S. Dominique: et mis en François, selon l'ordre de l'Autheur, par F. de Belleforest Comingeois. L'utilité de ce livre se voit par l'exhortation de l'Autheur qui suit l'Epistre du Traducteur: et l'ordre de l'œuvre par le Prologue, et le sommaire en la page suivante. Seconde Edition. A Paris, Chez Guillaume de la Nouë, rue saint Jacques, à l'enseigne du nom de Jesus. M.D.LXXIX. Avec Privilege du Roy.* Trans. F. de Belleforest. Paris: Chez Guillaume de la Nouë, rue saint Jacques, 1579. <<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5316540200>>.

poems of the *Vers chrestiens*, several of which focus on contemplating the Passion and the “vie éternelle.” In the Introduction of her edition, Colette Winn describes the total as

une longue élégie autobiographique, une sorte de confession intime où il est aisé de reconnaître les étapes successives d’une évolution spirituelle. La division en deux parties, qui retrace les degrés de ce processus, rappelle le mouvement même de l’ascension platonicienne. Dans la première partie du recueil, intitulée *Sonnets spirituels*, la beauté de l’univers créé accapare le regard de la poétesse et éveille en elle le désir de connaître “ce grand Dieu” (sonnet XL) et de s’élever jusqu’à lui. [...] La première partie du recueil évoque les états de l’âme ballottée entre des émotions contraires, les certitudes et les désespoirs, les élans spirituels suivis des retombées “funèbres”, les progrès et les échecs.

Cependant, le détachement laborieux de soi et du monde prélude à l’élan vers le divin. La seconde partie marque la rupture définitive. Gabrielle de Coignard résiste à “la tentation d’un lyrisme trop complaisant”, dit Huguette Kaiser, “pour s’élever à la considération éthique des grandes vertus, mais surtout pour méditer sur la passion d’un Dieu d’amour, modèle de toutes perfections” (p. 47). Elle renonce au “registre mondain” que l’on associe généralement au Canzoniere, à l’espérance de gloire qui motive l’entreprise littéraire, à l’idéal de perfection formelle et au plaisir esthétique que procure le sonnet à la forme si exigeante. Le “je” cède la place au “Il”. Et le sonnet à la disposition dialectique qui met en relief le déchirement intérieur, disparaît au profit de poèmes de plus grande étendue et de forme plus souple dans lesquels l’auteur chante les louanges de “ce grand Dieu”.

(Winn, Coignard 26-28)

It is also the case, however, that the trajectory thus proposed is peppered with poems that disrupt it – starting with a genuine (if short) epic, the *Imitation de la victoire de Judich*, thrown among the *Vers*, hardly a sign of having abandoned “l’esperance de gloire qui motive l’entreprise littéraire.” Overall, it remains difficult to assess the order that Coignard may have intended for her collection (and whether she intended to publish it in the first place)¹⁴. What is beyond dispute is that her poetry is shaped, at least in part,

¹⁴ “**Si elle estoit en vie et vouloit publier ses vers**, nous ne doutons point qu’elle n’eust fait mesme choix que nous pour les dedier” (i.e., “Aux Dames devotieuses”) is how Jeanne and Catherine de Mansencal put it (Coignard 130, *emphasis ours*). Thus Kaiser wonders if the poet divided the works into two parts herself, or if her daughters did, in accordance with the Petrarchan model popular in their day (Kaiser 47). As for a chronological order of composition, “Les points de repère sont rares et très vagues. Ils sont d’autant plus sujets à caution qu’ils font partie d’un message poétique” (Kaiser 49). Philippe Wolff argues that the *Sommaire de sept sermons faitz par monsieur Eimond* would have been written at the same time as some of the earlier sonnets (“Une poétesse peu connue du XVI^e siècle toulousain: Gabrielle de Coignard.” *Midi: Revue des sciences humaines et de littérature de la France du Sud*, n° 0, 1986, pp. 4-17). Winn suggests that “Animée de désirs opposés (cf. sonnets V, XLI, XLIII, XC, XCIII), l’auteur aurait pu composer ses sonnets lyriques et ses graves méditations simultanément” (Coignard 28, n. 27). In her article “Quel

by the practice of meditation; but that the *Œuvres* reflect a meditative progress in their very structure strikes us as less evident (we will return to this matter in our fifth chapter).

As for the meditator's subjective process, it has three basic elements¹⁵. First is "composition," which "bring[s] all the senses to bear on the object of meditation." Then comes "analysis": "the intellect is summoned to reflect on the problems involved (often of a theological nature)." Third is "affective prayer": "the 'affections' are poured out in thanksgiving and prayer" (Cave 26). Thus are mobilized three "faculties of the soul" (Kaiser 43): *imagination* aids with "composition," as the reader becomes "emotionally and almost physically" drawn by a text's appeal to the senses¹⁶. Analysis requires the use

sentiment as tu, ô mon ame [...]?' L'expression des sentiments dans les *Œuvres chrétiennes* de Gabrielle de Coignard (1594)." *Textes et contextes* [Online] 13.1 (2018). <<https://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=1793>>), Marie-Laentine Caëtano notes about sonnets LXXVII and LXXVIII that "La place de ces deux sonnets consécutifs est remarquable, car ils développent le même thème, le second approfondissant le premier. Cet ordre ne semble pas être un hasard, mais nous ne pouvons développer cette hypothèse faute de renseignements sur la publication" (§ 44). "Nous pouvons remarquer," adds Caëtano, "quelques places stratégiques, comme le premier et le dernier sonnets, tous deux consacrés à Ronsard, mais sans savoir si ces places sont liées à un ordre chronologique, logique ou arbitraire" (*ibid.*, note 7). Let us also note that sonnets L, LI, LXVII, and LXXIV are all paraphrases of different verses from the Old Testament (each poem has a title that begins with "Sur le verset"), while sonnets CXII-CXVIII, all titled, follow the sequence of the 7 sayings (or last words) of Jesus on the Cross. Sonnet LXXII, titled like Sonnet CXII, focuses on the first saying. Winn further points out that Sonnet LVII "introduit un groupe de dix sonnets consacrés aux fêtes du temps de Noël" (Coignard 206, n. 1). However, it is only clear to us that sonnets LVII-LXI and LXIV-LXVI follow, in chronological order (*i.e.*, December 25-27, January 1 and 6, and February 2), traditional Catholic feasts consecrated to the Christmas season. See Caëtano's M. A. thesis (*'Je suis Chrestienne et bruslant de ta flamme': Poétique et spiritualité: Les Œuvres chrétiennes de Gabrielle de Coignard*. Lyon: Université Lumière Lyon 2, 2008. p. 47) for her hypothesis as to why a sonnet in honor of the Day of the Holy Innocents (December 28) is not included.

¹⁵ Cave, following Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*. New Haven: Yale U. P., 1962.

¹⁶ See Cave's conclusion (*Devotional Poetry*, p. 303): "One of the most striking features of [devotional poetry] is the way in which it **establishes contact with the physical world**. If the abstractions of the professional theologians were to be communicated to the public, if individual laymen were to acquire a sense of the reality and the immediacy of the Church's teaching, **such a contact had to be made**: the image, which had played a central part in the medieval popularisation of religion, had to be reinterpreted in the light of a wider literacy. The early devotional masters – of whom Bonaventura is perhaps the outstanding example – had never lost their awareness of the literal nature of Christian truth: the presence of God in Creation, the historical reality of the Nativity and the Passion, the physical corruption and mortality which issued from the Fall, all these were taken in their most factual and concrete sense. The religious renewal of the sixteenth century took hold of this tradition and used it in the attempt **to give religion a human content**, so that, by means of meditation and prayer, the believer might penetrate (if not by-pass) the ritual of public worship and **reach the truth embodied in it**. Loyola replaced the image-worship of the Middle Ages by **teaching men to create their own images**. Thus in the later sixteenth century, 'devotion'

of “*entendement* or *esprit*” (intellectual understanding). The affections “arise from the *volonté*,” provided the latter remains guided by *entendement* (Cave 26-27)¹⁷.

It is on this basis that, by the 1560s, “le goût de l’oraison se répand parmi les laïcs” (Kaiser 37). The method is quite clear; what the “goût” is made of perhaps less so. Individual subjectivity – the writer’s or the reader’s – is the site of emotions that are supposed to contribute as such to the devotional process; especially where poetry, turning away from its earlier, secular pursuits, is involved. Granada recognized the benefits of using verse in worship, because of the attractive effect of rhythm and stylized words on the soul, thus better prepared for a genuine, intimate, and profound interaction with God:

C’est bien fait quelquefois de prier de bouche, et parolle, avant que mediter quelqu’une des oraisons qui sont és heures, et livres de devotion, et specialement celles qui sont és meditations de saint Augustin, et au Psautier de David, où il y a des Psalmes tres-devots, qui ayderont beaucoup à allumer et esveiller ceste tienne devotion. Car c’est le propre des parolles devotes (si elles sont dites de cœur, et attentivement) de ferir au cœur, et de l’eslever à Dieu: ce qui est de tant plus necessaire, comme plus nostre esprit sera refroidi, et distrait de ce sentiment. Souvent **nos oraisons servent mieux estans en vers, et en rythme**, telles que sont plusieurs proses et hymnes saints: d’autant que les paroles de stile, lesquelles attirent avec elles plus de douceur et soueveté pour nos ames.

(Granada, *Le vray chemin*, I, ch. 5, “De la preparation requise avant l’oraison,” fol. 178 v°; quoted in part by Kaiser (39); *emphasis ours*)

The institutional practitioners of religious (especially Marian) poetry, in Toulouse’s *Jeux Floraux* and elsewhere, saw a meaningful link between their faith and their art, based on the latter’s capacity to praise and take vivid pleasure in godly images. Testing this link

– for both Catholic and Calvinist – involved first and foremost **the physical awareness of man’s body and of Christ’s body**; it involved, too, a sense of terrestrial and cosmic reality, the inexorable significance of height and depth, of light and dark. ‘**Composition**’ and ‘**application of the senses**’ are not merely devices for making devotion easier: they imply the need to ‘incorporate’ religion, to give it human and physical values, and the same need determines **the high degree of physical urgency one finds in devotional poetry**. Even where a description is not elaborate, where it is restricted to a stanza or a line, the use of insistent demonstratives, of bright colour, of sharp contrast or pathetic detail can give momentum to the poem as a whole; the aim is patently to involve the reader’s sensual awareness, to represent the Passion or the Fall as a ‘natural’ event as well as a divine one” (*emphasis ours*).

¹⁷ Yet the whole sequence and its effect ultimately come from God. As Coignard puts it in Sonnet II: “Guide mon coeur, donne moy la science, / O Seigneur Dieu, pour chanter saintement / Ton haut honneur que j’adore humblement, / Reconnoissant assez mon impuissance” (Ins. 1-4, Coignard 141).

more personally in her poems, Coignard asks in prayer that they remain, at all times, inspired by God in order to properly “sing” of Him:

Et moy qui suis, ô Dieu, ton humble chanteresse,
Assiste moy tousjours, inspire mon esprit,
Que dans mes vers ton los soit dignement escrit,
Et de chanter ton los que jamais je ne cesse.
(*Poesie spirituelle*, 37-40, Coignard 306)

As we will see, it is on such condition only that she can begin to envision their success:

Je te louray, Seigneur, et la posterité
Lira des vers de moi, qui chauds de charité
Rendront de ton amour nos ames enflammées.
(Sonnet XC, 12-14, 248)¹⁸

We may wonder if the author of such statements remained touched by the ambition of “profane poetics” and concerned with the interests of a “courtly audience,” even as she practiced (for example) “systematic meditation on the life of Christ” (Cave 254).

Cave describes Gabrielle de Coignard as a private poet who firmly made the latter choice, and would not do so without guidance. Thus the long poems on the Passion¹⁹ are “based on Granada’s *Vray chemin*, since the principal meditative developments are much the same, and there are passages in which Granada is echoed verbally” (*ibid.*). They present “passages in which the theological or moral ‘message’ is brought out” directly, but “this analytic aspect is secondary in [their] overall economy,” which is dominated by “description and narration” of dramatic moments (“the descent from the Cross, the Pietà

¹⁸ Both the Toulouse (1594) and Tournon (1595) editions print Coignard’s poems in italics; stanzas are marked by indentation only. Winn, however, separates stanzas with blank lines (and removes the indentation), in long poems and sonnets alike. Because we are quoting from her edition, we will respect this format, which, as a result, differs from that of many other poems quoted here, whether from original editions or from modern editors who maintain the original layout (Ferguson’s edition of Marquets, mentioned below on p. 15, n. 31, is an example of this).

¹⁹ Such as *Discours sur la Passion de Nostre Sauveur Jesus-Christ* (860 lines, Coignard 461-520), *La Mort et la Passion de Nostre Seigneur sur le Mont de Calvaire* (316 lines, 520-538), and *Complainte de la Vierge Marie* (488 lines, 538-567).

and the embalming”) calling for the “application of the senses”²⁰ recommended by Granada: Cave also argues, however, that passages of this sort exhibit something more: the poet’s own “evident inclination towards pathetic emotion” (Cave 255).

As a result, Coignard’s “representation of the silent dialogue between Christ and Mary is far more extensive than Granada’s; and the sufferings and lamentations of the Virgin absorb much of her attention,” in the *Complainte de la Vierge Marie* especially, where “the ‘âme amoureuse’ of the meditator is exhorted to affective contemplation and thence to tears” (*ibid.*). If, as Winn points out, Catholics “font dans la vie spirituelle un usage constant des sens imaginatifs, qu’ils considèrent comme le seul mode d’accès à Dieu” (Coignard 69)²¹, Coignard’s long poems are certainly not afraid to push this “usage” as far as they can. But Cave thinks that another element is involved, and that there is something ambiguous to all this emotion:

[...] the blood and tears of Christ are readily associated with **decorative stylistic effects**, involving the grass and flowers of the surrounding landscape. Thus the emotional effect of the meditation is on such occasions defined in a special way: Gabrielle is showing, in embryo, **a taste for *mignardise*, for a mingling of elegiac emotion with a natural setting full of grace and sweetness**. She seldom exploits this mode to the full: her style suggests **a sober, if not hostile, attitude to profane poetics**. Nevertheless, there is at least one passage – an extension of the Pietà – in which she makes a wholly unambiguous use of **the ‘style doux-coulant’ so popular with admirers of the Pléiade, associating it once more with a highly affective and feminine devotion**^[22]. Here the hyperbolic description of the tears of the Virgin and her companions, the extended simile, the diminutives (*avettes, fleurettes*), the constant emphasis on *douceur* (*gracieux, doucement, douceur, douces*), compose a mood in

²⁰ Kaiser points out that Granada’s own prose style relies on images chosen to strike the imagination: readers will struggle to keep back tears, for example, when contemplating the graphic pain that they, as sinners, made their Savior endure (Kaiser 39). Also effective is the massive use of adjectives and adjectival participles (e.g. *sanglant, rougissant*, which “saturate the atmosphere with redness,” Cave 28), of repetition and duplication. Like Cave, Kaiser suggests that Coignard is particularly drawn to the more cruel and poignant scenes of the Passion in the four poems she dedicates to the subject (Kaiser 35).

²¹ By contrast with the Protestants, who emphasize the need to subject them to “surveillance” (Winn, in Coignard 69, and n. 68), so as to make sure that they are guided by the “internal” senses of the soul, already illuminated by grace. Winn also reminds us that “Ignace de Loyola propose l’application des cinq sens comme cinquième et dernier exercice du premier jour de la seconde semaine” (*ibid.*).

²² The *Complainte* is widely excerpted in Cave’s “Appendix,” pp. 312-319; the most relevant passage appears on p. 317 (lns. 341-374, Coignard 560-562).

which the outraged body of Christ is **contemplated not for moral or theological profit, but for the sake of the emotional indulgence, and indeed the delight, of the reader.** [...] although she has evident affiliations with the main current of devotional practice, Gabrielle nevertheless prefers **a devotional style that is far from ascetic**, and in which a certain **ambiguity of emotional experience** is, no doubt unconsciously, maintained.

(Cave 256-257; *emphasis in bold ours*)

While the use of pathos is recommended (by Granada) for the “imaginative” phase of meditation, there appears to be a tension, if not a contradiction, between the emotional “delight” triggered by the poetic means of this pathos and the poet’s own “sober” if not “ascetic” outlook. Winn, as we saw, argues that the *Vers chrestiens* tend to renounce the aesthetic concerns still exhibited by the *Sonnets*: it would seem that the purge is not complete, and that the *Vers* develop their own version of a literary temptation. One may ask, therefore, whether and to what extent it is possible to use the “imaginative” and “affective” powers of poetry for the purpose of meditation *without* unleashing, at the same time, the kind of pleasure and self-regard that “profane poetics” indulges in.

Our thesis will ask a slightly different question. Instead of looking at pleasure as a subjective, aesthetic effect (whether “unconscious” or not) of the representation of suffering in Coignard’s great Passion narratives, we will focus on poetic passages in which pleasure as such is mentioned or represented, as part of the very substance of a poem’s “theological or moral message.” We are referring to the “delight” of being united with God after all pain has ceased; in other words, to the ultimate “happiness” that we should all be pursuing according to Rev. Piper. To be clear, this focus will not lead us to forget or ignore the question of pain. On the contrary, the latter will remain central to our undertaking, because, as Darrin McMahon has argued, a distinctive trait of Christianity is precisely that it aims for a kind of happiness that is only attainable *through* suffering:

Steeped as it is in the primary narrative of suffering, the Christian religion may fail to call happiness immediately to mind. It is, after all, a tradition that has been described appreciatively as the “worship of sorrow,” a tradition whose foremost symbol is an instrument of torture. And yet these same facts notwithstanding, the promise of happiness was absolutely central to the early development and reception of the faith. “We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; [...] as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,” the apostle Paul writes to his brethren in Corinth sometime in the early 50s CE. In effect, this was the central paradox of the early Christian experience: The “good news” of Christ’s message was precisely the promise of redemption through suffering – and through suffering **the passage to an eternal felicity different from anything ever known**. We need only to think of Christ’s frequent injunction to “rejoice and be glad” to appreciate that the appeal of this new faith lay in more than just its invitation to participate in the sacrifice of its founder.

(McMahon 76-77)²³

Christ (*Christus*), ‘the anointed one,’ appeared as

the long-awaited savior who would lead in a direction whose path was familiar but whose destination was uncharted. In doing so, he revealed a new truth, a new kingdom, and not least, a new happiness. In form, content, and many of its words, the beatific promise was recognizable. But it was also unmistakably new.

(McMahon 82)

The originality of this Christian approach to happiness is illustrated by the “Beatitudes” (found in Matthew 5:3-11 and Luke 6:20-23), which posit a new (and complex) understanding of the means to achieve this desired end. The latter

was partly familiar to readers of Jewish scripture. But what were the followers of Jesus to make of the means, the steps that he traced for all who would go happily in the way that led through him? Whereas earlier sages, both Israelite and Greek, had counseled the avoidance of suffering as a condition of happiness – urging their followers to flee, scorn, or simply bear it like Job – Christ recommends suffering’s active embrace. **The emphasis is on the promise of future reward:** Those who endure pain now **will be granted pleasure** in a time to come.

(McMahon 83)

The pleasures promised as “reward” by the Christian notion of Heaven had long been familiar indeed to the faithful. In the 16th century, they were also one of the touchstones of the dispute between Catholics and Protestants²⁴; yet both sides, seeking to

²³ McMahon, Darrin M. *Happiness: A History*. New York: Grove Press, 2006.

²⁴ A key difficulty was the idea of reward itself. Catholicism had to check and “reform” its tendency to think of the rewarding and the reward in calculated and material terms; hence the importance of the parable of the “eleventh-hour workers” paid as much as the first-hour ones (Mt. 20:1-15). Calvinism fought even harder against the very logic of the notion, so as to make it agree with its doctrine of justification and predestination. Thus Calvin rejected the idea of “salary” for that of “heritage”: we will receive what God

showcase such delights, had a lot of material to work with. Whether understood literally or figuratively, images of a paradise full of white garments, crowns, and treasures, offering peace, joy, repose, and healing, quenching thirst with the water of life, satiating hunger with a banquet, pleasing ear and soul with a new and joyful song, would come to the mind of a believer of either confession imagining Heaven²⁵. Yet at the same time, believers recalled Saint Paul's words in 1 Corinthians, which underline the ineffable and *unimaginable* nature of what one shall encounter in Heaven: "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him'" (ESV, 1 Cor. 2:9)²⁶.

has *promised* to us, *even though* we do not deserve it. "Quant est de ce mot Loyer, il ne faut pas qu'il nous induise à faire nos œuvres cause de nostre salut. [...] le Royaume des cieux n'est pas **salaire** de serviteurs, mais **heritage** d'enfans: duquel **jouyront seulement ceux que Dieu a adoptez pour ses enfans**: et n'en jouyront pour autre cause, que pour ceste adoption. [...] Christ et ses Apostres se donnent garde que **nous ne referions point la beatitude eternelle aux œuvres**, mais à l'adoption de Dieu. [...] le Seigneur remunere les œuvres des fideles par **les mesmes benefices qu'il leur avoit ja donnez**, devant qu'ils eussent pensé à rien faire" (Calvin, Jean. *Institution de la religion chrestienne, mise en quatre livres et distinguee par chapitres en ordre et methode bien propre*, III, XVIII, 2. Geneva: Jaques Bourgeois, 1562, p. 506 <https://www.e-rara.ch/gep_g/content/zoom/1130045>). So the perspective of celestial delights should not flatter us as a measure of our merits, but comfort us as a "recompense" (in the sense of compensation, *not* reward), granted by God's "misericorde," "pour les miseres, tribulations et opprobres que nous endurons en terre" (p. 508).

²⁵ All these images appear in the Bible with reference to Heaven or the New Jerusalem. Paradise (Lk. 23:43 and Rev. 2:7), white garments (Rev. 3:5, 4:4, 6:11, and 7:9) [Rev. 19:8 and 14 refer to fine linen, bright and pure, symbolizing the righteous deeds of the saints], crowns (Jas. 1:12, II Tim. 4:8, and Rev. 2:10, 3:11, 4:10), treasures (Mt. 6:20 and 19:21), rewards (Mt. 5:12 and Rev. 11:18), recompense (Rev. 22:12), heritage (Rev. 21:7), peace and joy (Is. 65: 17-19 and Rom. 14:17), repose, rest from labor (Mt. 11:25, Rev. 14:13), healing (Rev. 22:2), river of life (Rev. 22:1), springs of living water (Rev. 7:17), quenched thirst (Rev. 21:6 and 22:17), no more hunger or thirst (Rev. 7:16), fruits (Rev. 22:2), a meal or wedding feast (Mt. 8:11, 22:2, Lk. 13:29, Rev. 3:20, Rev. 19:9), and a new song (Rev. 5:9 and 14:3).

²⁶ Saint Augustine echoes this message in *On Christian Doctrine*, which reflects upon it in light of the current comforts of the Holy Spirit and the gifts that make our tasks delightful: "And what tongue can tell, or what imagination can conceive, the reward [*praemium*] He will bestow at the last, when we consider that for our comfort in this earthly journey He has given us so freely of His Spirit, that in the adversities of this life we may retain our confidence in, and love for, Him whom as yet we see not; and that He has also given to each gifts suitable for the building up of His Church, that we may do what He points out as right to be done, not only without a murmur, but even with delight?" (I.xv.1) (Saint Augustine. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Vol. II St. Augustin's [sic] City of God and Christian Doctrine*. Ed. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. Trans. Marcus Dods. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Co., 1887. <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2053>>).

The paradox raised by these promised pleasures – in that they speak to our imagination but are supposed to exceed and transcend it – is a commonplace of Christian literature. Thus Granada posits that the life and Passion of Jesus “se peuvent figurer en imagination” (the latter in all its emotional horror), whereas

y a d’autres choses qui appartiennent plus à l’esprit, qu’à l’imagination, comme lors que nous pensons és benefices de Dieu, ou en sa bonté et misericorde, ou en quelque autre de ses perfections: et telle maniere de meditation s’appelle intellectuelle, et l’autre imaginaire.²⁷

Granada counts Heaven (and Hell) among the things that can and must be imagined. Yet the concept of the supreme good located in God and bestowed on us in Salvation lies *beyond* the power of imagination and might ideally, therefore, exercise the intellect only. In practice, it is hardly possible to announce, to human ears, “benefices” akin to a supreme delight in purely intellectual terms: we have to imagine what we cannot imagine.

Gabrielle de Coignard, a devout Catholic, does not fail to associate Heaven with the pleasures listed above²⁸. Yet in a piece aptly entitled *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle* (which will be the focus of our last chapter), the poet echoes 1 Cor. 2:9, Is. 35:10²⁹, Rev. 7:17, and Rev. 21:4³⁰ to remind us that

Il n’est possible aux mortels
D’exprimer la moindre chose,
Qui est aux lieux éternels

²⁷ Granada, *Le vray chemin*, quoted by Cave (*Devotional Poetry* 26); see also our Chapter V, p. 335.

²⁸ White robes (S. 120, 12), a banquet (S. 62, 12), crowns (S. 23, 14; S. 76, 14), heritage (S. 99, 1; S. 104, 4; *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle*, 148, Coignard 346), rewards (S. 35, 7; S. 54, 8), healing (*De la gloire*, 81-82, 342), a quenched thirst (*Les huict Beatitudes*, 16, 302; *De la gloire*, 201-204, 350), fruit (S. 39, 8; Coignard most often uses the word “fruit” when referring to Jesus), satisfaction/contentment (*De la gloire*, 113-116, 165-168, 177, 344, 348, 349), joy (S. 21, 14; S. 38, 4; S. 107, 4; *De la gloire*, 44 and 56, 340, 341), felicity (*De la gloire*, 60, 341), jubilation / “liesse” (*De la gloire*, 74, 342), sweetness (*De la gloire*, 155, 347; *Discours sur la Passion de nostre Sauveur Jesus-Christ*, 80, 466), a new and lovely song (*De la gloire*, 105-108, 343).

²⁹ “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (ESV, Is. 35:10) (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. ESV Text Edition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

³⁰ “[...] and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (ESV, Rev. 7:17). “[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (ESV, Rev. 21:4).

Où toute joye repose.
(Ins. 53-56, Coignard 340-341)

while also expressing her certainty that

[Dieu] nous remplira le coeur
De tout plaisir et liesse,
Esloignant de nous la peur,
L'amertume et la tristesse.
(73-76, 342)

even though she knows that

L'oeil n'a jamais regardé,
Ny l'oreille peu entendre
Le bien qui nous est gardé,
Si nous desirons le prendre.
(93-96, 343)

and cannot be sure (has to pray fervently) that

Les desreglées amours
De ces choses corruptibles,
Ne m'empeschent point le cours
Des biens incomprehensibles.
(205-208, 350)

One of Coignard's predecessors in this genre, Anne de Marquets, had developed the same argument in her own *Sonnets spirituels*³¹:

³¹ Marquets, Anne de. *Sonnets spirituels*. Ed. Gary Ferguson. Geneva: Droz, 1997. The *Sonnets spirituels* were only published in 1605, after the author's (and Coignard's) death, although they perhaps circulated beforehand, which may or may not have allowed our poet to become acquainted with them. Be this as it may, Coignard, as we will see, was likely familiar with Marquets' earlier work. In 1562, this nun from the Dominican convent in Poissy had published her *Sonnets, prières et devises en forme de pasquins pour l'assemblée de Messieurs les Prélats et Docteurs, tenue à Poissy, M. D. LXI* (Paris: G. Morel), inspired by the famous "Colloque" and, in particular, by the Catholic positions defended there by the Cardinal of Lorraine, to whom (in an epistle dated August 13, 1562) she dedicated the work, which was also praised by Ronsard and Dorat in liminary poems (the second edition – Paris: Chez la veufve G. Morel, 1566 – is available from Gallica, <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k72288p>>). Two years later, in June of 1568, Marquets dedicated a French translation of Marcantonio Flaminio's (Flaminius) *De Rebus Divinis Carmina* (Latin verse published eighteen years prior, in 1550) to Marguerite de Valois. Appended to the 23 poems translated from Flaminio were 55 additional pieces, which all appear to have been composed by Marquets herself: 11 *cantiques*, 40 *sonnets*, 1 *hymne* (in Latin and in French), and 3 more works in Latin, accompanied by their French translations. The collection was published in 1569 with the title: *Les Divines poësies de Marc Antoine Flaminus: Contenant diverses Prières, Meditations, Hymnes, et actions de graces à Dieu: Mises en François, avec le Latin respondant l'un à l'autre. Avec plusieurs Sonnets et Cantiques, ou Chansons Spirituelles pour louer Dieu. A Madame Marguerite, sœur du Roy treschrestien*

Puisque par maints ennus et tribulations
 Il nous faut parvenir au regne perdurable,
 Et puisque Jesus Christ, nostre chef honorable,
 Y est entré par mort et persecutions,
 Ne craignons de souffrir, veu que les passions
 Qu'on pourroit endurer au monde miserable,
 Ne sont dignes de l'heur et gloire incomparable,
 Dont Dieu veut qu'avec luy, sans fin nous jouissions.
 L'œil humain n'a peu voir, ny l'aureille oncq entendre,
 Ny le cœur ny l'esprit n'ont sceu jamais comprendre
 Ce loyer eternal qui nous attend ès cieux.
 Qui n'aspireront donc, par desir indicible,
 A quicter la prison de la chair corruptible,
 Pour aller posseder un bien si precieux?^[32]
 ("Pour le quatriesme dimanche d'apres la trinité."
 S. CCLXXXI, Marquets 258)

This caveat – drawing a line between spiritual and temporal pleasure – is always implied; but not every poem feels compelled to articulate it. Thus, in Coignard's Sonnet III, the poet strikingly commands her own desires (her "mignons") to forgo "choses temporelles" and fly to Heaven ahead of her own soul, so as to make

[...] un grand amas des eternels plaisirs,
 Pour festoyer là haut mon ame retournée.
 (13-14, Coignard 142)

But how pure is the concept of the "eternels plaisirs" *anticipated* in this way³³? In Sonnet CI, the young widow admits that she aspires to Heaven because her late husband's soul

S'en volla dans le ciel par la divine grace,
 Et portant mes amours, mon coeur et mes plaisirs,
 Aux pieds du souverain attacha mes desirs,
 Voila pourquoy depuis j'aspire à ceste place.
 (11-14, 261)

Charles IX. *Chez Nicolas Chesneau, rue S. Jaques, à l'enseigne de l'Escu de Froben, et du Chesne verd. 1569. Avec Privilege du Roy.* (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1569. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71875r?rk=64378;0>>).

³² Ferguson refers to "Rom. 8:18-23 (Epître) et I Cor. 2:9" (Marquets, *Sonets spirituels* 258, n. 1).

³³ Sonnet XXXIX, addressed to the Virgin, shows the opposite movement: currently overwhelmed with "amere tristesse" and the evidence of her sins, the speaker fears that without Mary's assistance, "Je perdray le doux fruct des celestes douceurs" (ln. 14, Coignard 186), whatever they may be.

The last line is, of necessity, as ambiguous as it is moving, since the poet both assumes that her “plaisirs” and “desirs” have been given over to God by virtue of her virtuous husband’s death *and* suggests that they remain, emotionally, connected with the man she loved and with whom she also hopes to be reunited³⁴.

Less ambiguous, in this regard, is the poet’s occasional embrace of earthly sensations as such, when they offer an opportunity to praise the Creator:

J’escoute le doux bruyt des coulantes fontaines,
Et des doux oyseletz les differents accords,
Voyant tant de beautez je considere lors
De ce Dieu eternel les graces souveraines.
(S. XCVI, 5-8, 254)

Here the poet’s attention and evocative powers focus on a country scene, experienced directly by the senses, instead of an episode from the Gospels brought to life “par le regard de l’imagination.” Even in a case like this, however, the question remains: how do we account for the difference between enjoying the pleasures that God gives us in this life³⁵ and “enjoying,” in advance as it were, the pleasures that await us in Heaven?

Rife with ambiguities, ironies, and misunderstandings, the debate on the nature of “eternal felicity” never closes. For example, in her study of “Mouvement et repos dans la cité de Dieu”³⁶, Pascale Chiron describes the notion in terms of repose for the elect, and

³⁴ This hope, and the ambiguity it contains, would be familiar to readers of Petrarch: “*O felice quel di che, del terreno / carcere uscendo, lasci rotta et sparta / questa mia grave et frale et mortal gonna, / et da sì folte tenebre mi parta, / volando tanto su nel bel sereno, / ch’i’ veggia il mio Signore et la mia donna!*”; “Happy the day that I shall from my earthly / prison escape, leaving broken and scattered / this heavy, frail garment of my own life, / and I shall take my leave from sad thick shadows, / soaring through clearness of bright skies so high / **that I may see my Lord and see my Lady**” (S. 349, 9-14. *The Canzoniere, or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Edited and translated by Mark Musa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 482-483). Henceforth all Italian and English quotations from the *Canzoniere* will come from this edition.

³⁵ It is striking that one sonnet (XVI, Coignard 159-160) celebrating the beauties of Toulouse and the Garonne is the only one, in the entire collection, that appears devoid of any religious dimension.

³⁶ Chiron, Pascale, “Mouvement et repos dans la cité de Dieu” in *Cité des hommes, cité de Dieu. Travaux en l’honneur de Daniel Ménager*. Geneva: Droz, 2003, pp. 591-601.

then asks: “Mais ce repos des élus n’est-il pas la source d’une erreur de perspective qui tendrait à faire penser que le paradis est un lieu ‘fade et monotone’?”³⁷ She proceeds to highlight excerpts from *Aucassin et Nicolette* and François Rabelais’s *Pantagruel*, both of which offer a skeptical attitude toward the expected perfection of the Christian paradise (or, at any rate, our understanding of it):

Une telle vision est mise en scène de manière provocatrice par Rabelais et avant lui l’auteur d’*Aucassin et Nicolette*: Gargantua semble espérer mieux pour sa femme que ce lieu trop sage du paradis:

Ma femme est morte, et bien, par Dieu, je ne la resusciteray pas par mes pleurs; elle est bien, elle est en paradis pour le moins, si mieulx ne est^[38].

L’édition de Guy Demerson^[39] choisit d’interpréter le “si” comme une conjonction introduisant l’hypothèse, et non comme un élément renforçant le discours qui aurait le sens de “certes” (les deux valeurs sont possibles en moyen français). “Cette plaisanterie d’allure anodine suggère que la mythologie chrétienne ne donne peut-être pas les meilleurs symboles de la vie dans l’au-delà”^[40]. Le paradis chrétien est doté de moins d’attraits que les Champs Elysées des anciens; le célèbre passage sur la résurrection d’Epistémon au chapitre XXX de *Pantagruel* nous en donne encore la preuve. *Aucassin et Nicolette* aboutissait à une conclusion semblable, le paradis présentant finalement beaucoup moins d’attrait que l’enfer:

en paradis ne vont fors tex gens con je vous dirai. Il i vont ci viel prestre et cil viel clop et cil manke qui tote jor et tote nuit crompt devant ces autex et en ces viés croutes [...] en infer voil jou aler, car en infer vont li bel clerc, et li bel cevalier [...] et s’i vont les beles dames cortaises [...]^[41].

(Chiron 595)

Coignard’s poetry, to be sure, conveys no such skepticism concerning the repose she hopes to enjoy in Heaven; clearly, pleasure figures in her notion of the condition to

³⁷ Epithets borrowed from Jacques Le Goff, *La Naissance du Purgatoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1981, p. 484 (Chiron 595).

³⁸ Quoted from Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chap. III. Ed. V. L. Saulnier. Geneva: Droz, 1965, p. 22. “Il est peu probable,” comments Chiron, “que par ‘paradis’ Rabelais entende un paradis intermédiaire, lieu d’attente des justes après la mort. En 1439, le Concile de Florence avait en effet condamné cette doctrine du lieu d’attente que l’on assimilait au paradis terrestre” (Chiron 595). Note the manner in which Gargantua describes his late wife’s present activity and condition: she prays to God on behalf of her mortal acquaintances, she is blessed and very happy, she no longer worries about human miseries. The fuller excerpt reads: “Ma femme est morte: et bien, par dieu (*da jurandi*) je ne la resusciteray pas par mes pleurs: **elle est bien, elle est en paradis pour le moins si mieulx ne est: elle prie dieu pour nous, elle est bien heureuse, elle ne se soucie plus de nos misères et calamitez**, autant nous en pend à l’œil, dieu gard le demourant, il me fault penser d’en trouver une aultre” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, “Chapitre III: Du dueil que mena Gargantua de la mort de sa femme Badebec.” *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Mireille Huchon and François Moreau. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994, p. 226).

³⁹ Quoted from Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, éd. G. Demerson. Paris: Seuil, 1973, p. 226.

⁴⁰ Éd. Demerson, *ibid.*, n. 8.

⁴¹ Quoted from *Aucassin et Nicolette*. Ed. Jean Dufournet. Paris: Flammarion, 1984, p. 58.

which she aspires, and in view of which she endeavors to carry out her present physical, intellectual, and spiritual life. The key questions concern the sort of pleasure thus presupposed, and the symbols employed to suggest it: are they sufficiently attractive? are they too ambiguous? Variations of the noun “plaisir” appear 53 times throughout the *Œuvres chrestiennes*⁴²: Coignard writes of various worldly pleasures to be rejected, yet also reflects upon acceptable delights experienced in her lifetime and, as we have just seen, expects Heavenly bliss of a nature that is unimaginable (yet imagined), and supposed to be exponentially greater; which leads one to ask whether it remains comparable to (even though so different from) what human life experiences as pleasure.

Our goal, therefore, is to study the nature, value, and role of pleasure as conveyed in Coignard’s poetic works. Specifically, we will ask whether the 16th-century Toulousaine’s outlook and her literary work can be described as hedonistic – and if so, to what extent. Is the poetess, as understood through her poetry, drawn by pleasure and pursuing pleasure, and is the net sum of pleasure (at least implicitly) communicated as being her highest good – the ultimate object for the sake of which she carries out all other acts, including the act of writing devotional poetry? Or is pleasure merely an instrumental good, and the promise of pleasure(s) merely one of the many psychological and rhetorical

⁴² 26 sonnets (out of 129 total) and 9 longer poems (out of 21) show at least one occurrence of the noun form. We count 26 instances of “plaisir” (10 in the sonnets, 16 in the longer poems), 25 instances of “plaisirs” (16 and 9), and 2 instances of “desplaisir” (1 in each); thus 53 instances in all, found in only 35 of the 150 poems composed by Coignard. The number of occurrences of the substantive is negligibly higher in the sonnets (27) than in the longer poems (26); the same goes for the use of the word “plaisir” in its singular form over its plural form (26 and 25 respectively). On the other hand, the word “plaisir” (singular and plural) greatly outweighs the antonym “desplaisir.”

devices used by the poet⁴³ to attract and maintain her own – and her reader’s – attention, to give comfort and encouragement to those facing the prospect of suffering, and to arouse godly affection throughout a demanding spiritual exercise, during an era of devotional revival initiatives encouraged by the Catholic Church? Moreover, is Coignard’s notion of pleasure strictly reflective of her historical and cultural moment, as well as of the practice of devotional poets in her time⁴⁴, or does it represent an original contribution on her part, let alone one that tests certain cultural and poetic norms?

To determine whether or not Coignard and her work can be called hedonistic (and meant to appeal to its readers’ hedonistic inclinations), we will need to explore “hedonism” as a concept and philosophical tradition, as well as various conceptions of the nature and meaning of pleasure – *plaisir* in French, *voluptas* in Latin, *hēdonē* in

⁴³ To clarify: the “poetic persona” posited by devotional poetry refers to the poet herself and/or to a more generic believer, for whom the poet serves as a stand-in. Either way, the “persona” is really trying to be the person here – not in the sense a Montaigne would understand it, yet not as a fictional artifact either. This, in a case like Coignard’s, raises the question of the relevance of gender to the person thus presented. We will specify it as appropriate, speaking on occasion of a “female poet.” Cf. the choices faced by French scholars such as Colette Winn (who uses the term *poétesse*) or Audrey Gilles-Chikhaoui, who favors “les substantifs féminins *autrice* et *poétrice*, lorsque le genre des auteurs et des poètes féminins aura son importance dans l’occurrence de cette fonction. Le mot *poétrice* est par ailleurs employé par Hélienne de Crenne dans ses *Epistres familières et invectives* et repris dans l’ensemble du XVI^e siècle, en particulier pour évoquer Sappho. *Autrice*, quant à lui, est employé dans le sens de ‘femme écrivain’ par Marie de Romieu dans son *Brief discours: que l’excellence des femmes surpasse celle de l’homme* (1581). Sur l’histoire de ce mot, cf. Aurore Evain, “Histoire d’autrice, de l’époque latine à nos jours,” *SÉMÉION-Travaux de sémiologie*, 6, 2008” (Gilles-Chikhaoui, Audrey. *D’une voix l’autre: plaisirs féminins dans la littérature française de la Renaissance*. Ph.D. thesis. Ottawa: Université d’Ottawa, 2014, p. 2). Marie-Laurentine Caetano also uses the terms *autrice* and *poétesse* in her own dissertation (*‘Moy qui suis, ô Dieu, ton humble chanteresse’: Anthologie de la poésie spirituelle et féminine du XVI^e siècle*. Ph.D. thesis. Lyon: Université de Lyon 2, GRAC, 2012. <<https://grac.univ-lyon2.fr/anthologie-de-la-poesie-spirituelle-feminine-du-xvie-siecle-en-francais-685397.kjsp>>). While Coignard refrains from referring to herself as a poet in the full sense, she does call herself God’s “humble chanteresse” (“Poésie spirituelle,” ln. 37, Coignard 306).

⁴⁴ For example, the language quoted above from the poem *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle* echoes that of Anne de Marquets, used years before in her own *Sonets spirituels*.

Greek⁴⁵—, which have been at the center of speculation and debate among philosophies, hedonistic and otherwise, for over two millennia⁴⁶.

We shall therefore begin, in Chapter I, with a brief history of the term “plaisir” and of the notion of “hedonism,” distinguishing between three varieties of the latter. Then, for the sake of illustrating the various roles that pleasure can play in one’s notion of humankind’s chief end (at times referred to generically as the *summum bonum*, and specified at other times as *eudaimonia* or *beatitudo*), we shall review the attitudes of several well-known Western philosophical traditions (some hedonistic, others not) toward the nature and role (be it obstacle, conduit, or end-goal) of pleasure. It is upon having presented those attitudes and then examined how some of them were incorporated into the Christian doctrine that we shall proceed, in Chapter II, to give an overview of Coignard’s life, times, and art, adding a few preliminary considerations on her own ethical outlook as well as on her sense of her “calling” as a Christian poet.

Through a series of close, comparative readings, Chapters III and IV will then focus on Coignard’s own conception of the “souverain bien,” the role(s) played by pleasure therein, and their representation or enactment in her poetry (her sonnets chiefly),

⁴⁵ Although “the word ἡδονή [*hēdonē*] is often translated solely as ‘pleasure,’” it can also be translated “as ‘delight’, ‘joy’, or ‘enjoyment’ because the Greek word ἡδονή refers to any physical, emotional, or mental state that is filled with sweetness (ἡδύς)” (note 2, Epicurus, “Principal Doctrines, 1-40.” *Principal Doctrines*. Trans. Peter Saint-Andre. N. p., 2008. Lexundria.com: A Digital Library of Classical Antiquity. <https://lexundria.com/epic_kd/1-40/psa>). As for the word *hedonism*, it translates the Greek *hēdonismos* (pleasure + ism). According to the TLFi, the Greek term ἡδονή is translated into French as “plaisir, agrément, jouissance” (*Trésor de la langue française informatisée* (TLFi). Paris: CNRS Editions, 2004. <<http://circe.atilf.fr/etymologie/hedonisme>>).

⁴⁶ For a helpful synoptic history and typology of hedonistic philosophies, see Dan Weijers’ contribution “Hedonism” to the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Weijers briefly identifies the earliest known written record of hedonism, which dates back to 600 BCE and is attributed to the Indian philosophical tradition of the Cārvāka – philosophers who “advocated skepticism and Hedonistic Egoism” (n. p.). The author then jumps to the 5th and 4th centuries BCE by describing the Cyrenaics – a group of hedonistic philosophers with whom Western scholars are likely more familiar. (Weijers, Dan. “Hedonism.” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. n.d. <<https://www.iep.utm.edu/hedonism/>>.)

in light of the poetic doctrines and practices that underlie the works of some of her contemporaries: secular poets (of the “Petrarchan” persuasion mostly) in Chapter III, which studies how Coignard both assimilates and rejects what they wrote on love, suffering, and pleasure; and her predecessor in the devotional genre, Anne de Marquets, in Chapter IV, which shows that Coignard is far more reticent than Marquets when it comes to making rhetorical use either of the supreme “bien” named as such, or of the many goods and pleasurable effects that it is supposed to contain.

In Chapter V, which focuses mostly on Coignard’s longer poems and on *De la gloire et felicité de la vie eternelle* in particular, we shall examine how the form of the latter serves its doctrinal content and devotional objective regarding the condition of the elect. With respect to the *summum bonum*, the supreme pleasure it entails, our ability to express either, the reasons why we should even try do so, and the dangers inherent in such an endeavor, *De la gloire*’s message – as is the case with most other religious subjects tackled by the *Œuvres chrestiennes* – is massively borrowed from *Le vray chemin*. Yet while Coignard’s “contemplation” of the Passion, for example, strives to relay Granada’s images and to amplify their pathos, the opposite is true of *De la gloire*, which systematically condenses, abridges, and attenuates what the Dominican friar wrote, with his usual thoroughness and prolixity, on this particular topic. It seems that the highest, most potentially-stirring devotional subject – which asks us to contemplate no less than Heaven as such in order to taste its “felicity” – is also, for Coignard, the one that must be approached with the lightest touch. It is this lightness – the successful product of poetic restraint – that we shall attempt to analyze, so as to show what makes it, in our

poet's eyes, the best, most appropriately pleasant expression of the inexpressible *eudaimonia* procured by eternal life.

CHAPTER I DOCTRINES OF PLEASURE

Three meanings of the word “plaisir”: activity, affective state, and causal object

It is necessary to recognize from the outset that the word “plaisir” is a hypernym. This characteristic provides an author with the freedom to use the word in a variety of ways. In turn, the reader may be enticed to evaluate the word’s meaning and ask, for example, whether the term “plaisir” in a given passage is intended to carry ameliorative or pejorative connotations; or whether the word portrays pleasure itself as possessing intrinsic or extrinsic value; or whether it essentially refers to a physical, intellectual, or spiritual pleasure. This characteristic also avails the word “plaisir” to ambiguities, which, for example, a devout female poet could exploit as a (perhaps acceptable or inconspicuous) means of transgression within her literary work. Or, such ambiguities could result in the authors’ preference to use more precise, specific, unambiguous terms instead of the (potentially banal) word “plaisir.”

In the *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, Alain Rey states that the use of the word “plaisir” as a noun in Old French proceeds from its early use as a verb. While the noun form (first attested in the French language in 1080) remains in use, the verb “plaire” would come to replace the verb “plaisir” in the 13th century. Prior to 1349, “plaisir” as a noun seems only to have signified “ce qu’il plaît à quelqu’un de faire,

d'ordonner" (Rey *et al.* 1537)⁴⁷. Two common expressions in which this signification was understood include "faire plaisir à" (*i.e.*, rendering a service to or obliging someone⁴⁸) and "bon plaisir" (*ibid.*). However, as early as 1349, the noun also began to be used to signify "une sensation ou émotion agréable" (*ibid.*). This more recent meaning of "plaisir" in its noun form would be used in expressions such as "prendre plaisir à" and "pour son plaisir" (*ibid.*). The *Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé* adopts this recent meaning of the word "plaisir," stating that it is an "État affectif agréable"⁴⁹, but it modifies the iteration by adding that it is also "durable," as provided by "la satisfaction d'un besoin, d'un désir ou l'accomplissement d'une activité gratifiante" (TLFi)⁵⁰. Thus, the agreeable and potentially-lasting affective state called "plaisir" is understood as arising specifically when a need or a desire is satisfied, or when a gratifying activity has been carried out to its end or fulfillment.

By 1482, "le mot a développé par métonymie le sens concret (*un, des plaisirs*)" (*ibid.*). In other words, the term "plaisir" is no longer only used to designate an activity, or an agreeable physical or mental sensation, but also to designate, together with it, the object (including human beings) causing that agreeable sensation to arise within an individual. This additional use is one of the factors that sometimes make it difficult to

⁴⁷ Rey, Alain, Marianne Tomi, Tristan Hordé, and Chantal Tanet. "Plaisir." *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française: contenant les mots français en usage et quelques autres délaissés, avec leur origine proche et lointaine*. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1995. pp. 1537-1538.

⁴⁸ It is not until 1669 that the phrase "faire plaisir" is attested as meaning "être agréable" (Rey *et al.*, 1537).

⁴⁹ This understanding of pleasure as an emotion (*i.e.*, pleasure being an agreeable affective state) is the same that Marie-Pierre Camus brings to her study of the value and distribution of the nouns *plaisir*, *joie*, *félicité*, and *liesse* throughout the poetic works of Marguerite de Navarre. (Camus, Marie-Pierre. "Le vocabulaire du plaisir dans les poésies de Marguerite de Navarre." In *Et c'est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble: Hommage à Jean Dufournet*. Vol. 1. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1993, pp. 309-319). Camus includes, in her corpus, Marguerite de Navarre's plays written in verse.

⁵⁰ "Plaisir." *Trésor de la langue française informatisée* (TLFi). Paris: CNRS Editions, 2004. <<http://stella.atilf.fr/Dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/visusel.exe?12;s=3943993710;r=1;nat=;sol=1;>>.

shed light on the exact semantic nuances conveyed by the word “plaisir” in literary works. On the other hand, it also reinforces the intimate dynamic between the object causing pleasure and the subject experiencing that pleasure. At the very least, it helps us understand how God, as the object causing an agreeable sensation or emotion within an individual, can simply be called “mon plaisir” by Coignard in Sonnet LXII (3, Coignard 213) or how God can be described as “de tous mes plaisirs, la joye perdurable”⁵¹ according to her Sonnet XXV (4, Coignard 170).

An examination of the theme and language of pleasure⁵² in Coignard’s *Œuvres chrestiennes* quickly shows that the passages evoking an agreeable physical sensation also tend to evoke an agreeable affective state and suggest a merger of the two. For example, Sonnet CXI⁵³ opens with the following quatrain, which sketches out a Ronsardian landscape:

J’avois **un grand plaisir** au plus chaut de l’esté
 De prendre les zephirs le long d’une riviere,
 Et soubz un orme espais à baisser la paupiere
 En escoutant le bruit du doux flot argenté.
 (1-4, 272)

In this case, “plaisir” implies the agreeable emotion that issues from carrying out particular actions (“prendre les zephirs [...] baisser la paupiere / En escoutant le bruit...”).

Yet, the reason why that affective state is pleasing in this case is not so much that it satisfies the narrator’s desire to carry out those actions, but that they give rise to physical

⁵¹ “*Joie*” is itself, of course, a word used to express a state of pleasure: “État plus ou moins durable de bien-être intérieur, de plaisir, lié à des circonstances très variables selon les personnes” (“*Joie*.” *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330-1500)*. ATILF-CNRS et U. de Lorraine, 2015.

<<http://circe.atilf.fr/definition/dmf/joie?idf=dmfXhgYrmXart.revusYjXce;str=0>>).

⁵² In addition to “plaisir,” a range of terms appear throughout Coignard’s work for which pleasure (in the layering of meanings described here) serves as the underlying referent. Such is the case with (singular and plural): *repos*, *joye(s)*, *paix*, *liesse*, *contentement/s*, *delice(s)*, *félicité(z)*, *bon-heur*, *volupté(z)*, *convoitise*, *jouissance*, *gaudium*, *soulas*, *tranquillité*, *passetemps*, *douceur(s)*, and *apasts*.

⁵³ Additional examples can be found in S. XXII (3, Coignard 167) and *Hymne sur la louange de la charité* (7, Coignard 587).

sensations (relief from the summer's heat, rest for one's eyes, an intensified experience of the sweet or gentle sounds coming from the river), to a sensorial experience enhanced by the closing of the eyes. What makes the pleasure "grand" – what transforms it into an emotional state – is the absorption of desire or willed intention by sensorial experience (minus sight, traditionally considered the highest or most intellectual of the senses).

Yet the accumulated physical *and* emotional pleasure prepares the subject's mind in such a manner that she is now delighted to open her eyes, in order to further observe, evaluate, and interpret the surrounding environment, created by God. This renders it perhaps even more, but in any case differently, pleasurable, by making it the object of a new mental activity, now fully willed; an intellectual investigation that seeks to reach high above the pleasant landscape, into the sky and perhaps beyond it:

Puis dessillant les yeux, j'avois de tout costé
Mille parfaicts crayons de ceste main ouvriere,
Lors mon esprit va prendre une haute carriere,
Voulant de l'intellect fendre le ciel vouté.
(4-8, 273)

On this occasion, however, the ambition (not the pleasure) that comes to pervert the mental activity in question will eventually be punished:

Mais ainsi qu'il poursuit tout à coup le nuage,
Fit lors en se crevant tomber un tel ravage
Que mon esprit mouillé fut constraint s'abaisser.

Ha! vaine, dis-je alors, voicy le vol d'Icare,
Il ne t'appartient pas de veoir chose si rare,
Ne monte point plus haut qu'on ne te veut hausser.
(9-14, *ibid.*)

Consequently, the dynamic of pleasure that we just described could be interpreted by some as amounting to a trap. Alternatively, one may interpret it as a good that has, by no fault of its own, been perverted by the intervening vice that is ambition: there may have

been nothing wrong with opening one's eyes instead of merely enjoying sensations; but something did go wrong inside the "esprit," the "intellect," in that it was no longer content with contemplating the art of the Creator. Either way, a conceptual framework placing intellectual pleasure above its sensorial counterpart in a hierarchy of goods finds itself upended: it turns out that the former is even more dangerous than the latter.

A second example of a passage that simultaneously evokes an agreeable physical sensation and the agreeable emotion that results from the satisfaction of will appears in the longest poem of the *Œuvres chrestiennes*, in a very different context. In the mini-epic⁵⁴ entitled *Imitation de la victoire de Judich*⁵⁵, Holofernes⁵⁶ commands his faithful servant Vage to find Judith and to

Dy luy, je te supply, que pour la trop priser,
Et l'aymer chèrement je ne puis reposer,
Et qu'en autre amitié cy devant esprouvée,
Helas! une passion telle encor' n'ay trouvée.
C'estoit pour **mon plaisir** que je faisois l'amour,
Mais ores dans ce feu je brusle nuict et jour;
Je suis le prisonnier de ma belle captive,
C'est elle qui de sens et de raison me prive.
(1139-1146, 434-435)⁵⁷

The "plaisir" mentioned here implies the physical sensation that Holofernes experienced as he "faisoi[t] l'amour" in the past, although it also conveys an affective state

⁵⁴ It contains an impressive 1548 lines composed in *rimes plates*.

⁵⁵ Let us note that the ambitious and tyrannical King Nebuchadnezzar ("Roy de Babylonne," 33, Coignard 370) encountered in this poem, who seeks to be "nommé de chascun le plus puissant des Dieux" (ln. 52, p. 371 and lns. 118-120, p. 375), is criticized in terms similar to those used by Coignard in Sonnet CXI above; the poet's ambition in the latter is for knowledge of God's work, while Nebuchadnezzar's is also for power, glory and praise; and yet both wish to know the (deep) secrets of the skies. Here is how Coignard describes God's reaction to such designs: "Mais celui qui cognoit les choses plus mussées, / Renverse les dessains de ces folles pensées; / Ce grand Dieu qui voit tout en toute eternité, / Se joue des humains et de leur vanité, / Les voyant travailler d'une effrontée audace, / D'un desir sans repos de se faire une trace, / Un chemin eslevé au monde apparoissant, / En mille et mille honneurs de jour en jour croissant, / Se faire eterniser de plus belles louanges, / Vouloir estre vanté des nations estranges, / Et comme les Geans entasser les hauts monts, / Pour cognoistre des cieus les secrets plus profonds" (61-72, Coignard 372).

⁵⁶ Holofernes is described in this poem as working for "Nabuchodonozor" (80, Coignard 373), and as the King's most loved and trusted aide (85-86, 373).

⁵⁷ This is based on Judith 12:10-16; however, some poetic liberties were taken (cf. Coignard 434, n. 213).

experienced at the same time (perhaps even involving a mental pleasure that he sensed from possessing control over someone); all of which stands in opposition to the painful, burning passion now holding him captive and depriving him of his own reason, inasmuch as intent and sensation, desire and satisfaction, now seem deprived of a chance to merge.

This layering of the word is also at work in examples where “*plaisir*” is clearly used negatively. One such example can be found in Sonnet XCV where, speaking directly to her flesh rather than to her soul, the poet disdainfully says:

As tu mis en oubly que nostre ame est divine,
Qu'elle remonste au ciel quand du corps elle sort?
Feignant l'amadou, tu luy veux faire tort,
Et pour **un vain plaisir** tu cherches sa ruyne.
(4-8, 253)

Since the poet is speaking to “*la chair*” (so named in the title of this sonnet: “*Contre la chair*”) about a pleasure sought by the flesh, it can be assumed that the pleasure in question involves a physical sensation received by one’s material flesh. However, in light of Saint Paul’s use of the word “flesh” in Galatians 5⁵⁸ and Romans 8⁵⁹, the pleasure of the flesh evoked in Coignard’s sonnet must also be interpreted as consisting of an emotional and moral state – in this case the failed condition of those who live “according

⁵⁸ “But I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (*ESV*, Gal. 5:16-24).

⁵⁹ “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. [...] For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (*ESV*, Rom. 8:5-8 and 13).

to the flesh,” as Paul has it⁶⁰. The core of the problem in this case is not the physical sensation of pleasure as such, but the sinful subjection of the spiritual to the physical, of will or intent to bodily sensation, which corrupts all – rendering the pleasure vain/empty/worthless. Therefore, “plaisir,” seen negatively here conflates human faculties (sensorial, emotional, intellectual) in a manner that amounts to jeopardizing the properly divine part of man (*i.e.*, the rational soul), and thus refers by no means to the inherent corruption of a mere physical sensation. Interestingly, the adjective “vain,” modifying the noun “plaisir” indicates that such pleasure is not really *true* pleasure in the first place (due to an improper ordering of the spiritual and the physical, of the moral and the sensual).

⁶⁰ Saint Augustine comments on the word “flesh” in *On Christian Doctrine*: some people mistakenly interpret it as being the “body” and, therefore, they hate their bodies whereas they ought not hate their body but, rather, the body’s “corruptions and its heaviness” (I.xxiv.1). The flesh is to be understood as a “carnal habit yet unsubdued” or an evil habit of the body, not the material body itself: “Those, on the other hand, who [scourge their bodies by abstinence and toil] in a perverse spirit, make war upon their own body as if it were a natural enemy. And in this matter they are led astray by a mistaken interpretation of what they read: ‘The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other.’ For this is said of the carnal habit yet unsubdued, against which the spirit lusteth, not to destroy the body, but to eradicate the lust of the body – *i.e.*, its evil habit – and thus to make it subject to the spirit, which is what the order of nature demands. For as, after the resurrection, the body, having become wholly subject to the spirit, will live in perfect peace to all eternity; even in this life we must make it an object to have the carnal habit changed for the better, so that its inordinate affections may not war against the soul. And until this shall take place, “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;” the spirit struggling, not in hatred, but for the mastery, because it desires that what it loves should be subject to the higher habit which it has derived from its parent stock, and which has grown in upon it by a law of nature till it has become inveterate. The spirit, then, in subduing the flesh, is working as it were to destroy the ill founded peace of an evil habit, and to bring about the real peace which springs out of a good habit. Nevertheless, not even those who, led astray by false notions, hate their bodies would be prepared to sacrifice one eye, even supposing they could do so without suffering any pain, and that they had as much sight left in one as they formerly had in two, unless some object was to be attained which would overbalance the loss. This and other indications of the same kind are sufficient to show those who candidly seek the truth how well-founded is the statement of the apostle when he says, ‘No man ever yet hated his own flesh.’ He adds too, ‘but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church’” (I.xxiv.2).

Three varieties of hedonism: folk, philosophical, and general

Today, the word “hedonism” is most commonly apprehended in two ways: the first variety is labeled “folk hedonism” and the second labeled “philosophical hedonism.” The first is described by philosophers as the type of hedonism that non-philosophers tend to use for designating an immediate and entirely self-centered search for pleasure, thus having little regard for one’s “own future well-being or for the well-being of others” (Weijers, n. p.)⁶¹. Within the second type, we find a predominant strand called “ethical hedonism”⁶², which identifies pleasure as the only intrinsically valuable (*i.e.*, an end in itself rather than a means to an end) element of physical and mental phenomena. In what follows, we will provide a cursory summary of two of the most well-known varieties of ethical hedonism, *i.e.*, that of the Cyrenaics and that of the Epicureans. Let us recognize first, however, that the contempt in which “folk hedonism” is typically held also inspires two presuppositions concerning “philosophical hedonism,” which Carolyn Williams identifies as having damaged the latter’s reputation over the course of history.

The first presupposition is that hedonism is a doctrine that “advocates only bodily pleasures” (Williams 353)⁶³. Despite the ever-increasing breadth of objects, sensations, and emotions one might place under the hypernym “pleasure,” Williams points out that

⁶¹ “Non-philosophers tend to think of a hedonist as a person who seeks out pleasure for themselves without any particular regard for their own future well-being or for the well-being of others [...] Philosophers commonly refer to this everyday understanding of hedonism as ‘Folk Hedonism.’ Folk Hedonism is a rough combination of Motivational Hedonism, Hedonistic Egoism, and a reckless lack of foresight” (Weijers, n. p.).

⁶² We understand the adjective “ethical” as referring to a discipline dealing with how humans ought to behave and insisting on the importance of human conduct by asking how humans should best live their lives. We understand the adjective “moral” as referring to a discipline dealing with what is to be considered as good or bad. Certainly, these two disciplines often overlap.

⁶³ Williams, Carolyn D. “Hedonism.” *The Oxford Companion to The Body*. Ed. Colin Blakemore and Sheila Jennett. New York: Oxford UP, 2001. p. 353.

the history of the word hedonism “reminds us that much pleasure is rooted in physical needs and desires” (*ibid.*). Thus, in light of the history of the word, this first presupposition is understandable; for the term, coming from *hēdonē* (the Greek word for “sweetness,” “joy,” or “delight”), originally signified “the sort of sweetness that could be appreciated by taste or smell; then hearing was involved” (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, says Williams, the word was eventually “applied metaphorically to any pleasant sensation or emotion” (*ibid.*). However, while the philosophical concept of hedonism ought not be entirely removed from notions of bodily pleasure, Williams notes that “Aristippus (435-356 BC), a body-centred, radical hedonist who identified good and evil with pleasure and pain” was but a “rare exception” to the norm (*ibid.*). Instead, she explains, “most philosophers seem to share this distrust of the body and advocate rational hedonism, regarding spiritual and intellectual joys as more lasting, and less likely to produce painful or inconvenient consequences” (*ibid.*). Indeed, some may argue that bodily pleasures cannot always be considered trustworthy because one’s sense organs may be mistaken and, consequently, may send a faulty message to the brain. Or, errors in the functioning of the brain may erroneously interpret the sensation of a bodily pleasure. Moreover, it is likely that one’s subjective beliefs will influence or even manipulate the brain’s interpretation of a sensation as being either pleasurable or painful.

The second damaging presupposition that Williams finds behind the condemnation of philosophical hedonism is the belief that bodily pleasures “are invariably sinful and degrading” (*ibid.*). Both presuppositions would have been particularly strong and deleterious to the reputation of hedonistic philosophies in France throughout the Middle Ages – an era during which the Roman Catholic Church ruled as

an absolute moral guide for its human subjects. Interestingly, however, while hedonism as an ethical philosophy has never been fully embraced by the masses⁶⁴, Don Cameron Allen identifies a curious shift in attitude that takes place among “men of letters”⁶⁵ during the Renaissance throughout Italy, France, and England, specifically with regard to Epicurus’ oft-misunderstood version of hedonism. In his article “The Rehabilitation of Epicurus and His Theory of Pleasure in the Early Renaissance,” Allen analyzes the treatment of Epicurus’ ethical philosophy by Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Ficino, Erasmus, Montaigne, and Gassendi, among others. He notes: “[a]s the Renaissance moved northward, the discussion of Epicurus’ character and doctrine of pleasure moved with it” (Allen 10). Allen shows that over a period of three hundred years (1400s-1600s) a tradition develops in which European men of letters gradually “began to write openly in defense of Epicurus and his philosophy of pleasure” (Allen 14). Later, we shall explore how Erasmus carries this out in his colloquy *Epicureus*. Such a shift notwithstanding, Allen wonders (without providing a conclusive answer) whether “it was the spirit of the age that revived the philosophy of Epicurus” or if it was “the doctrines of Epicurus that set the temper of the age” (Allen 15). We should point out right away that Coignard cannot be counted among this group to which

⁶⁴ Jean-Claude Margolin confirms that “Des diverses écoles philosophiques de l’Antiquité gréco-latine [...], l’épicurisme est assurément la plus décriée (et partant, la moins influente) tout au long du Moyen Âge, et même à la Renaissance. Sur ce point convergent les jugements de presque tous les spécialistes [...]” (Margolin, Jean-Claude. “Épicure, l’épicurisme et la philosophie du plaisir d’après l’*Epicureus* d’Érasme.” In *Le Plaisir au temps de la Renaissance*. Dir. Marie-Thérèse Jones-Davies. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010, p. 125).

⁶⁵ Allen distinguishes between men of letters and the general public, pointing out that “Men of letters, however, have very little to do with public attitudes, and if we wish to know what the public thought, we should consider the remarks of the clergy as the best registers of popular reaction” (Allen 2). (Allen, Don Cameron. “The Rehabilitation of Epicurus and His Theory of Pleasure in the Early Renaissance.” *Studies in Philology* 41.1 (Jan. 1944): pp. 1-15. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4172640>>.)

Allen makes reference, not only because she is not a “man of letters”⁶⁶, but because she also makes no open defense of Epicurus, nor of his theory of pleasure⁶⁷.

While a number of other derivative strands of hedonism do exist⁶⁸, it may be appropriate, for the purposes of this study, to envision a third, more generic type of hedonism, which we shall simply call “general hedonism” or “hedonism” *tout court*, which values and pursues pleasure in general, understood in its broadest sense, even if pleasure is not held to be the *exclusive* essence of the highest good. In other words, hedonism thus understood is *not* hedonism in the strict philosophical sense, but a hybrid or impure version of it – one allowing for human actions to be interested (*i.e.*, not entirely disinterested, as Kant would have celebrated).

Let us now turn to other philosophical traditions, in order to better understand how hedonistic philosophies differ from non-hedonistic ones with regard to the notion of pleasure, which will allow us to better situate the personal “philosophy” of a late-Renaissance devotional poet among them.

⁶⁶ We will discuss the extent of Coignard’s “savoir” and literary ambition in Chapter II.

⁶⁷ Anne de Marquets, for her part, attacks the Epicureans (traditionally understood as pursuers of worldly pleasures) in her versified prefatory letter to the Princess Marguerite de Valois: “Là donc on peut trouver assez bon argument / Pour doctement escrire et bien chrestienement, / Laissant les vers lascifs, et les chants impudiques / **Aux Epicuriens**, aux Paiens et Ethniques. / Si ne veux-je du tout l’invention blasmer / D’un Poëte facond, veu qu’elle peut charmer / Par une gracieuse et estrange merveille, / Un bien facheux soucy, et repaistre l’aureille. / Mais cela ne suffit pour l’esprit contenter, / Car estant immortel, il le faut substantier / De viande immortelle et celeste, de sorte / Que s’il gouste autre chose, il n’en tire et rapporte / Au lieu de nourriture, et de bon aliment, / Que desgoust, facherie, et mescontentement: / Ou s’il y prent plaisir, chose peu durable, / Et qui souvent en fin luy est desagreable, / C’est comme cest enfant prodigue et esgaré, / [...] / Mais cecy ne se doit entendre seulement / Pour quelque vaine estude, ains generalmente / Pour tous biens et plaisirs qu’on voit en ce monde estre, / Dont l’homme ne se peut contenter ny repaistre / Aussi Dieu ne l’a pas crée pour ceste fin: / Ains pour heur bien plus grand, c’est à sçavoir, afin / Qu’au seul souverain bien il aspire et pretende, / Qu’il le cherche par foi, le cognoisse et entende, / Et qu’en le cognoissant, il l’ayme entierement, / L’aymant qu’il le possède en fin heureusement: / Puis en le possédant en gloire supernelle, / Qu’il en ait jouissance heureuse et eternelle” (“Epistre Encore à la dicte Dame” in *Divines poësies*, n. p., § 8-10).

⁶⁸ *E.g.* “psychological hedonism” (Weijers, n. p.).

Two meanings of the word “*eudaimonia*”

One of the greatest preoccupations of many philosophical schools was the nature of and means to an ideal state of being called “*eudaimonia*.” This Greek word is often translated into Latin as “*felicitas*” or “*beatitudo*,” into French as “bonheur,” “bien-vivre,” or “béatitude,” and into English as “happiness,” “well-being,” “living well,” or “beatitude.” Darrin McMahon’s *Happiness: A History* contributes meaningful insights into the etymology and sociohistorical usage of this important Greek term. His insights also help us better apprehend a significant shift that takes place in Christian culture with respect to the notion of happiness – a shift that can notably be witnessed in Saint Augustine’s *magnum opus*, *De civitate Dei (Of the City of God)* (5th c. CE).

McMahon starts with the Greek adjective “*eudaimon*” as the term used by Herodotus in his *History* (5th c. BCE) to capture the subtleties of two other adjectives – “*olbios*” and “*makarios*”⁶⁹–, which “may be rendered (imperfectly) as ‘blessed’”:

In the Homeric hymns and the Hesiodic poems, these complex terms are used frequently in reference to the heroes, to the gods, and to those who enjoy their favor, indicating divine sanction, freedom from suffering, and general prosperity, both material and moral.

(McMahon 3)

McMahon goes on to explain that “*eudaimon* (and the corresponding noun, *eudaimonia*)” was used to indicate “a flourishing, favored life” (*ibid.*):

⁶⁹ “Consider the nature of Christ’s promise as recorded in the Gospels, particularly the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain in Matthew and Luke. Set down, many scholars argue, in roughly the years 80-90 CE, each sermon begins with a series of ‘beatitudes’ or blessings, a venerable form so named because of the Vulgate translation of the Greek term with which they begin. *Beati* in Latin, *makarios* in Greek, the terms are often rendered in English as ‘blessed,’ although ‘happy’ would serve equally well, as indeed it does in translations such as the French, where ‘heureux’ from the Old French *heur* is used in the canon. More revealing, though, is the original Greek term itself, a word that, as we have seen, was employed by classical authors, including Plato and Aristotle, to signify ‘happy’ or ‘blessed.’ Virtually interchangeable with *eudaimon*, *makarios* was frequently used as a direct synonym, although it gradually acquired a slightly more exalted sense. The classically educated reader of the first century, in any case, would not have failed to associate the word with the tradition of Greek philosophy” (McMahon 77).

The word was first employed in extant Greek literature by Hesiod. “Happy and lucky the man” (*eudaimon te kai olbios*), he declares in the *Work and Days*, who knows and keeps the holy days, who understands omens, who avoids transgression, and “who does his work without offending the deathless gods.” (*Ibid.*)

Yet McMahon also acknowledges the more enigmatic, if not ineffable, aspect of the phenomenon designated by this favored word:

the word was emerging in Herodotus’s own time as the preferred – and absolutely central – term to designate the elusive quality for which Croesus^[70] yearned. Comprising the Greek *eu* (good) and *daimon* (god, spirit, demon), *eudaimonia* thus contains within it a notion of fortune – for to have a good daimon on your side, a guiding spirit, is to be lucky – and a notion of divinity, for a *daimon* is an emissary of the gods who watches over each of us, acting invisibly on the Olympians’ behalf. As a leading classicist has observed, “*Daimon* is occult power, a force that drives men forward where no agent can be named,” and it is this aspect of the term that helps to account for the unpredictable force that leads Croesus, like all men, impelling him forward in pursuit of he knows not what. (3-4)

McMahon also makes sure to point out that:

In the understanding of Herodotus and his contemporaries, then, happiness [*i.e., eudaimonia*] is not a feeling, nor any subjective state [...]. Happiness, rather, is a characterization of an entire life that can be reckoned only at death. (7)

He goes on to illustrate the overarching worldview concerning *eudaimonia* by pointing to certain norms of the ancient Greek tragedy play, observing how:

In the tragic tradition, happiness is almost always a miracle, requiring the direct intervention of the divine. [...] Where human agency is frustrated, human choice contradictory, and human suffering inevitable, happiness, if it comes at all, is largely what befalls us. (9)

Nevertheless, this understanding of happiness as a characterization of one’s life to be determined only upon one’s death and dependent upon the unpredictable intervention of a supernatural agent, will eventually evolve. Indeed, McMahon notes, around the same

⁷⁰ Croesus is mentioned in an episode of Herodotus’ *History*. Summarizing the beginning of the (likely fictional) episode, McMahon explains: “Croesus, the fabulously wealthy king of Lydia, has summoned before him the itinerant sage Solon, lawgiver of Athens and a man who has traveled over much of the world in search of knowledge. The Lydian king lacks nothing, or so he believes, and attempts to convince Solon of the fact, dispatching servants to lead the wise Athenian around his stores of treasures so that he might marvel at ‘their greatness and richness.’ Needing nothing, Croesus nonetheless reveals that he is in need, for he is overcome by a ‘longing’ to know who is the happiest man in the world. Foolishly, he believes that this man is himself” (McMahon 1).

time that this view is being recorded into the works of Herodotus and those of the Athenian playwrights, “a new perspective on happiness was taking shape. At its most basic level, this view held that human beings might hope to influence their fate through actions of their own” (20).

This new perspective was emerging around the same time and place (6th-5th centuries BCE, Athens) that “the world witnessed the invention of a new type of government – *demokratia*, from *demos* (people) + *kratos* (power)” (20). “By the beginning of the fifth century, some measure of self-government was a distinctive feature of Greek political life” (21). While McMahon acknowledges that “it would be reductive to say that Athenian democracy was the *cause* of the emergence of happiness as a new and apparently realizable human end” (23), he finds it to be no mere coincidence that “it was nevertheless in Athens, democratic Athens, that individuals first put forth that great, seductive goal, daring to dream that they might pursue – and capture – happiness for themselves” (*ibid.*). Following this observation, McMahon concludes:

Surely we may admit some connection between context and concept, between a society in which free men had grown accustomed, through rational inquiry and open deliberation, to decide matters for themselves, and the effort to extend the sway of self-rule even further, even to the long-standing domain of the gods. Freed by Athenian prosperity from the need to direct life solely to the pursuit of survival, a fortunate few could afford to turn their attention to the pursuit of other things. (23-24)

Socrates “was the first to consider in detail what would draw the ‘sleepless and laborious efforts’ of all subsequent philosophers: the ‘question of the necessary conditions for happiness’” (24):

Whereas earlier philosophers had focused largely on questions of natural science, logic, and the grounds of knowledge (epistemology), asking how the world is made and how we know it, Socrates insisted dramatically on the importance of human conduct (ethics), asking how we should best live our lives. And while the epic poets and tragic playwrights had accepted that human happiness was beyond human agency – controlled by luck, fate, or the gods –

Socrates adopted as his point of departure the proposition that happiness is within the human grasp. “What being is there who does not desire happiness?” he asks his companions in Plato’s early dialogue, the *Euthydemus*. “Well, then,” he answers, “since we all of us desire happiness, how can we be happy? – that is the next question.” Transforming Croesus’s quest from an outrageous act of hubris to the highest form of inquiry, Socrates grounds the search for happiness in natural human longing. (25)

Interestingly, however, the overarching goal of McMahon’s study is to bring into question how natural or inherent such a desire for happiness really is to human beings (25)⁷¹. Be this as it may, his view is that human expectations gradually shifted from imagining “happiness to lie in a remote, otherworldly place – in the fields of Elysium, [...], in Heaven, Paradise, or a vanished Golden Age” (12) to speculating “on the prospects of happiness on earth” (*ibid.*).

The question, then, becomes that of *who* could aspire to attain the latter:

[I]n both classical philosophy and Christian practice, happiness of this immanent variety [*i.e.*, happiness on earth] was exceedingly rare – the preserve of a “happy few,” whose outstanding virtue or exceptional favor made them more than mere men. As Aristotle observed, a life of happiness “would be superior to the human level,” tantamount to the divine. His happy few were a “godlike” few – a description that applies equally well to the Socratic sage or the Platonic philosopher, the Stoic ascetic or the Epicurean wise man, the Catholic saint or Calvin’s predestined elect. In all of those incarnations, the happy man – and less frequently, the happy woman – was thought of as one who approached the gods, who had gone beyond the merely human, who had achieved a form of transcendence. For much of Western history, happiness served as a marker of human perfection, an imagined ideal of a creature complete, without further wants, desires, or needs. (12-13)

To summarize: the phenomenon identified as *eudaimonia* is, according to McMahon, initially attributed to individuals by others who have assessed their lives at the point of physical death. Moreover, such a quality is attributed to those dead individuals who are evaluated as having been the fortunate recipients of a supernatural force – not within human control – which had driven the human in question toward a most desirable

⁷¹ In his introduction, McMahon explains that “This book tells the story – the history – of how people in the West came to harbor [the belief that to be happy is a right, a natural human entitlement, perhaps even a “moral obligation” and that it lies within our power to find happiness]. It is a long story, and in telling it, I hope to make what is today an unexamined assumption appear strange – less a certainty of the universe than a species of faith” (McMahon 12).

end-goal. However, the notion of *eudaimonia* would gradually evolve to signify a state of being that comes from within the individual and could be controlled, at least in part if not in whole, by the human agent. This second construct of *eudaimonia* was believed to be achievable on earth, during one's lifetime, by certain elite souls at least.

Pleasure, happiness, and the highest good (1): various traditions

Many Western philosophical schools believe that attaining or possessing the *summum bonum*, the highest good (whatever it may consist of) will provide one with the (presumed) universally-desired eudaimonic life. This intimate link is explored in works such as that of Ullrich Langer, who, in a study of the forms assumed by literary pleasure in Renaissance texts, offers the following definition of the *summum bonum*:

Le souverain bien (*summum bonum*) est ce bien que nous recherchons au-delà de toute autre chose et qui, lorsque nous le possédons, peut conférer le bonheur (*felicitas, eudaimonia*). (Langer 31)⁷²

Let us recall that the *summum bonum*, according to Weijers, is also that which is believed to possess intrinsic value, meaning that it is an end in itself; whereas elements possessing extrinsic value denote that they are merely means to an end. As we will now see, schools of thought that share this assumption diverge, in great part, as a result of their differing views concerning the quiddity of the *summum bonum*.

– Philosophical hedonism

At one end of our philosophical spectrum are Aristippus of Cyrene (435-356 BCE) – a pupil of Socrates – and his followers the Cyrenaics. As previously reported,

⁷² Langer, Ullrich. *Penser les formes du plaisir littéraire à la Renaissance*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2009.

theirs is perhaps the version of philosophical hedonism most akin to its “folk” variety and representation. Despite the scarce availability of original texts recording their views on pleasure, scholars propose that this school of thought generally holds to the belief that the only intrinsic good is pleasure (characterized as the absence of pain and the addition of enjoyable sensations). Yet they have a skeptical theory of knowledge, believing that we can only know with certainty our immediate experiences. Consequently, momentary pleasures (often physical/bodily pleasures) are considered stronger and better to pursue than mental ones (such as pleasures of memory or of anticipation), presumably because, for this school of thought, the former are more vivid and trustworthy than the latter (Weijers n. p.).

It is evident that a devout Christian poet will not – whatever else she may endeavor to do – endorse or celebrate such a radically body-centered hedonism. Rather, a poet like Coignard gives preference to the mental pleasure of anticipation (in the form of hope), and prefers likewise the mental pleasure of remembering Christ on the Cross to other personal memories, if not, as we have seen, the dangerous thrill of attempting to know what is beyond the reach of our “intellect.” Unsurprisingly, she refers to “Circeans appas” with disdain in Sonnet XVIII (11, 161)⁷³. Nevertheless, it will be worth asking whether her vivid description of momentary physical pleasures could be interpreted as implicitly exposing, if not confessing, a subconscious preference for such pleasures over

⁷³ “Perisse la grandeur qui trompe les plus sages, / Enfle les plus sçavans, charme les plus devots, / Elle attire chacun au bruit de son beau los, / Puis des liens d’orgueil enlasse nos courages. / Mais las! tous ces honneurs et ces grans heritages / Ne nous peuvent donner un moment de repos, / Agitant nos esprits tout ainsi que les flos, / Guindés jusques au ciel, par mille et mille orages. / Bien-heureux donc celuy qui n’est point engeollé / En sa douce prison et n’est point affollé / Des Circeans appas dont plusieurs elle trompe. / Fuyez, humbles d’esprit, ses vaines passions, / La croix soit le sujet de vos affections, / Car c’est un traict volant, que le monde et sa pompe” (Coignard 161-162).

mental (intellectual) ones, or (more simply) one's inability to make and maintain that very distinction.

We must recall, however, that momentary physical pleasures are often more vividly felt and, consequently, easier to report in human language and apt to be used metaphorically to evoke or allude to "higher" ones. They can also be apprehended by individuals who are situated low on the spiritual path, and yet, for this very reason, serve as a starting point that arouses the affections and captures the attention and desires of a sinful human. Whether understood as an image or as a first step, pleasures of this sort can be dangerous if one "stops there," but can also lead one on an intellectual or practical path that leads to something better and more genuinely satisfying. This latter progression is one posited by the (Neo)Platonists, which we shall discuss momentarily.

Epicurus (341-270 BCE) puts forth a different variety of philosophical hedonism than that of Aristippus. We mentioned previously that his doctrines were frequently misunderstood or distorted throughout the span of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, while the European Renaissance saw increasing efforts to rehabilitate the reputation and doctrine of this famously "hedonistic" Greek philosopher. Langer points out that it is thanks to Diogenes Laertius "que la doctrine et les textes d'Epicure furent connus au XVI^e siècle" (47). Included in the final book of Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* are three letters written by Epicurus to his disciples. One of those letters, specifically dedicated to the presentation of Epicurean ethics, is the philosopher's famous *Letter to Menoeceus*. In this letter, according to Langer,

Épicure affirme que la tranquillité de l'âme (*ataraxia*) et l'absence de douleur (*aponia*) sont des plaisirs découlant d'un état de repos, alors que la joie (*chara*) et la festivité (*euphrosunē*) consistent en mouvement et activité (*energeia*). (Langer 48)

David Konstan proffers an alternative presentation of Epicurus' classification of pleasures and pains⁷⁴. According to his reading of the *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus separates the pleasures and pains that are sensations "experienced via the non-rational soul that is distributed throughout the body" from the pleasures and pains that are experienced via the rational soul, which "is concentrated in the chest" (n. p.)⁷⁵. In the first category, Epicurus, an atomistic materialist, situates the physical sensations of pleasure (*hêdonê*) and pain (*algêdôn*). In the second category, he situates the negative mental state of fear (especially the fear of "unreal dangers" like death). Such fear, also known as a persistent mental perturbation (*tarakhê*), Epicurus considers to be worse than physical pain. In contrast to that negative mental state are two positive ones. The first, which, according to Konstan, Epicurus does not seem to treat as the end-goal of life, is the positive mental state of joy (*khara*)⁷⁶. The second one, however, does play a partial role in humankind's chief end in life – it is the positive mental state that is characterized by the absence of mental perturbation. As we know, Epicurus calls this *ataraxia*. Konstan posits that, for Epicurus, the goal or chief end of life is happiness (*eudaimonia*), but it is a happiness that can be understood and defined as our *most pleasurable* state in that it specifically consists of the combination of *ataraxia* and freedom from *algêdôn*. Konstan points out that, despite his tendency "to describe the goal by negation," Epicurus does not consider that combination to be a "neutral or privative condition." Rather, he considers

⁷⁴ Konstan, David. "Epicurus." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. N. p., 2016. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/epicurus/>>.

⁷⁵ Previously, in Konstan's article, Epicurus's conception of the soul and the mind (*i.e.*, the rational soul) is explained thus: "the soul atoms are particularly fine and are distributed throughout the body (*LH* 64), and it is by means of them that we have sensations" but "[t]here is also a part of the human soul that is concentrated in the chest, and is the seat of the higher intellectual functions [*i.e.*, the mind]" (Konstan n. p.).

⁷⁶ Though Konstan discusses the term *khara* (spelled *chara* by Langer) in his article, he does not mention the word *euphrosunê*.

such a state or condition “a form of pleasure in its own right” (Konstan n. p.) and he labels that form of pleasure “catastematic,” translated by Cicero as “static” (*stabilis*), which Epicurus values more highly than “kinetic” (*in motu*) pleasure⁷⁷. This is because

kinetic pleasures seem to be of the non-necessary kind [...] such as those resulting from agreeable odors or sounds, rather than [the necessary kind] deriving from replenishment, as in the case of hunger or thirst. (Konstan n. p.)

Concerning one’s behavior (*i. e.*, ethics), Epicurus discourages attempts to augment one’s desire because it tends to augment *tarakhê*. In particular, Epicurus discourages attempts to pursue empty desires (like immortality, wealth, marks of fame, and power) because they can never be fully satisfied⁷⁸. On the other hand, he does acknowledge that some desires are natural. They comprise only two classes: (1) the desires that are natural but not necessary and (2) the desires that are both natural and necessary. As mentioned above, Epicurus gives priority to the latter because they correspond to the static pleasures such as those “deriving from replenishment” or “those that look to happiness, physical well-being, or life itself” [*i. e.*, *eudaimonia*] (*ibid.*). The desires that are natural but not necessary correspond to the kinetic pleasures, such as

⁷⁷ See Cicero’s *De finibus* (*On Ends*, trans. H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1914). The Epicurean Torquatus, after stating that Epicurus places the *summum bonum* in pleasure (“*in voluptate*,” I.IX.29, p. 32), presents this distinction in Book I (XI.37-38, pp. 40-43). Then Cicero himself rejects it in Book II, arguing that the absence of pain is not the same thing as pleasure (let alone a supreme form of it), and that claiming otherwise defies our understanding of what pleasure is (III.9-V.16, pp. 86-97 and XXIII.75-77, pp. 164-167). Yet Julia Annas points out that “There is little on this important distinction in extant Epicurean texts, and it is much disputed. ‘Static’ pleasure is the pleasure of being in a state of having had one’s desires satisfied and thus being untroubled and tranquil, which is the Epicurean final end. This passage [*i. e.*, II.III.9] suggests that ‘kinetic’ pleasure is the pleasure of having a desire fulfilled; other texts are more puzzling” (Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On Moral Ends*. Ed. Julia Annas. Trans. Raphael Woolf. New York: Cambridge U. P., 2001, p. 29, n. 10). Be this as it may, Langer is referring to “catastematic” pleasure when he writes of pleasures coming from a state of repose, and likewise referring to “kinetic” pleasure when discussing pleasures that consist of movement and activity.

⁷⁸ McMahon makes a helpful distinction between the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies, for which *eudaimonia* is theoretically attainable by the many (thus being more democratic), and the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies, for which *eudaimonia* is attainable by a select few (McMahon 12).

“pleasant things like sweet odors and good-tasting food and drink” or “pleasurable activities of sorts other than simple smelling, touching and tasting” (*ibid.*).

Contrary to that of the Cyrenaics, Epicurus’s version of “hedonism” does not, in fact, consider *hēdonē* to be the preferred type of pleasure; and yet his philosophy is still characterized as being hedonistic. This is important to us because, if “pleasure,” understood merely in the strictest sense of *hēdonē* / *voluptas*, is the only type of pleasure that one can associate with hedonism, then, as we just saw, we must simply discard any possibility that Coignard and her work could be hedonistic. Yet such is not the case. Nevertheless, it goes again without saying that – Erasmus’s clever transposition, to which we shall return, notwithstanding – there are significant discrepancies between the beliefs of a 16th-century Christian and Epicurus’s own beliefs, as presented in his letters. For example their notions concerning God (or the gods), the material world, and death could not be more different⁷⁹. Yet there are also certain overarching principles that seem, to us, to be at least analogous between the two belief systems. For example, we will see that absence of mental perturbation and freedom from pain are significant elements in Coignard’s notion of her end-goal; in fact, they seem to be more important and desired than joy. In other words, while the approach of a devout writer like Coignard to attaining the absence of mental perturbation and freedom from pain differs from that of Epicurus, it is the case that she seems to give preference to static pleasure(s) over kinetic ones, and to necessary pleasure(s) over unnecessary ones. The question that remains, however, is whether or not Coignard points to the sum of necessary pleasures as being the highest good. We will further explore this question in Chapters III and IV.

⁷⁹ See e.g. Jones-Davies, *Le Plaisir au temps de la Renaissance* 131. For examples of Coignard’s beliefs and attitudes concerning death, see her sonnets LIII to LVI, LIX, LXXXI, CIII, and CXIX.

– *Stoicism and Neo-Stoicism*

At the opposite end of our philosophical spectrum are the Stoic philosophers, who generally adhere to the belief that pleasure could never be the *summum bonum*. The Stoics maintain that one must seek virtue⁸⁰ for its own sake because it is, in and of itself, the sovereign good (Langer 32). In this search for virtue, the Stoics also insist on maintaining “a total indifference concerning material and bodily goods” (Langer 32, *our translation*). Regarding the notion of pleasure specifically, Seneca the Younger’s *De vita beata* shows how the Stoics view its relationship with virtue:

Even those who declare that the highest good is in the belly see in what a dishonourable position they have placed it. And so they say that it is not possible to separate pleasure from virtue, and they aver that no one can live virtuously without also living pleasantly, nor pleasantly without also living virtuously. But I do not see how things so different can be cast in the same mould. [...] if the two things were inseparable, we should not see certain things pleasant, but not honourable, and certain things truly most honourable, but painful and capable of being accomplished only through suffering. [...] virtue often lacks pleasure, and never needs it. [...] Virtue is something lofty, exalted and regal, unconquerable, and unwearied; pleasure is something lowly, servile, weak, and perishable [...]. The highest good is immortal, it knows no ending, it permits neither surfeit nor regret [...]. But pleasure is extinguished just when it is most enjoyed; it has but small space, and thus quickly fills it [...]. And therefore the ancients have enjoined us to follow, not the most pleasant, but the best life, in order that pleasure should be, not the leader, but the companion of a right and proper desire (*ut rectae ac bonae voluntatis non dux sed comes sit voluptas*).⁸¹

⁸⁰ Angie Hobbes helpfully explains in layman’s terms that, for the Stoics, virtue means “living in accordance with rational nature and accepting whatever happens to you as part of the divine plan” (Morris, Thomas, prod. “Stoicism.” *In Our Time*. BBC Radio-4. London, 4 Mar. 2005. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003k9fs>>). The Stoics consider themselves to be bound in duty and they believe in social responsibility, engagement in society, and duty to the state and others. In contrast, the Christians emphasize focusing on the self and the soul above/before civic virtues or the “world of illusion.” The Stoics also valorize self-command and pursue a lofty indifference towards that which happens to them; they believe in a cosmos that is “rationally coherent and rationally determined,” and count all humans as part of a greater whole. It follows that everything that happens to us is ultimately for our own good and for the good of the cosmos; consequently, one must strive to accept, rather than to alter, one’s lot. While Coignard condones living in accordance with rational nature (*cf.* sonnets LVII (esp. ln. 8), LXVIII, and XCIII), performing her duty as a mother (S. XI) and accepting divine will (*cf.* sonnets LXXVII and CIII), virtue is not what she considers to be the *summum bonum*; nor does she pursue indifference about material and bodily goods.

⁸¹ Seneca. *On the Happy Life*, VII, 1-VIII, 1; *Moral Essays. Volume II*. Trans. John W. Basore. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. P., 1990, pp. 115-117.

While pleasure can accompany virtue, it is never the cause of virtue, nor can it ever be its recompense. In this way, the Stoics reject any form of mixture of pleasure with virtue in what they understand to be the highest good, and radically separate any common notion of pleasure from that of the “bliss” (*felicitas*) of a life well lived.

At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, the “Neo-Stoics,” who attempted to revive Stoicism while making it compatible with Christianity⁸², reactivated objections to the Aristotelian notion of the “pleasure” of virtue as residing in the virtuous activity itself, and reaffirmed that virtuous “pleasure,” if it can even be called that, only consists of “la tranquillité qui nous parvient lorsque nous ne sommes point troublés par nos passions [...] dans un sentiment général que nous ne subirons pas le mouvement de la passion” (Langer 38)⁸³. Unlike the Aristotelians, who posit a natural, inherent link between pleasure and the virtuous activity (“le plaisir accompagne naturellement l’activité vertueuse,” *ibid.*), the Neo-Stoics (like the Stoics before them) perceive virtue and pleasure as two distinct entities. For them, “aucun plaisir n’est inhérent à l’exercice de la vertu” (*ibid.*). Consequently, the pleasure one may feel by doing something right is not believed to hold intrinsic value, nor can it be that of which *eudaimonia* consists.

⁸² Their main representatives at the end of the 16th century were figures like Justus Lipsius and Guillaume Du Vair; see e.g., Lipsius, *De constantia libri duo, Qui alloquium praecipue continent in Publicis malis*, and Du Vair, *De la constance et consolation és calamitez publiques and Philosophie morale des Stoïques* (in *La sainte philosophie*). On Lipsius, see Papy, Jan. “Justus Lipsius.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. N. p., 2019. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justus-lipsius/>>. On the connection between Neo-Stoicism and religious poetry, see Duru, Audrey. *Essais de soi. Poésie spirituelle et rapport à soi, entre Montaigne et Descartes*. Geneva: Droz, 2012. Duru identifies Montaigne as a Neo-Stoic, but such a notion is disputed and, if not false, partial at best. See also Sellars, John. “Neo-Stoicism.” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. N. p., n. d. §4. <<https://iep.utm.edu/neostoic/>>. We discuss Neo-Stoic overtones in Coignard’s poetry in Chapter II, beginning on p. 143 (Coignard’s moral outlook: the problem of “vouloir”).

⁸³ Langer reiterates this notion using slightly different wording a few pages later. Namely, he observes that “[l]e plaisir n’est plus dans l’activité elle-même [*i.e.*, “l’action vertueuse” (Langer 46)] mais dans le repos qu’elle nous promet. Nous arrivons alors [...] à la ‘tranquillité de l’âme’ vertueuse chez Descartes” (Langer 46) who, we may recall, is associated with the Neo-Stoic tradition.

To conclude his presentation of two different understandings of “la nature véritablement *éthique* du plaisir” (44) during the Renaissance in particular⁸⁴, Langer identifies this Neo-Stoic view of pleasure’s relation to virtue as a model that became predominant (at the expense of the Aristotelian one) at the end of the 16th and in the first decades of the 17th century, with Descartes’s “tranquillité” (in *Les Passions de l’âme*) as its best representative. While Langer does not include spiritual or theological works in his study⁸⁵, we will look for any trace of this split between two models and of the replacement of one by the other in Coignard’s devotional poetry⁸⁶.

– *Aristotelianism*

As we just saw while discussing Stoicism, Aristotle and his followers, the Peripatetics, are situated closer to the middle of the philosophical spectrum concerning pleasure, as they hold to the notion that “la chose la plus désirable de toutes est l’activité non entravée de nos facultés” (Langer 33). Even though this school of thought does not

⁸⁴ The two understandings are described as follows: “D’abord, l’exercice de la vertu nous réalise, nous fait approcher de nous-mêmes, par rapport à la finalité de notre être, le bien-vivre. Le plaisir est un mouvement volontaire de l’être vers lui-même, ou bien accompagne tout retour de l’être vers lui-même, accompagne l’accomplissement de la finalité de l’être (en l’occurrence, la ‘contemplation’) [...] Une deuxième explication de la valeur éthique du plaisir, qui s’ajoute à celle-ci dans les commentaires, voit le plaisir de l’action vertueuse non pas dans la nature de l’action elle-même, mais dans la tranquillité de la conscience, dans l’absence de soucis, d’inquiétude de l’homme juste” (Langer 45).

⁸⁵ “Cette orientation philosophique exclut évidemment la théologie: la grâce qui confère un certain type de plaisir, *delectatio* ou *gaudium*, l’extase mystique, la confiance sereine de l’ élu, la jouissance (*fruitio*) de Dieu. La visée de notre étude est donc explicite: elle concerne la fiction littéraire profane et non pas, par exemple, la poésie de dévotion, les sermons, les hymnes. Même la forme littéraire profane la plus apparentée à la joie de la vision mystique, le ravissement lyrique, peut s’étudier dans un contexte philosophique contrastant qui en relève les contours et nous permet d’en mesurer la valeur dans une histoire du plaisir littéraire, sans aller chercher du côté de la théologie qui ne se penchera pas vraiment sur la **nature** même de ce plaisir, mais sur sa **signification**. Le plaisir resterait ainsi pour elle toujours ce qui désigne autre chose” (Langer 12, n. 1). This last sentence points to the very question we are asking here.

⁸⁶ See in the next chapter our discussion of what Coignard’s poetry may owe to this Stoic (or neo-Stoic) outlook. From this perspective, we may ask, for example, whether the poet gets pleasure out of *writing* devotional poetry or out of the *repose* that writing devotional poetry promises to offer: is her experience of pleasure an integral or separate part of what makes writing poetry a virtuous activity.

consider pleasure to exclusively make up the highest good, it does hold that pleasure accompanies – and perhaps even completes – it (*ibid.*). Thus, its emphasis is on the fact that when one exercises virtue (*i. e.*, acts according to a virtuous *habitus*, a trained “habit”) with the pleasure that normally accompanies all unimpeded activity, then one is *truly* virtuous and, at the same time, enjoying oneself.

Langer notes, however, that Aristotle’s definition of pleasure appears to evolve over the course of the philosopher’s works. While in his *Rhetoric* pleasure is a “movement”⁸⁷ or a “retour” to one’s natural state, in Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle adds that pleasure should not be understood as a passive movement but as an activity, led and practiced according to nature⁸⁸. While the first definition remains “Socratique” (50), the second marks Aristotle’s separation from Plato. The latter argued (in *Philebus*) that pleasure is a process that satisfies an appetite or need, *i. e.*, a replenishment and restoration from a state of deficiency, of lack and pain⁸⁹. A state of “divine” perfection would have no such deficiency and, in that sense, would *not* experience this kind of pleasure – which, therefore, cannot be (nor be associated with) the highest good, unless we speak of a different, infinitely higher form of pleasure, one that does not proceed from pain and involves the rational part of the soul (knowledge and

⁸⁷ See Langer 16-18.

⁸⁸ It is worth noting here that the “syncretic” solution to the problem of the *summum bonum* proposed at the end of Cicero’s *De finibus* (after the Greek philosopher Antiochus of Ascalon, Cicero’s master) offers something similar in that all parts of our being are said to tend naturally toward their perfection (which in turn implies a natural preference for the higher parts and their higher goals). Yet, in a key distinction with Aristotle, this view makes the matter of pleasure secondary if not entirely moot (see Book V.XVI.45).

⁸⁹ See Katz, Leonard D. “Pleasure.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. N. p., 2016. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/pleasure/>>. It also follows that hedonists are wrong (and in fact unable) to make pleasure *qua* pleasure a value in and of itself: as *Philebus* shows, they are forced to concede that pleasure as they understand it, whatever it consists of, is always caused by and dependent on *something else* (see Gerd Van Riel, *Pleasure and the Good Life. Plato, Aristotle and the Neoplatonists*. Leiden: Brill, 2000, p. 33).

contemplation of beauty; *cf.* Langer, *ibid.*) from the start. For Aristotle, on the other hand, pleasure results from appropriate, unimpeded activities *at all levels*: while they have vastly different values, there is no obstacle to the notion that the highest among them, which procure a perfect life, also be highly pleasurable in a sense that is not wholly alien to lower forms of the same phenomenon. Finally, in the last book of the same *Ethics*, the definition further evolves to posit that pleasure does not consist of “the act itself” but of its “completion,” which is no longer understood as the accomplishment of something inherent, but as something added, “a surplus, a ‘luxury’” (51; *our translation*)⁹⁰.

– *Platonism(s)*

Separating the Peripatetics from the Platonists on the issue of *eudaimonia* is the opinion concerning the requisite conditions by which an individual can achieve it. Aristotle and the Peripatetics, as we just saw, believe that it can be achieved within one’s mortal lifetime by virtue of the continuity or similarity of pleasurable experience (resulting from unimpeded, perfected activity) from one level to the next, whereas Plato draws a distinction between pleasure as commonly experienced (replenishing a lack) and the highest form it must assume once harmony is fully restored. It follows, however, that

⁹⁰ “C’est dans la *Rhétorique* qu’Aristote reprend la définition socratique [...] Le plaisir est indissociable du mouvement de retour de l’être vivant à son état naturel; et Socrate et Aristote (du moins ici) semblent dire que le plaisir est constitué par ce retour, en quelque sorte *est* ce mouvement même. La phrase de Charron, ‘ce qui est convenable à nature’, reprend ce concept classique. Le mouvement n’est pas le sens fondamental du plaisir chez Aristote, lorsqu’il considère le plaisir non pas dans le cadre de la rhétorique, mais en relation avec la vertu. Il reprend la définition du plaisir au septième livre de l’*Éthique à Nicomaque* et en fait non un mouvement subi mais une activité (tout comme la vertu il est manifesté dans un agir, *habitus* qui s’exerce): le plaisir serait “une activité [non empêchée] de la manière d’être qui est selon la nature”, *energeia* [*anempodistos*] *tēs kata phusin hexeōs* (1153a14-15). Aristote précise qu’il ne s’agit pas d’une activité ‘sentie’ ou ‘consciente’, mais de l’activité non entravée de nos facultés. La définition du plaisir subit encore une dernière modification dans l’ultime livre de l’*Éthique à Nicomaque*, où Aristote lui dénie le mouvement (qui faisait partie intégrante, pourtant, de sa définition dans la *Rhétorique*) parce que le plaisir en lui-même n’est pas lié au temps. Le plaisir ne serait pas l’acte lui-même, mais un achèvement de l’acte, un surplus, un ‘luxe’ (selon l’expression de Tricot) [...]” (Langer 50-51).

the nature of this highest form (as achieved in intellectual contemplation of this harmony, for example) is somewhat mysterious, since it should no longer be understood by way of a contrast with the lack that preceded it, but on its own terms. This, as Gerd Van Riel has shown, is the problem that Neoplatonists⁹¹ such as Plotinus and Proclus will take on, but will use Aristotle to solve, by positing that “the activity of contemplation that constitutes the good life yields a very specific supervenient element: a ‘well-being’ (εὐπάθεια or εὐφροσύνη)” (Van Riel 4). Contrary to Aristotle, however, they insist on what *separates* this high form of pleasure, resulting from contemplation, from its lower counterparts, resulting from various activities linked to the body: they believe that the soul can carry out true contemplation only when it separates from the weighty, material body and reunites with the “One,” the “Form” from which it proceeds.

The greatest proponent of Christian Platonism in the Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino, taking his cue from both Plato and the Neoplatonists, further refined this separation, reflecting on the successive stages (depending on age, character, education, and lifestyle) of our experience of enjoyment. Ficino had once embraced, and then abandoned in favor of Plato, an Epicurean notion of pleasure, which he opposed to the hedonism of Aristippus⁹². Reacting in part to this early position of his, he developed, among other concepts, that of a hierarchy of the senses (and of the pleasures they procure), which posits their separation: touch, taste, and smell remain confined within the body, whereas sight and hearing speak to the soul, thus providing it with a form of

⁹¹ The label Neoplatonism is not commonly used until the 19th century; it refers retrospectively to the school of thought proceeding from the Platonists and primarily associated with Plotinus, the 3rd-century author of the *Enneads*.

⁹² See James G. Snyder, “Marsilio Ficino’s Critique of the Lucretian Alternative.” *Journal of the History of Ideas*. U. of Pennsylvania P., vol. 72 n° 2, 2011, pp. 165-181; and by the same author, “Marsilio Ficino, (1433-1499).” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. n.d. <<https://www.iep.utm.edu/ficino/>>.

pleasure (namely, a preliminary enjoyment of Beauty, which comes from God) that does not exhaust itself and is, therefore, deemed compatible with (capable of playing a part in) the elevation of the rational soul toward its original unity.

Ficino, as is well known, saw this ascending movement as propelled by four successive *furores*⁹³, forms of divine madness symbolized, respectively, by the Muses, Dionysos, Apollo, and the Celestial Venus. First the *furor poeticus* (poetic and musical inspiration) restores harmony among the parts of the troubled, divided soul; second, the *furor mysterialis* restores the soul's unity as intelligence (*mens*) by orienting it toward its higher calling, piety and the divine cult; third, the *furor vaticinium* raises the soul above its now unified intelligence to perceive the essence of this unity, which allows it to predict the future; fourth, the *furor amatorius* – i.e., love (understood as a burning desire for divine Beauty and the Good) – completes the journey, allowing the soul's access to the unity of all unities, God Himself. Thus the successive steps of contemplation lead to the ultimate enjoyment, from which nothing lacks: our highest goal is (should be) that we wholly enjoy God out of our “perpetual love” for Him⁹⁴.

The immense influence of this scheme also demultiplied its potential for ambiguity (in love poetry most notably), since one same question occurs at every level: is what is enjoyed at a given level – say, the beauty of an object of affection – enjoyed *as such*, or only in that it reflects (and leads to) a higher good, and ultimately to the one divine source of all beauty and love (which we are unable to fully merge with in this life anyway)? The soul's ascension should never stop. In practice, it often does, or is suspect

⁹³ See Book VII, Chapter 14 of Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love* (Trans. Sears R. Jayne. Thompson, CT: Spring Publications, 1985).

⁹⁴ See the last words of Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, Book VII, Chapter 17.

of doing so; with the result that the pleasure afforded by any intermediate level becomes (as its own, self-satisfying goal) a diversion or an illusion.

Pleasure, happiness, and the highest good (2): Augustine

As illustrated by the case of Ficino, any approach to the question of how classical notions of pleasure may have made their way into the works of a late Renaissance Christian poet requires some notion of the manner in which the heritage of ancient philosophy was absorbed into Christian theology and ethics in the first place – where union with God, *i.e.*, the clear (though not entirely unmediated⁹⁵) vision or knowledge of God, comes to qualify a supreme form of human happiness (*beatitudo*), and God, Himself, occupies the position of the sovereign good (*summum bonum*). Two prominent figures in this absorption process are St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE).

The former was undeniably influenced by Neoplatonism, and to a lesser degree, by Aristotelianism, while also famously influencing the development and articulation of Christian doctrine that would shape much of the Christian faith through the European Renaissance and beyond. Timothy Chappell identifies the Numidia-born Bishop of Hippo as “the first great theorist of Christendom,” not long after the “Christian Church became [...] a worldly order” (189)⁹⁶. While Augustine is not the only individual of his era whose

⁹⁵ In that it is all mediated through Christ in a sense.

⁹⁶ See the opening of Chappell’s chapter on St. Augustine’s ethics: “through Constantine at the Council of Nicaea (325), the Christian Church became [...] a worldly order. It became that concrete reality in the public world of human life that, for at least the next thousand years, it was indisputably to be in every part of the Roman or post-Roman world that evaded annexation by Islamic conquistadors, [...] Constantine’s achievement was no less than to invent Christendom. Here as elsewhere in theology, the theory followed the practice: the first great theorist of Christendom inaugurated by Constantine (272-337) is Augustine (354-430), and the central text of his theorising [*sic*], *De civitate Dei*, “On the city of God,” was completed

written work unabashedly assimilates certain (Neo-)Platonic⁹⁷ and Aristotelian notions with Christian doctrine, McMahon points out that

In the Platonic, and Neoplatonic, understanding of the journey of the soul as a return to God – a journey back to the One from which we are separated at birth – Augustine found a compelling model to describe his own struggle to regain a vanished wholeness. He also found a vocabulary readily adaptable to Christian ends. [...] it was not the least of Augustine's many contributions to the long-term development of Christianity that he infused a strong element of Platonic thought into the faith.

(McMahon 105)

McMahon thinks that in doing so, Augustine specifically “helped ensure that the pagan goal of happiness **as the rest or completion of the soul** remained very much a part of the Christian promise” (*ibid.*). Yet, as McMahon's very choice of words implies, the notion

almost exactly 100 years after Nicaea, in 427” (Chappell, 189-190); Chappell, Timothy, “Augustine's Ethics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. (Second Edition) Eds. David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump. Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge U. P., 2014. pp. 180-207.

⁹⁷ One can begin to detect such a phenomenon in Augustine's ideas merely by reading some of the chapter headings added to the English translation of two of his great works: “Whatever Has Been Rightly Said By The Heathen, We Must appropriate To Our Uses” (*On Christian Doctrine*, II.xl.); “That It Is Especially With The Platonists That We Must Carry On Our Disputations On Matters Of Theology, Their Opinions Being Preferable To Those Of All Other Philosophers” (*City of God*, VIII.v); “Porphyry's Emendations and Modifications of Platonism” (*City of God*, X.xxx) (*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Vol. II (St. Augustin's [sic] City of God and Christian Doctrine)*. Ed. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. Trans. Marcus Dods. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Co., 1887. <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2053>>. (n.b. Porphyry serves as Plotinus' scribe; the latter is often retrospectively identified as the first of the Neoplatonists.) In one chapter of the *City of God* we find Augustine disagreeing with and responding to the Platonic view that, with earth being the lowest element in Plato's hierarchy of the elements, the earthly human body cannot inhabit Heaven when the body is resurrected because its physical weight would be too heavy for Heaven, since the latter is situated above the element of air (XXII.xi). On the other hand, Augustine later asserts that, concerning the resurrection of the human body and soul, Plato's opinion (“that souls could not exist eternally without bodies”) combined with Porphyry's opinion (“that the purified soul, when it has returned to the Father, shall never return to the ills of this world”) “Would Have Conducted Them Both To The Truth If They Could Have Yielded To One Another” (*City of God*, XXII.xxvii). Augustine goes so far as to say that, if the two “could have seen their way to hold [statements they made singly] in common, they might possibly have become Christians” (XXII.xxvii.1). Additionally, Augustine attempts to demonstrate which aspects of the philosophies of Plato, Labeo, and Varro might have contributed to what Augustine calls the “True Faith Of The Resurrection” if the three philosophers “Had Adopted One Another's Opinions Into One Scheme” (*City of God*, XXII.xxviii). John Haldane and Annabel Brett also study Augustine's debt to the Platonic tradition, such as his dualistic view of Earth below and Heaven above (Morris, “St Thomas Aquinas,” 00:05:53-00:06:13), and his use of Platonic metaphysics to explain the journey or temporal / eschatological line that takes those fallen humans who are redeemed by Christ back to God – the supreme good and the supreme being, whereas evil is “the privation of being” (00:15:15-00:16:08). According to Brett, while Plato and Augustine use the metaphor of a journey (and pilgrimage, for Augustine), Aristotle does not. Aristotle does, however, believe in an antecedently-established *telos* that humans (“dynamic agents seeking our end”) are meant to achieve (00:16:08-00:16:35). (Morris, Thomas, prod. “St Thomas Aquinas.” *In Our Time*. BBC Radio-4. London, 17 Sept. 2009. <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b00mkd63>>.)

of the rest and completion of the soul is merely *part* of the Christian promise, not necessarily the exclusive essence of what a Christian ought to understand as being *eudaimonia/beatitudo* and/or the sovereign good.

Despite Augustine's use of borrowed vocabulary and certain theoretical models, there are significant discrepancies between the meaning he applies to some of these terms and that assigned to them by secular philosophers. For instance, one will find that Augustine inherits his pagan predecessors' general definition of the *summum bonum* – a definition we find in the opening chapter of Book XIX of what is considered his greatest work, *De civitate Dei (On the City of God)*:

For the end of our good is that for the sake of which other things are to be desired, while it is to be desired for its own sake; and the end of evil is that on account of which other things are to be shunned, while it is avoided on its own account. Thus, by the *end of good*^[98], we at present mean, not that by which good is destroyed, so that it no longer exists, but that by which it is finished, so that it becomes complete; and by the *end of evil* we mean, not that which abolishes it, but that which completes its development. These two ends, therefore, are the supreme good^[99] and the supreme evil [...]. (*City of God*, XIX.i.1)¹⁰⁰

Though the perennial philosophical question must be raised: of what *specific* element (be it substance, activity, emotion, sensation, *etc.*) does that end essentially consist?

Having (re-)converted to Christianity as an adult, after courting other philosophical schools (including a ten-year stint studying Manichaeism and, later, Neoplatonism), Augustine makes sure to call attention to at least three key differences between the Christian notions of the *summum bonum* and *eudaimonia* (which he calls

⁹⁸ “*Finem boni.*” All Latin quotations from the *City of God* are taken from: *S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia: De Civitate Dei contra Paganos libri XXII*. Augustinus.it., n. p., n. d. <<http://www.augustinus.it/latino/cdd/index.htm>>.

⁹⁹ “*Summum bonum.*”

¹⁰⁰ All English quotations from *The City of God* are taken from *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Vol. II (St. Augustin's [sic] City of God and Christian Doctrine)*. Ed. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. Trans. Marcus Dods. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Co., 1887. <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2053>>.

beatitudo or *felicitas*) and the notions adhered to by various pagan philosophical traditions. Augustine discloses that this is part of his effort to expose the difference between what he calls the “empty dreams”¹⁰¹ of unbelievers and the hope (and fulfillment of that hope) provided by God (*ibid.*)¹⁰².

The first distinction is one made implicitly between the terms *eudaimonia* and beatitude/felicity. In a chapter entitled: “That To Obtain The Blessed Life, Which Consists In Partaking Of the Supreme Good, Man Needs Such Mediation As Is Furnished Not By A Demon, But By Christ Alone” (*City of God*, IX.xvii.1), Augustine dismisses the need for demonic influence or agency, which, as we know, had been tied to the original sense of the term *eudaimonia*. In other words, it is from this chapter that one may infer that the original demon involved in *eudaimonia* is to be replaced by Christ; for Christ’s mediation alone is counted on to provide humans with beatitude/felicity, not the intervention of a demon – not even that of a good demon.

The second distinction falls between the notion of beatitude and that of the sovereign good. Augustine distinguishes between the finite human being’s beatitude and the infinite sovereign good – the latter possessing all intrinsic value and affecting even more than mankind’s beatitude alone. Augustine believes that God is not only the site and source of the sovereign good but also the sovereign good itself, whereas the human’s ideal state of beatitude occurs in and comes from that sovereign good. Said another way,

¹⁰¹ “*Rebus vanis.*”

¹⁰² “[...] I must first explain, so far as the limits of this work allow me, the reasonings by which men have attempted to make for themselves a happiness in this unhappy life, in order that it may be evident, not only from divine authority, but also from such reasons as can be adduced to unbelievers, how the empty dreams of the philosophers differ from the hope which God gives to us, and from the substantial fulfillment of it which He will give us as our blessedness” (*City of God*, XIX.i.1).

the Christian philosopher asserts that one's supreme blessedness can only occur in and come from God, who is an incorporeal nature that fills all at all times¹⁰³.

This view stands in opposition to the belief held by many pagan philosophers that *eudaimonia* (and the sovereign good, *i.e.*, the essence of which *eudaimonia* consists, the object causing it to occur) can be sourced from within oneself. Augustine adopts an openly critical tone with respect to this understanding; he claims that philosophers of this sort “have, **with a marvelous shallowness**, sought to find their blessedness in this life

¹⁰³ “But the question arises, whether, when their eyes are open, they shall see Him with the bodily eye? If the eyes of the spiritual body have no more power than the eyes which we now possess, manifestly God cannot be seen with them. They must be of a very different power if they can look upon **that incorporeal nature which is not contained in any place, but is all in every place**. For though we say that God is in heaven and on earth, as He, Himself says by the prophet, ‘I fill heaven and earth,’ we do not mean that there is one part of God in heaven and another part on earth; but **He is all in heaven and all on earth, not at alternate intervals of time, but both at once, as no bodily nature can be**. The eye, then, shall have a vastly superior power, — the power not of keen sight, such as is ascribed to serpents or eagles, for however keenly these animals see, they can discern nothing but bodily substances, — but the power of seeing things incorporeal. Possibly it was this great power of vision which was temporarily communicated to the eyes of the holy Job while yet in this mortal body, when he says to God, ‘I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and melt away, and count myself dust and ashes;’ although there is no reason why we should not understand this of the eye of the heart, of which the apostle says, ‘Having the eyes of your heart illuminated.’ But that God shall be seen with these eyes no Christian doubts who believingly accepts what our God and Master says, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.’ But whether in the future life God shall also be seen with the bodily eye, this is now our question. [...] Wherefore it may very well be, and it is thoroughly credible, that we shall in the future world see the material forms of the new heavens and the new earth in such a way that we shall most distinctly **recognize God everywhere present and governing all things**, material as well as spiritual, and shall see Him, not as now we understand the invisible things of God, by the things which are made, and see Him darkly, as in a mirror, and in part, and rather by faith than by bodily vision of material appearances, but by means of the bodies we shall wear and which we shall see wherever we turn our eyes. As we do not believe, but see that the living men around us who are exercising vital functions are alive, though we cannot see their life without their bodies, but see it most distinctly by means of their bodies, so, wherever we shall look with those spiritual eyes of our future bodies, we shall then, too, by means of bodily substances behold **God, though a spirit, ruling all things**. Either, therefore, the eyes shall possess some quality similar to that of the mind, by which they may be able to discern spiritual things, and among these God, — a supposition for which it is difficult or even impossible to find any support in Scripture, — or, which is more easy to comprehend, God will be so known by us, and shall be so much before us, that we shall see Him by the spirit in ourselves, in one another, in Himself, in the new heavens and the new earth, in every created thing which shall then exist; and also by the body we shall see Him in every body which the keen vision of the eye of the spiritual body shall reach. Our thoughts also shall be visible to all, for then shall be fulfilled the words of the apostle, ‘Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the thoughts of the heart, and then shall every one have praise of God’” (*City of God*, XXII.xxix.3 and 6).

and in themselves” (*City of God*, XIX.iv.1). In Augustine’s view, beatitude is granted by God and its goodness is just one of the many expressions of God’s goodness.

Augustine also characterizes beatitude as a human being’s union with God. This point is made evident by a passage in which he alludes to the words of Psalm 73:28, pointing out that the psalmist (in this instance, the psalmist is Asaph) does *not* say “it is good for me to enjoy sensual pleasure” but, rather, that he *does* say: “it is good for me to be united with God” (X.xviii.1)¹⁰⁴. Likewise, we might add that the psalmist does not say that “it is good for me to **enjoy** being united with God,” but, rather, simply to “**be** united with God” (*ibid.*). This may lead readers to conclude that, as it was for the Psalmist and for Augustine, union with God (not even the *experience* of enjoyment of such union with God) is to be considered the essential and ultimate good, from which all beatitude proceeds, and which, therefore, we should not consider an “instrument” of beatitude – let alone of “pleasure” as commonly defined or understood.

Hence, Augustine’s discussion of the difference between *to use* (*uti*) and *to enjoy* (*frui*), which (this is not by chance) are used interchangeably in “common parlance”:

[...] we are said to enjoy that which in itself, and irrespective of other ends, delights us; to use that which we seek for the sake of some end beyond. For which reason the things of time are to be used rather than enjoyed, that we may deserve to enjoy things eternal; and not as those perverse creatures who would fain enjoy money and use God, – not spending money for God’s sake, but worshipping God for money’s sake. However, in common parlance, we both use fruits and enjoy uses. (*City of God*, XI.xxv.1)

Augustine repeatedly emphasizes a tenet that is most concisely summarized in a different work, *De Doctrina Christiana*: while it is permissible to use many things, truly and

¹⁰⁴ In English, the idea is separated into two verses: “Those who are far from you shall perish; [...] But for me it is good to be near God” (*ESV*, Ps. 73:27-28). In the Latin Vulgate, this idea is contained in one verse: “*Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est; ponere in Domino Deo spem meam: ut annuntiem omnes praedicationes tuas in portis filiae Sion*” (*Vulgate*, Ps. 72:28). This verse can be translated into English literally as: “For/To me it is good to adhere to God; to place my hope in the Lord God: [...]”

properly speaking, one must only enjoy “the Blessed Trinity, who is the Supreme and Unchangeable Good” (*On Christian Doctrine*, I.xxxiii.2).

The treatise describes these two verbs in further detail: “to enjoy a thing is to rest with satisfaction in it for its own sake. To use, on the other hand, is to employ whatever means are at one’s disposal to obtain what one desires, if it is a proper object of desire; for an unlawful use ought rather to be called an abuse” (I.iv). Book I of the *De Doctrina* (chapters xxxii-xxxiii) develops this concept further while also distinguishing it from God’s use (never enjoyment¹⁰⁵) of human beings:

But neither does He use after our fashion of using. For when we use objects, we do so with a view to the full enjoyment of the goodness of God. God, however, in His use of us, has reference to His own goodness. For it is because He is good we exist; and so far as we truly exist we are good. And, further, because He is also just, we cannot with impunity be evil; and so far as we are evil, so far is our existence less complete. Now He is the first and supreme existence, who is altogether unchangeable, and who could say in the fullest sense of the words, “I AM THAT I AM,” and “Thou shalt say to them, I AM hath sent me unto you;” so that all other things that exist, both owe their existence entirely to Him, and are good only so far as He has given it to them to be so. That use, then, which God is said to make of us has no reference to His own advantage, but to ours only; and, so far as He is concerned, has reference only to His goodness. When we take pity upon a man and care for him, it is for his advantage we do so; but somehow or other our own advantage follows by a sort of natural consequence, for God does not leave the mercy we show to him who needs it to go without reward. Now this is our highest reward, that we should fully enjoy Him, and that all who enjoy Him should enjoy one another in Him. (I.xxxii.1)

Thus, when Augustine appears to conflate things to be enjoyed in Heaven (such as eternal blessings, felicity, or citizenship in the City of God) with God Himself, we are to understand that such things are to be enjoyed only on account of God’s goodness or presence as it is experienced *together with* them. If not read in this manner, the claim that

¹⁰⁵ “For God loves us, and Holy Scripture frequently sets before us the love He has towards us. In what way then does He love us? As objects of use or as objects of enjoyment? If He enjoys us, He must be in need of good from us, and no sane man will say that; for all the good we enjoy is either Himself, or what comes from Himself. And no one can be ignorant or in doubt as to the fact that the light stands in no need of the glitter of the things it has itself lit up. The Psalmist says most plainly, ‘I said to the LORD, Thou art my God, for Thou needest not my goodness.’ He does not enjoy us then, but makes use of us. For if He neither enjoys nor uses us, I am at a loss to discover in what way He can love us” (*On Christian Doctrine*, I.xxxi.1).

“Things of time are to be used rather than enjoyed, that we may **deserve to enjoy things eternal**” (the Latin is plural too) (*City of God*, XI.xxv.1) could have us wonder if one is to enjoy more than just God Himself. Indeed, a potential ambiguity lies in the author’s reference to plural objects rather than a singular focus on a singular God. A similar confusion could arise when Augustine describes families who live by faith as focusing on eternal blessings: “they look for promised eternal blessings, they do not get diverted from God” (*City of God*, XIX.xvii.1). Yet another example arises in Book XIX, Chapter xix, where “eternal interests” are mentioned even though, once again, “God” is referred to in the singular throughout the passage¹⁰⁶. Moreover, instead of stating that God created man

¹⁰⁶ “It is a matter of no moment in the city of God whether he who adopts the faith that brings men to God adopts it in one dress and manner of life or another, so long only as he lives in conformity with the commandments of God. And hence, when philosophers themselves become Christians, they are compelled, indeed, to abandon their erroneous doctrines, but not their dress and mode of living, which are no obstacle to religion. So that we make no account of that distinction of sects which Varro adduced in connection with the Cynic school, provided always nothing indecent or self-indulgent is retained. As to these three modes of life, the contemplative, the active, and the composite, although, so long as a man’s faith is preserved, he may choose any of them without detriment to his eternal interests, yet he must never overlook the claims of truth and duty. No man has a right to lead such a life of contemplation as to forget in his own ease the service due to his neighbor; nor has any man a right to be so immersed in active life as to neglect the contemplation of God. The charm of leisure must not be indolent vacancy of mind, but the investigation or discovery of truth, that thus every man may make solid attainments without grudging that others do the same. And, in active life, it is not the honors or power of this life we should covet, since all things under the sun are vanity, but we should aim at using our position and influence, if these have been honorably attained, for the welfare of those who are under us, in the way we have already explained. It is to this the apostle refers when he says, ‘He that desireth the episcopate desireth a good work.’ He wished to show that the episcopate is the title of a work, not of an honor. It is a Greek word, and signifies that he who governs superintends or takes care of those whom he governs: for ἐπί means over, and σκοπεῖν, to see; therefore ἐπισκοπεῖν means ‘to oversee.’ So that he who loves to govern rather than to do good is no bishop. Accordingly no one is prohibited from the search after truth, for in this leisure may most laudably be spent; but it is unseemly to covet the high position requisite for governing the people, even though that position be held and that government be administered in a seemly manner. And therefore holy leisure is longed for by the love of truth; but it is the necessity of love to undertake requisite business. If no one imposes this burden upon us, we are free to sift and contemplate truth; but if it be laid upon us, we are necessitated for love’s sake to undertake it. And yet not even in this case are we obliged wholly to relinquish the sweets of contemplation; for were these to be withdrawn, the burden might prove more than we could bear” (*City of God*, XIX.xix.1: “*Nihil sane ad istam pertinet civitatem quo habitu vel more vivendi, si noon est contra divina praecepta, istam fidem, qua pervenitur ad Deum, quisque sectetur; unde ipsos quoque philosophos, quando Christiani fiunt, non habitum vel consuetudinem victus, quae nihil impedit religionem, sed falsa dogmata mutare compellit. Unde illam quam Varro adhibuit ex Cynicis differentiam, si nihil turpiter atque intemperanter agat, omnino non curat. Ex tribus vero illis vitae generibus, otioso, actuoso et ex utroque composito, quamvis salva fide quisque possit in quolibet eorum vitam ducere et ad sempiterna praemia*”).

to covet God Himself, Augustine asserts that God designed humans to “covet [...] citizenship” in the City of God (XI.i.1). Another example appears in the penultimate paragraph of the entire work. There, Augustine asks rhetorically: “For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?” (XXII.xxx.5)¹⁰⁷. Surely this question does not imply that humans are created to pursue (citizenship in) such a kingdom rather than God Himself.

Augustine often conflates a variety of heavenly aspects with the singular notion of the sovereign good (and of beatitude). In juxtaposition to the pagan notion that the sovereign good consists in pleasure, he uses a constellation of words and imagery to describe (or make reference to) it according to the faith. In the chapter entitled “What Christians Believe Regarding the Supreme Good,” for instance, Augustine writes that “**life eternal is the supreme good**” (*City of God*, XIX.iv.1) and “[s]alvation, such as it shall be in the world to come, shall itself be our **final happiness**” (XIX.iv.5). Elsewhere, he explains, “we may say of **peace**^[108], as we have said of eternal life, that it is **the end of**

pervenire, interest tamen quid amore teneat veritatis, quid officio caritatis inpendat. Nec sic esse quisque debet otiosus, ut in eodem otio utilitatem non cogitet proximi, nec sic actuosus, ut contemplationem non requirat Dei [...],” p. 387).

¹⁰⁷ In the sentences leading up to this question, the author describes this kingdom of which there is **no end** in the following manner: “But there is not now space to treat of these [7] ages; suffice it to say that the seventh shall be our Sabbath, which shall be brought to a close, not by an evening, but by the Lord’s day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end” (*City of God*, XXII.xxx.5).

¹⁰⁸ Augustine describes this peace in detail. Chapter xi sees the supreme good in Jerusalem as being / constituting eternal peace: the word *pax* “is a good so great, that even in this earthly and mortal life there is no word we hear with such pleasure [*gratius*], nothing we desire with such zest [*desiderabilius concupisci*], or find to be more thoroughly gratifying [*i.e.*, giving satisfaction or pleasure]” [*nihil postremo possit melius inveniri*] (*City of God*, XIX.xi.1). After positing, in Chapter xii, that all human beings wish to be joyful and have peace, Augustine presents the Law of Nature as preserving universal peace in Chapter xiii. There, he develops a multi-layered portrayal of universal peace. First comes the peace of the body (which will be further described in XXII.xii-xxi as he speculates on the resurrected body’s age, size, beauty, substance, etc.): it “consists in the duly proportioned arrangement of its parts” (*City of God* XIX.xiii.1). Then come the peace of the irrational soul and that of the rational soul: one is “the harmonious repose of the appetites,” and the other “the harmony of knowledge and action” (*ibid*). Then comes peace *between* the body and the

our good,” (XIX.xi.1) and “the **supreme good** of the city of God is perfect and eternal **peace** [...] the peace of freedom from all evil” (XIX.xx.1).

In other instances, though, Augustine emphasizes God’s role as the true essence of the sovereign good: when our spirits (endowed with intelligence, capable of contemplating and enjoying God) are united in the “holy and heavenly city [...] the **material** of their sustenance and **blessedness** is **God Himself**” (*City of God*, XXII.i.2); God is “our **chief good**” (XXII.xxix.1); “there is **nothing greater or better**” than “**God Himself**” (XXII.xxx.1). Still, the many aspects – pertaining to time (eternal), condition (union, peace, order, hierarchy without envy or resistance or threat, completion), feeling (tranquility, fullness, felicity, joy), substance (God Himself), quantity (nothing greater), quality (nothing better), location (kingdom without end, city of God), activity (participation in God, rest, love, praise) – characterizing the sovereign good convey a notion that is admittedly layered. Yet these enticing aspects, by which the writer targets his readers’ hedonistic affinities and appetites, serve to direct one’s spiritual eyes in the

soul, *i.e.*, the “well-ordered and harmonious life and health of the living creature” (*ibid*). Peace is further described as a state in which, just as the “soul shall rule the body [just as God shall rule the man], with a sweetness and facility suitable to the felicity of a life which is done with bondage” (*City of God*, XIX.xxvii.1). Augustine continues, in XIX.xiii.1, by describing the peace *between* man and God as consisting of “the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law” (*City of God* XIX.xiii.1). He even goes on to characterize the peace between humans, between family members, and between citizens: “Peace between man and man is well-ordered concord. Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens” (*ibid*). The final peace described is that of the celestial city: it “is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. The peace of all things is the tranquility of order. Order is the distribution which allots things equal and unequal, each to its own place” (*ibid*). To peace, Augustine opposes misery, disquiet, and separation from “tranquility of order in which there is no disturbance” (*ibid*). What arises from this complex description is the notion that peace essentially entails a (restored) natural order of all aspects of the cosmos in relation to one another. An order authored by God, and entailing a hierarchy in which entities of different levels are content and not striving or threatening to occupy a higher level. Augustine describes this perfect peace on numerous occasions throughout the *City of God*; *cf.* “That the Peace of Those Who Serve God Cannot in This Mortal Life Be Apprehended in Its Perfection” (XIX.xxvii); “Of the Happiness of the Eternal Peace, Which Constitutes the End or True Perfection of the Saints” (XIX.xi). In XXII.xxx, peace means that we suffer no opposition; in XXII.xxix, we learn that only God understands such a peace (*cf.* Phil. 4:7); yet we will be made to participate.

direction of God Himself. Hence the permission that Augustine grants to use, with wisdom, various means that will assist us in on our path¹⁰⁹.

Book IV of *On Christian Doctrine* addresses “the mode of making known the meaning” of Scripture when it has been properly interpreted (IV.i.1). Without laying down a full treatise on rhetoric¹¹⁰, the former teacher of the art advises Christian teachers on the appropriate use of it. Referring to Cicero, Augustine reminds us that

a great orator has truly said that “an eloquent man must speak so as to teach, to delight, and to persuade.” Then he adds: “To teach is a necessity, to delight is a beauty, to persuade is a triumph.” Now of these three, the one first mentioned, the teaching, which is a matter of necessity, depends on what we say; the other two on the way we say it. He, then, who speaks

¹⁰⁹ The Council of Trent decided (December 1563) “that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints are to be placed and retained especially in the churches, and that due honor and veneration is to be given them; not, however, that any divinity or virtue is believed to be in them by reason of which they are to be venerated, or that something is to be asked of them, or that trust is to be placed in images, as was done of old by the Gentiles who placed their hope in idols; but because the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which they represent, so that by means of the images which we kiss and before which we uncover the head and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ and venerate the saints whose likeness they bear. [...] Moreover, let the bishops diligently teach that by means of the stories of the mysteries of our redemption portrayed in paintings and other representations the people are instructed and confirmed in the articles of faith, which ought to be borne in mind and constantly reflected upon; also that great profit is derived from all holy images, not only because the people are thereby reminded of the benefits and gifts bestowed on them by Christ, but also because through the saints the miracles of God and salutary examples are set before the eyes of the faithful, so that they may give God thanks for those things, may fashion their own life and conduct in imitation of the saints and be moved to adore and love God and cultivate piety. [...] If any abuses shall have found their way into these holy and salutary observances, the holy council desires earnestly that they be completely removed [...]. And if at times it happens, when this is beneficial to the illiterate, that the stories and narratives of the Holy Scriptures are portrayed and exhibited, the people should be instructed that not for that reason is the divinity represented in picture as if it can be seen with bodily eyes or expressed in colors or figures” (Schroeder, Rev. H. J. (trans.), *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1978. pp. 215-216).

¹¹⁰ Cicero, *Orator*, LXIX. In his *De Oratore*, however, Cicero defines the three functions of eloquence as *probare*, *conciliare*, and *flectere*. His choice of *conciliare* rather than *delectare* shows his focus on bringing the audience together, to political agreement. This supreme goal should never be “mere” pleasure, as is supposed to be the case in poetry and in epideictic rhetoric (praise, disconnected from an immediate political or forensic aim). With its emphasis on the epideictic, however, the oratory of the imperial period put a renewed emphasis on pleasure, which, as we see here, is inherited in turn by Christian rhetoric – saint Augustin in particular, whose *De doctrina christiana* (esp. Book IV) is the first in a series of similar efforts to “convert” classical rhetoric into Christian eloquence. Augustine limits the persuasive effect of pleasure by positing a distinction between pleasure and use: sin consists of taking undue pleasure from what should be used on our way to a higher level. Thus it is appropriate to “please” the converted (for whom such pleasure is not a “god” but points to the true God), but not those who need to be converted. The latter must be moved. Renaissance authors such as Melancthon, Erasmus, Budé and others reflected on the manner to adapt classical rhetoric to a Christian world and apply it to Christian themes as well as predication. See, for example, the first chapters of Marc Fumaroli’s *L’âge de l’éloquence. Rhétorique et « res literaria » de la Renaissance au seuil de l’époque classique* (Geneva: Droz, 2008) on this transformation.

with the purpose of teaching should not suppose that he has said what he has to say as long as he is not understood [...]. If, however, he is understood, he has said his say, whatever may have been his manner of saying it. But if he wishes to delight or persuade his hearer as well, he will not accomplish that end by putting his thought in any shape no matter what, but for that purpose the style of speaking is a matter of importance. And as the hearer must be pleased in order to secure his attention, so he must be persuaded in order to move him to action. And as he is pleased if you speak with sweetness and elegance, so he is persuaded if he be drawn by your promises, and awed by your threats; if he reject what you condemn, and embrace what you commend; if he grieve when you heap up objects for grief, and rejoice when you point out an object for joy; if he pity those whom you present to him as objects of pity, and shrink from those whom you set before him as men to be feared and shunned. [...]

28. If, however, they do not yet know this, they must of course be instructed before they can be moved. And perhaps the mere knowledge of their duty will have such an effect that there will be no need to move them with greater strength of eloquence. Yet when this is needful, it ought to be done. And it is needful when people, knowing what they ought to do, do it not. Therefore, to teach is a necessity. [...] On the same principle, to persuade is not a necessity: for it is not always called for [...]. For this reason also to persuade is a triumph, because it is possible that a man may be taught and delighted, and yet not give his consent. And what will be the use of gaining the first two ends if we fail in the third? Neither is it a necessity to give pleasure; for when, in the course of an address, the truth is clearly pointed out (and this is the true function of teaching), it is not the fact, nor is it the intention, that the style of speech should make the truth pleasing, or that the style should of itself give pleasure; but the truth itself, when exhibited in its naked simplicity, gives pleasure, because it is the truth.

(*On Christian Doctrine*, IV.xii.1-2)

Accordingly, the next chapter posits that

The eloquent divine, then, when he is urging a practical truth, must not only teach so as to give instruction, and please so as to keep up the attention, but he must also sway the mind so as to subdue the will. For if a man be not moved by the force of truth, though it is demonstrated to his own confession, and clothed in beauty of style, nothing remains but to subdue him by the power of eloquence. (IV.xiii.1)

We find this core principle of Christian rhetoric asserted by Granada after and before many others¹¹¹.

¹¹¹ This is because “les hommes pechent plus par la corruption de leurs affections et passions que pour ignorer la verité: à ceste cause celuy qui parle du remede de ce mal faut que travaille **pour esmouvoir leurs volontez plus que pour enseigneur leurs entendemens**. Pource disent tous les maistres d’eloquence, qu’il n’y a moyen meilleur pour celuy qui veut mouvoir les affections des autres, que d’avoir veritablement esmeu la sienne. Ce que Quintilian exprime, disant ainsi: [...] si nous voulons mouvoir les cœurs des autres que les nostres le soient premierement [...]; comment s’indignera celuy que je veux esmouvoir à courroux s’il voit que je ne me courrouce point? Comment pleurera celuy que je veux attirer à compassion, s’il voit que mes yeux sont sans larmes? [...]. Que faut-il donc douter que l’homme devot qui nuit et jour ploure et gemit et s’arreste au sentiment des choses divines, ne sente beaucoup plus profondément et sensiblement des choses que celuy, lequel quoy que soit sçavant, ne sçeut onc que c’est que **d’espandre une larme pour l’amour de Dieu**. A cecy j’adjouste que (comme dit Ciceron) l’eloquence qui ne ravit les auditeurs en admiration n’est d’aucune efficace: **Et si telle eloquence est requise pour les choses humaines, à**

However, judgment must be exercised when choosing the style or level of eloquence, the amount of ornamental words that one will employ when presenting truths. At times, a more florid style may be appropriate, while, at other times, “a more chastened style” may be the more appropriate choice (IV.xiv.1). Augustine repeatedly reminds us that the actual truth is more important than the expression of that truth (*cf.* IV.xxix). The same fundamental reasoning applies in all such cases, whether we consider the “things” that God as supreme good provides us with or the words we use to name and envision them: it is both inevitable and appropriate to use means (*i.e.*, incomplete objects or representations, and the words that name them) insofar as we remember that they are only means, which should not be confused with what we wish to get to, even though we cannot think of it or reach for it in any other way. In this sense the means should be constantly mobilized *and* discarded in our minds.

Other things promised and to be enjoyed in Heaven are also evoked, but Augustine does not equate them with the supreme good, the chief end, or the object of one’s focus. Rather, they appear to be something additional bestowed by the supreme good, without ever making up part of its quiddity. The peace of immortality is expected to be accompanied, for example, by glory and honor (*City of God*, XIX.xiii), and contentment will be given as a gift (XXII.xxx).

A third distinction the author makes is that many pagan philosophers believe that the sovereign good and, by extension, beatitude, can be attained in this life, whereas

combien plus forte raison l’est elle pour les divines, et pour oster les hommes de peché, et vaincre les forces de l’ennemy lesquelles comme sont sur-naturelles, requiert aussi un esprit et bien-seance au dire qui surpasse le cours naturel. Et pour obtenir ceste eloquence, il est certain, qu’il n’y a rien plus propre, ou qui se rapporte mieux que l’esprit de Dieu et ceste sorte de parler, de sorte que les estincelles de l’esprit resplendissent és parolles de celui qui parle” (*Le vray chemin*, II, “Des remedes contre ceste tentation,” 304 v°-305 v°). Thus, the ultimate agent of the orator’s persuasive emotion is the Holy Spirit.

Christian doctrine holds to the belief that the sovereign good (and, consequently, beatitude) can only be attained in the next life, after one's physical death. This point separates Augustine's point of view from that of Aristotle and the Peripatetics, among others. Not surprisingly, Augustine bases his rejection of the notion that beatitude can be fully attained or realized in this life on the understanding that such happiness was lost when humankind first sinned in the garden of Eden. Nevertheless, he adds, "when we lost happiness, we did not lose the love of it" (*City of God*, XXII.xxx.3), thus explaining why humans still desire and search for that happiness during one's mortal life, even though it cannot be attained in full until the life hereafter. However, he recognizes that not all pagan philosophical traditions adhere to the notion held by Aristotle. In fact, he acknowledges that "[t]he foremost of the philosophers agree with us about the spiritual felicity enjoyed by the blessed in the life to come" (XXII.xxv.1). The philosophers to whom he is alluding include, most prominently, the Neoplatonists, with whom Augustine quarrels nonetheless, taking issue with the fact that they do not believe that the body will also be resurrected with the soul (XXII.iv, v, and xi). Following a series of arguments developed in chapters xxv-xxvii, Augustine concludes by reminding readers of God's promise that "He will give eternal felicity to souls joined to their **own** bodies" (XXII.xxvii.1); and dedicates no short amount of time to speculating about the condition and occupation of those resurrected bodies (XXII.xii-xxi).

At this point, we may wonder what happiness, if any, Augustine's theories concede to mankind *now*, in one's mortal lifetime. He famously makes no effort to ignore, hide, or deny the miseries of this "unhappy^[112] life" (*City of God*, XIX.i.1), nor

¹¹² "Infelicitate."

the ineluctable “state of anxiety” (XIX.x.1) that humans experience “in this abode of weakness, and in these wicked days” (*ibid.*) – a time in which “we are still engaged in this intestine war [*bello intestino*¹¹³]” (XIX.iv.3). The conclusion of Book XXII.xxi¹¹⁴ foreshadows the topics that will be treated in the next three chapters, concerning both the sobering condition of mankind’s present life, and the “tokens¹¹⁵ of God’s goodness that are extended to the human race even in this life” (XXII.xxi.1). Augustine goes on to describe original sin as the “root of error and misplaced love which is born with every son of Adam” (XXII.xxii.1); and those who are “alienated from God” (God being the “blessed life of man” just as the soul is the life of the flesh) he describes as “[m]iserable” (XIX.xxvi.1). This misery of the condemned human race entails

[mankind’s] love of so many vain and hurtful things, which produces gnawing cares, disquiet, griefs, fears, wild joys, quarrels, law-suits, wars, treasons, angers, hatreds, deceit, flattery, fraud, theft, robbery, perfidy, pride, ambition, envy, murders, parricides, cruelty, ferocity, wickedness, luxury, insolence, impudence, shamelessness, fornications, adulteries, incests, and the numberless uncleannesses and unnatural acts of both sexes, which it is shameful so much as to mention; sacrileges, heresies, blasphemies, perjuries, oppression of the innocent, calumnies, plots, falsehoods, false witnessings, unrighteous judgments, violent deeds, plunderings [...]. (XXII.xxii.1)

In addition to such miseries are other travails: not only do bodily diseases cause pain but even “the cures and remedies are themselves tortures, so that men are delivered from a

¹¹³ In line 7 of Sonnet 164 (“*Or che 'l ciel et la terra e 'l vento tace*”) of his *Canzoniere*, Petrarch writes “*guerra è 'l mio stato*” [*i.e.*, “war is my state”] (ed. Musa, p. 254). In Coignard’s Sonnet LXXXV (12, 243), we find “*guerre intestine*.” The expression is not used in Rom. 8, and we have yet to find this expression in Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* or in Luis de Granada’s works. Could Coignard be quoting Augustine directly?

¹¹⁴ “For I say nothing of the time when God made man upright; I say nothing of the happy life of ‘the man and his wife’ in the fruitful garden, since it was so short that none of their children experienced it: I speak only of this life which we know, and in which we now are, from the temptations of which we cannot escape so long as we are in it, no matter what progress we make, for it is all temptation, and I ask, Who can describe the tokens of God’s goodness that are extended to the human race even in this life?” (*City of God*, XXII.xxi.1). Cf. Coignard’s Sonnet XCI on the tokens of God’s goodness in Nature, which He made for us.

¹¹⁵ These tokens, readers will learn, involve not only the inner and outer parts of the material human body but also the mind and soul.

pain that destroys by a cure that pains” (XXII.xxii.3)¹¹⁶. Furthermore, after asserting that sleep is “justly called repose,” Augustine rhetorically inquires:

how little of repose there sometimes is in [sleep] when disturbed with dreams and visions; and with what terror is the wretched mind overwhelmed by the appearances of things which are so presented. (*Ibid.*)¹¹⁷

Within Augustine’s philosophical and theological framework, one does find, however, a type of “middle ground” situated between the opinion of the pagan philosophers who believed happiness could be attained in this mortal life and Augustine’s Christian belief that happiness can only be attained in Heaven, on the other side of death. The conception of this “middle ground” happiness is not the same as that of Aquinas’ notion of “imperfect happiness,” which we will present in the following section. Rather, Augustine calls it the “happiness of hope”¹¹⁸. Indeed, even though beatitude (union with the sovereign good) cannot be fully experienced in one’s physical life on earth, Augustine

¹¹⁶ Cf. Coignard, Sonnet CIII.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Coignard, Sonnet LXXX.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Augustine’s “happiness of hope”: “Beyond this world and its veil of tears, all Christians could take solace in the thought that they were being led to the Lord, where our journey would be brought to its happy resolution and end. Here the blessed would see God ‘face to face,’ see him eternally through the spirit, and all desires would be fulfilled. Absolved of doubts, of fears, of longings, we would be made right again, as our ancestors were in the beginning, when ‘true joy flowed perpetually from God.’ There we could drink our fill, perpetually, in the kingdom without end. But until that time we would always suffer thirst. This vision of life was essentially ‘tragic’ in the sense that it downplayed the role of human agency in determining human fate, and tragic, too, in that it presented earthly existence as invariably steeped in suffering and pain. And yet by transforming the end of existence from a boundary into a gateway opening up onto eternal life, Augustine’s account offered a very different take on the tragic adage of old, ‘Call no man happy until he is dead.’ In the Christian conception, happiness *was* death, a proposition that dealt a severe blow to the impact of earthly fortune and the vagaries of chance. If, as in the classical reckoning, death completed happiness, [...] marking the end of a favored life, in the Christian conception, death was both a culmination and a beginning – the culmination of earthly pain and the onset of infinite beatitude, the beginning of happiness without end. And whereas the classical hero was thus wise to confront existence with continual foreboding – envisioning a happy ending only in hubris or as the unlikely intervention of a god from the machine – the Christian pilgrim could travel with the comfort of hope that he was moving in the direction of a better place. The struggle of the journey was itself a constant reminder that struggle was not in vain, for to suffer was to suffer in righteous punishment, in expiation, in forward movement and progress along the way. The trail of the journey becomes a trial, but also a continual reminder that the pain of each step has a purpose” (McMahon 105-106).

claims that its pursuit ought to commence in this lifetime; and one can take some comfort in this middle-ground avatar, called the happiness of hope.

Thus “a man can be called blessed, even now, not in reality but in hope **if he uses this life with a reference to the end** in which God shall be all and all in a secure eternity and perfect peace, which one ardently loves and confidently hopes for” (*City of God*, XIX.xx.1). Augustine reiterates this notion a few chapters later by explaining that, presently, one may enjoy perfect peace with God *by faith* and, later, will enjoy it *by sight*. The latter constitutes the “positive enjoyment of felicity”:

But the peace which is peculiar to ourselves we enjoy now with God by faith, and shall hereafter enjoy eternally with Him by sight. But the peace which we enjoy in this life, whether common to all or peculiar to ourselves, is rather the solace of our misery than the positive enjoyment of felicity. (XIX.xxvii.1)

Conversely, Augustine posits that the actual possession of happiness of this life, when done so without the hope of what is beyond, is really just “false happiness and profound misery” (XIX.xx.1)¹¹⁹, only to be surpassed by eternal misery (which is opposed to joy/happiness) in hell¹²⁰. This latter misery entails a second death, the soul being separated from God (who is the soul’s life¹²¹), the body being subjected to eternal pains all the more severe, hurtful, destructive, bitter, and grievous than pains experienced in this life, and there is no victory over one’s opponents (XIX.xxviii.1). This explanation serves to warn, if not scare, those who may not yet be motivated by his previous description of Heaven. Book XIII also characterizes hell as a place where man will sense feeling “neither sweet with pleasure nor wholesome with repose” (XIII.ii.1).

¹¹⁹ This notion echoes 1 Cor. 15:19: “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” (*ESV*).

¹²⁰ Augustine seems to assimilate evil with non-being: “For it is because [God] is good we exist; and so far as we truly exist we are good. And, further, because he is also just, we cannot with impunity be evil; and so far as we are evil, so far is our existence less complete” (*On Christian Doctrine*, I.xxxii.1).

¹²¹ God is the life of the soul (*City of God*, XIII.ii.1).

In *City of God* XIX.iv, Augustine explains in greater detail *how*, according to the Christian tradition, one is to go about pursuing the sovereign good in one's mortal lifetime. The resulting program of ethics that Augustine proffers can be summarized by the following counsel. Upon exhorting his readers, saying: "let us by God's help accomplish at least this" (XIX.iv.3), Augustine specifies two acts: first, "to preserve the soul from succumbing and yielding to the flesh that lusts against it" (*ibid.*) and second, "to refuse our consent to the perpetration of sin" (*ibid.*). These two acts, we learn in the fourth paragraph, are carried out by means of the virtues¹²² of temperance, prudence, justice, and fortitude. He adds that, while sense and intellect are human goods, virtue holds the highest place among human good things (compared to divine things, like grace) because its occupation is "to wage perpetual war with vices" (XIX.iv.3)¹²³. Moreover, virtues have the potential power to "make good use of good and evil things" (XIX.x.1).

In Book XXII, a third act is added to the program of ethics proposed here. Augustine claims that the soul can potentially *conquer* (not just wage war with) vices specifically by "fixing its desires upon no other object than the supreme and unchangeable^[124] good" (*ibid.*). He rhetorically reframes the unpleasant reality of "this abode of weakness, and in these wicked days, this state of anxiety" by positing it as being

¹²² In the passage, virtue is defined as "the art of living" that is learned; thus it is not a primary object of nature (XIX.i.2). Virtue is also defined as the "art of regulating life" (XIX.iii.1); this is telling with respect to the value of temperance.

¹²³ Vices to avoid/resist are lust, ire, hatred, indecent language, slander, immoderate grief, ungrateful disposition (XXII.xxiii).

¹²⁴ In Augustine's understanding, God does not change. Humans change, though humans have the impression that God has changed. Rather, Augustine explains, our experience of something at God's hand is new/changed: "It is true that wicked men do many things contrary to God's will; but so great is His wisdom and power, that all things which seem adverse to His purpose do still tend towards those just and good ends and issues which He Himself has foreknown. And consequently, when God is said to change His will, as when, *e.g.*, He becomes angry with those to whom He was gentle, it is rather they than He who are changed, and they find Him changed in so far as their experience of suffering at His hand is new, as the sun is changed to injured eyes, and becomes as it were fierce from being mild, and hurtful from being delightful, though in itself it remains the same as it was" (*City of God*, XXII.ii.1).

useful since it “stimulat[es] us to seek with keener longing for that security where peace is complete and unassailable” (XIX.x.1)¹²⁵. Though he acknowledges that, lest the human become too confident now and stop looking towards the life to come, victory over the vices is not secure – it is “full of anxiety and effort” (XIX.xxvii.1). In other words, the consoling aspect of the anxiety and effort involved in acquiring and maintaining virtue is that they keep us humble and push us to look towards the life to come. Augustine also asserts that, in order to obtain the sovereign good, one must, with God’s help and grace, “live rightly” [*recte nobis esse vivendum*] (XIX.iv.1)¹²⁶, by which he means that one must live by faith, obtain remission of one’s sins, and work towards perfecting one’s virtues; for “Our very righteousness, too, though true in so far as it has respect to the true good, is yet in this life of such a kind that it consists rather in the remission of sins than in the perfecting of virtues” (XIX.xxvii.1). Using language that will later be reclaimed by the Reformation¹²⁷, he is careful to emphasize that one cannot live by faith via one’s own

¹²⁵ Using a similar argument/line of reasoning, Augustine writes that God permits torments (such as death) even upon baptized infants and teaches us to “bewail the calamities of this life and to desire the felicity of the life to come” (*City of God*, XXII.xxii.3).

¹²⁶ “Eternal life is the supreme good [...] and to obtain [it] we must live rightly” (XIX.iv.1).

¹²⁷ Concerning Augustine’s view of the role of human agency in one’s attainment of the *summum bonum*, McMahon observes the following: “As Augustine emphasized again and again, true happiness was ‘the gift of God,’ to be imparted only at death and only to the chosen few. The disturbing implication of this judgment was that God in his wisdom had ‘predestined’ those who would be saved. And indeed the rudiments of a theory of predestination can certainly be found scattered throughout his works, as Martin Luther and John Calvin, among others, would later observe. But unlike these men, Augustine refused to dwell at length on the mysteries of the dispensation of grace” (McMahon 105). Further: “In countering [the ‘Pelagian’ belief that one can achieve happiness on one’s own], Augustine tried to strike a careful balance between free will and grace, human agency and the dynamic power of God. But it was a delicate balance, and in some minds it tipped dangerously close to a tragic fatalism with respect to our position in the world. As a consequence, long before Luther and Calvin weighed in, at the time of the Reformation, with their attempt to propel Augustine’s authority further in this direction, figures in the church were devoting critical energy to putting weight on the other side [...]. Whether Augustine himself actually taught [the doctrine of ‘twin predestination’] remains a contested question. But what is most immediately relevant is that already in the ninth century there were people in the church who worried about the dangers that such a doctrine could pose. Double predestination, they argued, not only presented a terrible picture of the true, loving God but also threatened to subvert all efforts at moral and spiritual reform. Undermining free will, it would

power. We need God's help (XIX.iv.1), for we do not possess within "ourselves power to live rightly, but can do so only if He who has given us faith to believe in His help to help us when we believe and pray" (*ibid.*).

Defining orthodox Christian doctrine, Augustine proclaims that, ultimately, "From this hell upon earth there is no escape, save through the grace of the Saviour Christ, our God and Lord" (XXII.xxii.4) – this is the Christ who "redeemed us by his blood" (XXII.xxx.4). He adds that one cannot be delivered from the consequences of original sin except for "by Christ's grace" (XXII.xxii.1). As mentioned previously, Book IX argues that Christ's mediation alone can provide humans with eternal blessedness: "That To Obtain The Blessed Life, Which Consists In Partaking Of the Supreme Good, Man Needs Such Mediation As Is Furnished Not By A Demon, But By Christ Alone." The chapter further explains: "This, then, as Scripture says, is the 'Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,' [1 Tim. 2:5] of whose divinity, whereby He is equal to the Father, and humanity, whereby He has become like us" (IX.xvii.1). In the same paragraph, we read that Christ, as our mediator, cleanses us and heals us. Book XXII explains how it is by Christ that one is "reconciled to God" because Jesus cleansed us of our sins (XXII.x.1); "When we are **restored** by God, we are perfected, we see, and we are made full" (XXII.xxx.4)¹²⁸. We are reminded that, no matter the success of our efforts to resist vice, we should always ask for forgiveness:

undermine the church's position as the sole mediator of God's grace, unleashing havoc on the world" (McMahon 110-111).

¹²⁸ "For we shall ourselves be the seventh day, when we shall be filled and replenished with God's blessing and sanctification. There shall we be still, and know that He is God; that He is that which we ourselves aspired to be when we fell away from Him, and listened to the voice of the seducer, 'Ye shall be as gods,' and so abandoned God, who would have made us as gods, not by deserting Him, but by participating in Him. For without Him what have we accomplished, save to perish in His anger? But when we are restored

But yet we are to know this, that however valorously we resist our vices, and however successful we are in overcoming them, yet as long as we are in this body we have always reason to say to God, Forgive us our debts. (XIX.xxviii.1)

Consequently, it is not one progressive, uninterrupted trajectory that humans are to expect from this lifetime. Rather, one's progress toward beatitude (as union with God) is intermittent, and depends heavily on God's intervention: on this side of Heaven, humans are bound to try to enjoy that which they ought to use, and *vice versa*.

Augustine also clarifies, in the *De Doctrina*, what must take place when one is enjoying another human being; he warns us not to settle forever on such enjoyment but, rather, allow that person to encourage us as we continue in our pursuit of a higher good:

For if we find our happiness complete in [*i.e.*, when it is caused by] one another, we stop short upon the road, and place our hope of happiness in man or angel. Now the proud man and the proud angel arrogate this to themselves, and are glad to have the hope of others fixed upon them. But, on the contrary, the holy man and the holy angel, even when we are weary and anxious to stay with them and rest in them, set themselves to recruit our energies with the provision which they have received of God for us or for themselves; and then urge us thus refreshed to go on our way towards Him, in the enjoyment of whom we find our common happiness. For even the apostle exclaims, "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" and again: "Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." And the angel admonisheth the man who is about to worship him, that he should rather worship Him who is his Master, and under whom he himself is a fellow-servant.

But when you have joy of a man in God, it is God rather than man that you enjoy. For you enjoy Him by whom you are made happy, and you rejoice to have come to Him in whose presence you place your hope of joy. And accordingly, Paul says to Philemon, "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord." For if he had not added "in the Lord," but had only said, "Let me have joy of thee," he would have implied that he fixed his hope of happiness upon him, although even in the immediate context to "enjoy" is used in the sense of to "use with delight." For when the thing that we love is near^[129] us, it is a matter of course that it should bring delight with it. And if you pass beyond this delight, and make it a means to that which you are permanently to rest in, you are using it, and it is an abuse of language to say that you enjoy it. But if you cling to it, and rest in it, finding your happiness complete in it, then you may be truly and properly said to enjoy it. And this we must never do except in the case of the Blessed Trinity, who is the Supreme and Unchangeable Good.

(*On Christian Doctrine*, I.xxxiii.2-3)

by Him, and perfected with greater grace, we shall have eternal leisure to see that He is God, for we shall be full of Him when He shall be all in all" (*City of God*, XXII.xxx.4).

¹²⁹ Note the emphasis on proximity here.

In sum, we can see that in Augustine's philosophy, enjoyment means that one loves God Himself, and His being near us brings us delight/enjoyment. Furthermore, it means that God is that entity to which humans are to cling, in which they are to permanently rest, and in which they are to find their happiness complete without looking elsewhere. Consequently, we are led to understand that humans may be on their way to enjoying the sovereign good (*i.e.*, God), but that this very enjoyment, or beatitude from union with God, could not be separated (conceptually or emotionally) from that union itself, even though, as humans, we will inevitably think of it as a reason to seek that union.

Most telling in this respect is the fact that also falling under the category of things that may be used (not enjoyed) is pleasure itself. Borrowing from Marcus Varro's¹³⁰ *De Philosophia*, Augustine reviews the traditions we have discussed above: he acknowledges that some philosophical sects conceive of the essence of the sovereign good as pleasure (*voluptas*) – where pleasure is defined as “an agreeable stirring of the bodily sense” (*City of God*, XIX.i.2)¹³¹. Examples of activities in which one experiences bodily pleasure include eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse (*ibid.*). He also acknowledges that other philosophical sects, like the Epicurean school, conceive of the sovereign good as pleasure (*voluptas*), but he explains that, as Varro had already pointed out, the Epicurean definition of such pleasure involves a semantic merging – combining the agreeable stirring of the bodily sense *and* repose (*quies*), the latter being characterized as something

¹³⁰ Varro (116-27 BCE) advocates for the Paripatetics and the Old Academy.

¹³¹ “*Delectabiliter movetur corporis sensus.*” Augustine specifically names Aristippus as one philosopher who “placed the chief good in pleasure” (*City of God*, VIII.iii.2).

that “excludes bodily inconvenience” (*ibid.*)¹³². Augustine’s reaction to this conception of the *summum bonum* is not much more favorable than his reaction to that of Aristippus¹³³: consider Book V, which accuses the Epicureans of thinking of the virtues as slaves meant to serve pleasure. Thus, Augustine agrees with the pagan philosophers who criticize such an understanding of the dynamic between virtue and pleasure and claim that “There is nothing [...] more disgraceful and monstrous than this picture, and which the eyes of good men can less endure” (V.xx.2).

Moreover, Augustine agrees with (or, at least, does not amend) Varro’s opinion that pleasure is something to be considered as different from repose, health, safety, mental gifts, etc., and he agrees that these (including pleasure) all fall within the category of “primary objects of nature” (XIX.i.2)¹³⁴. Varro posits that such primary objects are, collectively, naturally desired by human beings; some of them (*i.e.*, pleasure and repose) may collectively be considered the sovereign good. Augustine obviously does not conceive of the sovereign good in this manner. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note how he employs and even associates with the notion of the sovereign good other words that could be understood as indicators of a mental or spiritual pleasure. In fact, these very words (or their definitions) are often used to define pleasure. For example, readers will

¹³² “*Fit ut nullam molestiam corporis quisque patiatur.*”

¹³³ Don Cameron Allen points out that Augustine inherits the dominant opinion concerning Epicurus and, consequently, perpetuates his infamy (Allen 3). He adds that, even though Petrarch is typically “impressed by Augustine’s judgments,” the Italian poet does not accept the Medieval evaluation of Epicurus (5).

¹³⁴ “To illustrate briefly what [Varro] means, I must begin with his own introductory statement in the above-mentioned book, that there are four things which men desire, as it were by nature without a master, without the help of any instruction, without industry or the art of living which is called virtue, and which is certainly learned: either pleasure, which is an agreeable stirring of the bodily sense; or repose, which excludes every bodily inconvenience; or both these, which Epicurus calls by the one name, pleasure; or the primary objects of nature, which comprehend the things already named and other things, either bodily, such as health, and safety, and integrity of the members, or spiritual, such as the greater and less mental gifts that are found in men” (*City of God*, XIX.i.2).

frequently encounter the words “peace,” “joy”¹³⁵, “felicity”¹³⁶, and “satisfaction”¹³⁷. While these mental and spiritual pleasures are typically described as gifts granted by God, effects caused by God, or even sensations that drive us to praise God, they are nonetheless involved in the notion of enjoyment – which is what we feel called to seek in relation to God.

While Augustine does not always deny the positive value of bodily pleasures, he relegates them to a lower status in relation to other human goods (such as virtue and intellect). He also specifically criticizes the unnatural or inordinate ranking of pleasure carried out by the sinful heart rather than faulting pleasure *qua* pleasure. For instance, he observes that “those things which give us pleasure, such as food, drink, and the light of the sun, are found to be hurtful when immoderately or unseasonably used” (XI.xxii.1). Thus, to ensure one’s moderate and reasonable use of such pleasures, the author encourages us to look for the hidden utility of those pleasures rather than simply enjoying the pleasant sensation that they may generate. Moreover, Book XII argues that

the defection of the will is evil, because it is contrary to the order of nature, and an abandonment of that which has supreme being for that which has less. [...] [Luxury is not] the

¹³⁵ From his reading of the *Aeneid*, vi. 730-32, Augustine adopts Virgil’s categorization of joy as a “mental emotion” (*City of God*, XIV.iii.2), one of the four most common mental emotions, in addition to desire, fear, and sorrow. In another passage, it seems that readers are likely permitted to infer, based on Augustine’s logic, that God is the cause but something else (like rest or joy) is the effect/gift that one will experience (XI.viii.1).

¹³⁶ God is identified as the author of felicity (Book IV) and we are encouraged to “desire the felicity of the life to come” (*City of God*, XXII.xxii). Additionally, in the opening line of his final chapter, the author speculates about the expected eternal felicity to be encountered in the City of God. It comprises five characteristics: “How great shall be that felicity, which shall be tainted with no evil, which shall lack no good, and which shall afford leisure for the praises of God, who shall be all in all!” (XXII.xxx.1). Thus, felicity is thought to be “great,” “tainted with no evil,” it “lacks no good,” “affords leisure for the praises of God” (praising, we learn, is an “outgoing of affection”), and is “in all.”

¹³⁷ God is our satisfaction and the end/completion of all our desires: “What else was meant by His word through the prophet, ‘I will be your God, and ye shall be my people,’ than, I shall be their satisfaction, I shall be all that men honorably desire, – life, and health, and nourishment, and plenty, and glory, and honor, and peace, and all good things? This, too, is the right interpretation of the saying of the apostle, ‘That God may be all in all’” (*City of God*, XXII.xxx.1).

fault of lovely and charming objects, but of the heart that inordinately loves sensual pleasures, to the neglect of temperance. (XII.viii.1).

Such language echoes that of Aristotle, but Augustine does not stop there. He adds that temperance actually “attaches us to objects more lovely in their spirituality, and more delectable by their incorruptibility” (*ibid.*). Greater beauty (“more lovely”) and delight (“more delectable”) are being promised as a logical premise or means of persuading us to either abandon or, at least, moderate (*i.e.*, use with measured delight) sensual pleasures, provided that such use not cause one to neglect temperance, nor the pursuit of higher, spiritual objects – of which God is the essence.

The litany of what Augustine describes as the miseries and ills of this life is counterbalanced by more pleasing contemplations. For example, even though humans are alienated from God, they still have a temporal peace that they may momentarily enjoy¹³⁸ and ought to make use of. Moreover, by following Paul’s exhortation to pray for those in authority, one may aspire to “live a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and love” (XIX.xxvi.1). Other iterations of temporal peace are described earlier: temporal peace can come from health, safety, and human fellowship (XIX.xiii.2). Additional blessings from God that are present in one’s mortal existence include

all things needful for the preservation and recovery of this [temporal] peace, such as the objects which are accommodated to our outward senses, light, night, the air, and waters suitable for us, and everything the body requires to sustain, shelter, heal, or beautify it. (*Ibid.*)

Elsewhere, Augustine alludes to the ineffable nature of present blessings by asking rhetorically: “**Who can describe** the tokens of God’s goodness that are extended to the

¹³⁸ Passages like these show how the verb “enjoy” is dialectically connected with the verb “use”: what we “enjoy” at one level, we should “use” to access the next one.

human race even in this life?” (XXII.xxi.1). He also points to their abundance, and obligates us to

contemplate the rich and countless blessings with which the goodness of God, who cares for all He has created, has filled this very misery of the human race, which reflects His retributive justice. (XXII.xxiv.1)¹³⁹

Furthermore, we can know that God is good even in the midst of misery because creation pleases man’s eye, creation serves man’s purpose, and the variety and delights of creation are the solace of the condemned (XXII.xxiv.5). Note that the pleasure here serves a purpose. It gives humankind solace, which, in turn, informs us about God’s goodness and encourages us to persevere in the midst of inevitable labor. It would be erroneous, however, to conclude that God’s goodness is to be measured or substantiated by that of utility or even pleasure. Rather, pleasure and utility merely allude or make reference to the incomprehensible goodness of God¹⁴⁰.

Augustine gives priority to the joy and the peace of the soul rather than to bodily pleasure or the peace of the body. This is to be expected given the dominant belief that

¹³⁹ Among these blessings are: fecundity or the power of the seed to generate new life despite sin leading all to death (§1); that some of the things that God originally conferred upon Nature still remain (§1); that God did not entirely remove his power and governance over our human nature (§1); the mind that God gives to the soul (§3), by which the soul drinks in wisdom and is endowed with virtues (prudence, fortitude, temperance, and righteousness), which teach us how to spend our life well and how to attain endless happiness (§3); that, as reason and understanding are, over time, awakened and exercised, they become capable of knowledge and fit to understand what is true and fit to love what is good (§3); God-given blessings in the human body, like the sense organs and members of the body – the placement, appearance, and form of the sense organs and members serve the reasonable soul (§ 4) (*City of God*, XXII.xxiv.1-4).

¹⁴⁰ A similar concept is asserted in the following excerpt: “And thus divine providence admonishes us not foolishly to vituperate things, but to investigate their utility with care; and, where our mental capacity or infirmity is at fault, to believe that there is a utility, though hidden, as we have experienced that there were other things which we all but failed to discover. For this concealment of the use of things is itself either an exercise of our humility or a leveling of our pride; for no nature at all is evil, and this is a name for nothing but the want of good. But from things earthly to things heavenly, from the visible to the invisible, there are some things better than others; and for this purpose are they unequal, in order that they might all exist. Now God is in such sort a great worker in great things, that He is not less in little things, – for these little things are to be measured not by their own greatness (which does not exist), but by the wisdom of their Designer; as, in the visible appearance of a man, if one eyebrow be shaved off, how nearly nothing is taken from the body, but how much from the beauty! – for that is not constituted by bulk, but by the proportion and arrangement of the members” (*City of God*, XI.xxii.1).

the aspects humans have in common with other animals are baser than the aspects that distinguish them, since the latter make us specifically the image of God or, in Aristotelian terms, make humans specifically human. The dichotomy between human and animal tracks the distinction that must be made between the satisfaction of the appetites (leading to bodily comfort and abundance of pleasures, contributing to the peace of the body) and the peace of our rational soul:

if we were irrational animals, we should desire nothing beyond the proper arrangement of the parts of the body and the satisfaction of the appetites, – nothing, therefore, but bodily comfort and abundance of pleasures, that the peace of the body might contribute to the peace of the [irrational] soul. [...] But, as man has a rational soul, he subordinates all this which he has in common with the beasts to the peace of his rational soul, that his intellect may have free play and may regulate his actions, and that he may thus enjoy the well-ordered harmony of knowledge and action which constitutes, as we have said, the peace of the rational soul. (XIX.xiv.1)¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, the body does remain an integral part of what one calls “human nature”; we recall that in Augustine’s understanding, it will not entirely disappear in the next life. Again, Augustine does not contradict Varro’s opinion, which, this time, includes his qualification of human nature:

[Varro] is of opinion that there are two parts in human nature, body and soul, and makes no doubt that of these two the soul is the better and by far the more worthy part. But whether the soul alone is the man, so that the body holds the same relation to it as a horse to the horseman, this he thinks has to be ascertained. [...] Of these three alternatives, then, Varro chooses the third, that man is neither the body alone, nor the soul alone, but both together. And therefore the highest good, in which lies the happiness of man, is composed of goods of both kinds, both bodily and spiritual. (XIX.iii.1)

Consequently, the sensation of bodily pleasure can be thought of as either being a minor part of or accompanying one’s experience of the sovereign good within one’s state of beatitude. Hence Augustine’s speculation about the condition of the spirit and the

¹⁴¹ In Book XI.xvi.1 of *City of God*, Augustine writes of the ranks and differences among creatures. In part of the discussion, he explains that “reason looks for what the mental light will judge to be true, while pleasure looks for what pleasantly titillates the bodily sense.”

resurrected body in Heaven (such speculation is permissible as an expression of love).

First, he enquires: “what shall we be [in the blessed life]?”

What blessings shall we receive in that kingdom, since already we have received as the pledge of them Christ’s dying? In what condition shall the spirit of man be, when it has no longer any vice at all; when it neither yields to any, nor is in bondage to any, nor has to make war against any, but is perfected, and enjoys undisturbed peace with itself? Shall it not then know all things with certainty, and without any labor or error, when unhindered and joyfully it drinks the wisdom of God at the fountain-head? What shall the body be, when it is in every respect subject to the spirit, from which it shall draw a life so sufficient, as to stand in need of no other nutriment? For it shall no longer be animal, but spiritual^[142], having indeed the substance of flesh, but without any fleshly corruption. (XXII.xxiv.5)

As we can see, the question already answers itself. The use of the temporal conjunction “when” sets apart the unknown from the expected (though presumed certain) and the latter makes up more of each question’s content than the former. Therefore, that which is expected is that the spirit and body (with the latter, and this is key, “subject” to the former) will have freedom from evil and pain (vice, bondage, war, disturbance, hindrance) and will have perfection (condition), peace (condition and activity), joy (emotion), wisdom (virtue), life, and sufficiency (condition). While the word “pleasure” perhaps does not suffice¹⁴³ and is not used here, the meaning underlying pleasure – an agreeable/welcome/pleasing sensation, affective state, or object causing it – underlies a number of these expected experiences and plays a major part in arousing the will of the reader and inciting it to pursue the site and source of those things. Which, again, speaks to the inevitable imperfection of our understanding, all the more so as we imagine our

¹⁴² Augustine makes a key distinction between the human’s animal body and the human’s spiritual body, positing that one’s resurrected body will not be one’s old animal body but, rather, a new spiritual though fleshly body: “The flesh shall then be spiritual, and subject to the spirit, but still flesh, not spirit, as the spirit itself, when subject to the flesh, was fleshly, but still spirit and not flesh” (XXII.xxi.1). [*Erit ergo spiritui subdita caro spiritalis, sed tamen caro, non spiritus; sicut carni subditus fuit spiritus ipse carnalis, sed tamen spiritus, non caro.*] Prior to this chapter, Augustine addresses various concerns regarding the resurrected body, such as the size, age, sex, and color of such bodies (XXII.xii-xx).

¹⁴³ It bears mentioning that the noun “pleasure” appears only twice in the final book of *City of God*, in Book XXII, chapters xxiii-xxiv. The subsequent chapters do not mention the word at all.

future (spiritual) bodies from the perspective of our present (carnal) ones. Thus, in “a state without pain,” we pay too much attention to “without” because pain is what we know; a state in which pain is unthinkable, in which there is no trace (left) of relief, is beyond our apprehension.

Pleasure, happiness, and the highest good (3): Aquinas

Nine centuries after Augustine, the heritage of ancient Western philosophy continues to be absorbed into Christian theology and ethics. For example, Saint Thomas Aquinas develops aspects of ancient philosophy (primarily that of Aristotle) within a Christian framework. Yet Aquinas’ approach is notably different from those proffered by his predecessors Aristotle and Augustine. The 13th-century theologian’s *magnum opus*, *Summa Theologiae*, retains a profound impact on orthodox (Catholic) Christian doctrine during the Renaissance. The 16th-century Dominican friar Louis of Granada, for example, adheres to the Thomistic tradition, which, by Granada’s time, had been adopted by the Dominican order as a whole. Moreover, members of the Council of Trent turn to many of Aquinas’ doctrines as they seek to rework the Roman Catechism, which would be published in 1566.

Classically trained at medieval universities in Naples, Rome, Paris, then Cologne, the author of the *Summa Theologiae* composes this “most obviously philosophical of his big theological works” (Kretzmann and Stump 5)¹⁴⁴ in a style entirely representative of the scholastic tradition – the established norm in European scholarship at the time:

¹⁴⁴ Kretzmann, Norman, and Eleonore Stump (Eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge U. P., 1993.

The literary format that is characteristic of Aquinas's (and other scholastic philosophers') work, the "scholastic method," is a hallmark of medieval philosophy. Treatises written in this format are typically divided into "questions" or major topics (such as "Truth"), which are subdivided into "articles," which are detailed examinations of particular issues within the topic (such as "Is there truth in sense perception?"). The examination carried out in the article begins with an affirmative or negative thesis in answer to the article's yes/no question, and the thesis is then supported by a series of arguments. Since the thesis is typically opposed to the position the author will take, its supporting arguments are often called "objections." Immediately following the objections is the presentation of at least one piece of evidence on the other side of the issue – the *sed contra* ("But, on the other hand . . ."). The *sed contra* is sometimes an argument or two, sometimes simply the citation of a relevant authority – just enough to remind the reader that, despite all the arguments supporting the thesis, there are grounds for taking the other side seriously. The body of the article contains the author's reasoned reply to the initial question, invariably argued for and often introduced by pertinent explanations and distinctions. The article then typically concludes with the author's rejoinders to all the objections (and sometimes to the *sed contra* as well), so that the form of the article is that of an ideal philosophical debate. (Kretzmann and Stump 5-6)

Central to us here is Aquinas' concern for elucidating doctrinal ambiguities – such as describing the nature of the *summum bonum*. Indeed, as Kretzmann and Stump put it,

Aquinas is at least as concerned as we are with making sense of obscure claims, exploring the implications and interrelations of theoretical propositions, and supporting them with valid arguments dependent on plausible premises. And he is no less concerned than any responsible philosopher has ever been with the truth, coherence, consistency, and justification of his beliefs, his religious beliefs no less than his philosophical ones. (8)

Aquinas is more commonly associated with his infusion of Aristotle's metaphysics – which had relatively recently become the philosophical standard in European universities – into Christian doctrine¹⁴⁵. This is important to us because it informs Aquinas' construct of the imperfect happiness he believes human beings can attain within this lifetime. We are, therefore, looking at the notion of pleasure in a Christian philosophical landscape that was shaped, in good part, by Aristotle; and

¹⁴⁵ During the 20 to 30 years prior to Aquinas' arrival in Paris, no instruction on Aristotle's work and philosophy of nature may be given; yet, when Aquinas returns to Paris after a stint with Albert the Great in Cologne, it is being required. According to John Haldane, Albert the Great sees in Aristotle's philosophy of nature (*i.e.*, the account of how the world is put together and how it operates) a more secure foundation for philosophy, science, and theology compared to the Platonic one, and he encourages Aquinas to engage in the project of reestablishing this Aristotelian basis for those three domains (Morris, "St Thomas Aquinas," 00:06:24-00:09:30).

Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* is a key witness of that landscape – being both a powerful and influential synthesis of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy.

Aquinas calls the ultimate end (completion/fruition/flourishing) of *human* life “beatitude;” and, echoing the beliefs of Augustine, posits that all mankind tends to this end even though they may not be aware of it: “Therefore all human actions must be for an end” (*ST Ia-IIae* 1.1 co.)¹⁴⁶, although “there is considerable disagreement over what it is in which happiness consists” (*Ia-IIae* 1.7). Many do not know what happiness – the last end, which obviously cannot be distinguished from itself conceptually, let alone separated practically – truly consists in (*i.e.*, that in which our last end is fully realized), which explains why many associate it with the wrong object (*ST Ia-IIae* 5.8).

From *ST Ia-IIae* 2.6, it is therefore made clear that, for Aquinas, beatitude (*beatitudo*) cannot be the same thing as pleasure (*voluptas/delectatio*); while the supreme good does give both beatitude and the optimal form of pleasure to mankind, pleasure is not that which makes one happy or blessed. In other words, mankind is not to seek beatitude for the sake of pleasure, for that approach would result in failure. Rather, it is *union* with a personal God (as understood by Christianity) that monopolizes the position of beatitude according to Aquinas' ethical system (*ST Ia-IIae* 17.7; 23.3; 23.7):

Thus he says that human beings ‘attain their last end by **knowing** and **loving** God’ (*ST Ia-IIae* 1.8). Aquinas specifically refers to this last end – the state in which perfect happiness consists – as the **beatific vision**. The beatific vision is a **supernatural union** with God, the enjoyment of which surpasses the satisfaction afforded by those goods people sometimes associate with the last end. (Floyd, n. p.)¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Aquinas, St. Thomas of. *Summa Theologica*. Trans. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Bros, 1947. <<https://sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/index.htm>>. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the *Summa* will henceforth be from this same source. (*n.b.* *ST Ia-IIae* 1.1. co. = First Part of Second Part, Question 1, Article 1, “I respond that.”)

¹⁴⁷ Floyd, Shawn. “Aquinas: Moral Philosophy.” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. N. p., n. d. <<https://iep.utm.edu/aq-moral/>>.

Nevertheless, it is promised that mankind will have pleasure by means of achieving happiness (beatitude) specifically in God; for He is perfect goodness and “the only one capable of fulfilling our heart’s deepest longing and facilitating the perfection at which we aim” (*ibid.*). Thus, while true or complete pleasure is not the essence of beatitude, it is an inseparable property, aspect, or effect of beatitude.

Later, in *ST Ia-IIae* 31-34, Aquinas provides a definition of and analyzes pleasure *qua* pleasure in greater depth. For example, he quotes Aristotle:

according to the Philosopher (*Rhet.* I, 11) ‘delight [*i.e.*, pleasure] is a certain movement of the soul and a sensible establishing thereof all at once, in keeping with the nature of the thing.’ (*ST Ia-IIae* 31.1)

From the animal’s perception of its establishment (*i.e.*, the fact of complete establishment) in the state becoming its nature, there arises a movement of the soul in the sensitive appetite and that movement is called delight. “It is therefore evident that, since delight is a movement of the animal appetite arising from an apprehension of sense, it is a passion of the soul.” In other words, delight consists in a state of completion, it is a certain repose of the appetite, but it can also be a kind of movement because there remains the impression made on the appetite by the object that is present and satisfies it.

Delight in this sense is a passion that has a tendency toward something good, not a corrupting or evil tendency. It is a passion of the soul that supposes enjoyment of the good and the end of movement toward the good in question. In *ST Ia-IIae* 31.3, pleasure is understood as encompassing both spiritual (rational) and physical pleasures, while joy is more specifically described as a (higher) form of pleasure that consists only of the rational variety. In true Aristotelian fashion, Aquinas proposes a hierarchy of pleasures that corresponds to a hierarchy of the appetites that want pleasure, according to a similar

movement toward an end. The physical pleasures are desired by the sensitive appetite while the intellectual or spiritual pleasures are desired by the intellectual appetite. There remains a big difference, however: *ST Ia-IIae* 31.5 shows that the intellectual/spiritual pleasures do not have to be moderated in the same way that the physical pleasures do. Yet beyond this difference, there is one of a different order between all pleasures and the beatitude achieved by the fulfillment of our ultimate end, (re)union with God.

A Christian hedonism?

To conclude this long review, we will discuss two Renaissance texts (one briefly, through two of its commentators, the other more extensively, in our own voice) by “Christian Humanists”¹⁴⁸ that seem to bypass the difference between *voluptas* and the supreme good, if not ignore it altogether. Lorenzo Valla’s *De voluptate* (later revised as *De vero bono*, then *De vero falsoque bono*)¹⁴⁹ and Erasmus’s *Epicureus* deliberately played, to a degree that is difficult to measure precisely, with the orthodox Christian view

¹⁴⁸ In her introduction to the translation of Valla’s *De voluptate* (see reference below), Maristella de Panizza Lorch underlines that “He called himself a *miles christianus*, a ‘soldier of the Christian Republic,’ and by this very definition delimited his particular brand of Humanism, which is best described not as ‘Christian’ but, more precisely, as the Humanism of a Christian who subscribes to the teachings of the Bible, Paul, and the Fathers as fundamental and supremely relevant for Humanist thinking” (p. 12).

¹⁴⁹ Valla, Lorenzo. *On Pleasure: De Voluptate*. Ed. Maristella Lorch. Trans. A. Kent Hiatt and M. Lorch. New York: Albaris Books Inc., 1977. (Kent and Lorch base their English translation on Lorch’s own critical edition of *De Vero Falsoque Bono*, Bari 1970, published by Adriatica Editrice (Valla, *On Pleasure* 4)). As Jean-Claude Margolin puts it in an article we have already quoted: “[Valla] est l’auteur d’un ouvrage, intitulé d’abord (en 1431) *De voluptate*, puis, dans une seconde rédaction, *De voluptate ac de vero bono*, une troisième (publiée à Louvain en 1483 et à Cologne en 1509) ayant pour titre *De vero bono* avec occultation du terme de *voluptas*, qui disparaît encore sous un titre, une fois de plus modifié: *De vero falsoque bono*. Comme on le voit, les modifications de l’intitulé, en partie suggérées par les réactions de ses lecteurs et par les malentendus qu’engendrait dans une société chrétienne un éloge de la volupté ou du plaisir, soulignaient le paradoxe central de cette problématique dont les termes avaient été fixés par Épicure lui-même: la recherche du plaisir, à laquelle nous convient la nature et les sens qu’elle a mis à notre disposition, est identifiée à la recherche du souverain bien” (Margolin 129).

(best clarified by Aquinas) that the pleasure given by the supreme good should not be construed as the supreme good itself, but simply as an aspect or effect of it.

Before we focus on the conceptual aspects of such works, we must note that their authors are *not* philosophers in the sense that we have presupposed so far, even though they do have philosophical insights. As Maristella Lorch puts it, Valla, for example,

distinguished himself in the expression of his ethico-religious ideals partially because of **the personal and original way** in which, **as a rhetor and as an orator**, he read and exploited the Christian Fathers. On the other hand, [...] Valla shared with Petrarch one basic need: to affirm and define his Christianity within an intellectual world that presented a challenge to it. Thus, if it is true that no Humanist can be called a philosopher in the sense of having worked out **a coherent system of thought** – for, as teachers, artists, scholars, or chancellors of republics, they were primarily men of letters – a reading of Valla’s most engaging works [...] reveals that he had a definite philosophical motivation in his **literary-rhetorical pursuits**.

(Valla, *On Pleasure* 15)¹⁵⁰

Our own challenge, therefore, is to give a sense of what Valla and Erasmus brought to the Christian notion of pleasure without erasing the very ambiguities on which they counted to convey their message *by* making it provocative and seductive as well, in a manner that philosophers (in the Aristotelian mode at least, made even more rigorous by the scholastic method) would reject; indeed, in a manner that was designed to shock them¹⁵¹.

¹⁵⁰ Lorch emphasizes that “the dialogue as a genre had assumed great importance in the service of the arts of argumentation and persuasion. [...] it had become the most apt literary form for the pedagogical reform undertaken by Humanists. The *magister* Valla, at Milan in 1433, intended to make the most of this literary form, which allowed the greatest possible use of the pro and contra in discussion” (Valla, *On Pleasure* 24). Further, Valla wanted his work “to be understood as a reflection of the intellectual debates that actually occurred at the Studium of Pavia [where he spent time in 1431-1432] in those golden years of humanistic activity; that is, he intends here to reenact the debate between the *humanistae*, promoters of a new culture, classical and Christian, and the dialecticians, the contemporary representatives of ‘philosophy’” (*idem*, 25).

¹⁵¹ For Lorch, “Valla’s primary motivation was indeed cultural reform” (Valla, *On Pleasure* 11). Thus, “For this work whose content and tone are highly polemical, an awareness of the author’s personality is especially necessary [...]. Inspiring the polemic is a Christian concept of morality based on an empirical study of human nature, a concept that Valla considers not an innovation but a return to original Christianity, to the Fathers, and to the Bible” (*ibid.*). Hence also the importance of Valla’s varied writing style; as his co-translator, Lorch knows how challenging it is to “render an idea faithfully and at the same time maintain the flavor of certain sentences in which Valla intends to be simultaneously solemn and witty; where he employs metrical clauses; where he displays the fierce, aggressive spirit of a soldier doing battle; where he takes the dry, axiomatic tone of one who has discovered a truth to which nothing can be added or detracted; or again, where he turns suddenly from seriousness to irony, and where, consequently, some terms change

– Valla's *De voluptate*

In the Introduction to Kent and Lorch's English translation of Valla's text, Lorch provides us with a clear and concise summary of its argument:

(1) Man is naturally inclined to the pursuit of pleasure (*voluptas*), which implies an instinct of self-preservation motivating all of his actions. (2) Man's self-sufficiency in ethics is the cause of unhappiness, whence the condemnation and consequent attack [...] upon the moral philosophies of the ancients, which were based on the principle of reason and a self-contained virtue. Boethius (against whom in particular the Dialogue is supposedly directed) and his stoicizing Neoplatonism, and every form of Stoic, Aristotelian, and Platonic ethics that presupposed man's self-sufficiency in morality, as well as every aspect of rationalistic idealism – all are attacked by Valla as hypocritical and false, since beneath the beautiful veil of self-contained *virtus*, or virtuous principle, or civic honesty, is concealed the instinctual, hedonistic motivation that inspires every human action. (3) By following his instincts, man, as God's creature and redeemed by Christ's sacrifice, can reach permanent and absolute happiness, provided he recognize God as the source of his privileged condition. This recognition, or love-*caritas*, is the supreme form of *voluptas*.

(Valla, *On Pleasure* 30)

Reduced to its bare bones, Valla's goal, Lorch explains (using the names found in the second and third editions of the work), is "to transform the *voluptas* of Books I and II [where Maffeo Vegio, the Epicurean, vanquishes Catone Sacco, the Stoic] into the *voluptas* of Book III, by submitting Vegio (the Epicurean) to Raudensis [Antonio da Rho] (the Christian)" (25).

Valla, for one, knew full well what he was playing with when he chose his original title:

I preferred [...] *De voluptate* [On pleasure] because of the subtlety and pleasant quality of the word *voluptas*. This title was chosen instead of *De vero bono* [On the true good], as I might have done since throughout the whole book we expound the true good, and declare it to be this very *voluptas*.

(*On Pleasure* 34, citing the Preface to the first version)

meaning because of ironical implications. Valla's Latin in this Dialogue – a work that, as we have said, occupied him throughout his life – seems to reflect the qualities of his *voluptas*. His language is as varied and personal, as intense and impetuous, as spontaneous and deliberate, as glittering and elusive as he tells us pleasure ought to be" (*ibid.*).

The game consists of playing with the word: the two meanings remain connected even though their distinction (that is, the redemption of pleasure as a righteous goal after the coming of Christ¹⁵²) prevails. It is therefore not surprising that some early interpreters of the dialogue, taking Vegio's discourse at his word, "were misled into considering Valla an Epicurean *sui generis*," even though he ends up distinguishing between lower and higher forms of pleasure; and that he was accused of "unorthodoxy and immorality," yet later could also find "favor with Erasmus as well as Luther and Calvin" (27). In turn, it is tempting for commentators "to stress Valla's Christianity purely by interpreting the Dialogue at face value: the Stoic is refuted by the Epicurean; the Christian supersedes both" (*ibid.*). That is true, but the logic of the superseding remains troubling.

As Lodi Nauta puts it:

We do not [...] strive to attain virtue for its own sake, since it is full of toil and hardship, but rather because it leads us to our goal. This is one of Valla's major claims against the Stoics and the Peripatetics, who – at least in Valla's interpretation – regarded virtue as the end of life, that is, the goal which is sought for its own sake. Because virtuous behavior is difficult, requiring us to put up with harsh and bitter afflictions, no one naturally and voluntarily seeks virtue as an end in itself. What we seek is pleasure or delectation, both in this life and – far more importantly – in the life to come.

By equating pleasure with love, Valla can argue that it is love or pleasure that is our ultimate end. This entails the striking notion that God is not loved for his own sake, but for the sake of love: "For nothing is loved for its own sake or for the sake of something else as another end, but the love itself is the end" (*Repastinatio*, 417^[153]). This is a daring move. Traditionally, God was said to be loved for his own sake, not for his usefulness in gaining something else. Many thinkers agreed with Augustine that concupiscent love was to be distinguished from friendship, and, with respect to heavenly beatitude, use from fruition. We can love something as a means to an end (use), and we can love something for its own sake

¹⁵² "[...] Redemption creates an abyss between our world and that of the ancients, [...] with regard to motivation of every human action." Before Redemption, man's seeks pleasure, not virtue, and the Stoics have it wrong. After Redemption, man still seeks pleasure, but this time "[his] **motivation is his love of God, as the efficient rather than final cause of the good** that providential Nature places at his disposal. Within the context created by this Love, we accept the pain and difficulties that are inevitable during our lifetimes in order to overcome them. Hence, **a new concept of *virtus*, not as a reward in itself** and not as an ancillary element of *voluptas-utilitas* of the instinctive man who lived before Christ, but as **the means to reach the highest and permanent good following the earthly death** – with the full use of the body reunited with the soul after a brief separation" (Valla, *On Pleasure* 31).

¹⁵³ *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie*, ed. Gianni Zippel, 2 vols. Padua: Antenore, 1982. Valla's *Repastinatio* revisits the substance of his *De voluptate*.

(fruition). But because Valla has maintained that pleasure is our highest good, God can only be loved as a means to that end.¹⁵⁴

The extent to which Valla embraced the consequences of his “daring move” is a matter of debate. Suffice it to say, for our purpose, that his approach offers a radical formulation of (if not solution to) the difficulty we have been grappling with: how can we emphasize, whether under the name of pleasure or love (or both), the effect of the highest good (which is also our motivation, our “drive” to seek it) without making the supposed highest good an instrument or “means” to its own effect (which *becomes* the highest good in turn)? Does God’s love nullify this potential slippage or displacement, by making it impossible (or moot) to distinguish God Himself from His love, nor His Love from the effect it will have on us (bodies and souls) in Salvation, and already has, to an extent, as we await? Yet if that is the case, if there is no slippage, how can we ever be sure of it¹⁵⁵?

– *Erasmus’ Epicureus*

Initially compiled as a collection of Latin phrases and idioms for Erasmus’s pupils to use for practice exercises, the *Colloquia familiaria* were later amplified into full dialogues, and multiple editions (each one longer and more serious than its predecessor) appeared between 1522 and 1533. The language and reasoning used throughout the final colloquium, entitled *Epicureus (The Epicurean)* – first published in March of 1533 – are

¹⁵⁴ Nauta, Lodi. “Lorenzo Valla.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. N. p., 2017. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/lorenzo-valla/>>.

¹⁵⁵ A striking example of this certainty is provided (much to the puzzlement and anger of her interlocutors) by “la Bergère” in Marguerite de Navarre’s *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*: “Je ne sens corps, ame ne vie, / Sinon amour, ny n’ay envye / De Paradis, ny d’enfer crainte; / Mais que sans fin je soys est[r]aincte / A mon amy, unie et jointe” (lns. 871-875, p. 316; in Marguerite de Navarre. *Théâtre profane*. Ed. V. L. Saulnier. Geneva: Droz / Paris: Minard, 1978). To which “la Sage,” until then a model of understanding and good Christian behavior, replies: “Je n’y congnois teste ny poincte” (ln. 876, *ibid.*).

quite helpful when endeavoring to describe a paradoxical “hedonistic” philosophy for which God, rather than pleasure (*pace* Valla), remains identified as the sovereign good.

In this equally amusing and didactic dialogue, Hedonius reacts to the title of a book being read by his interlocutor Spudaeus¹⁵⁶. When the former learns that the book is “Cicero’s dialogue *On the Ends of Goods*” (*i.e.*, *De finibus*), famous for its refutation of Epicurus, he wonders aloud “How much better it would be to seek the beginnings of goods rather than their ends!”¹⁵⁷ The dialogue continues as follows:

SPUD. But Tully [*i.e.*, Cicero] calls the “end” of good the “complete, perfect good,” which, if one attains it, leaves nothing to be desired^[158].

HEDON. It’s a book famed for learning and eloquence; but you don’t imagine, do you, that in return for your trouble you’ve discovered truth?

SPUD. I’ve profited to this extent, I think: that I’m even more doubtful about ends than I was before!

HEDON. Farmers are the ones to dispute about boundaries or ends.

SPUD. I can’t get over the fact that on so important a subject there was so much conflicting opinion among such eminent men.

HEDON. No wonder, because error is prolific while truth is single. Missing the head and source of the matter, they all rant and rave. But which doctrine strikes you as closer to the mark?

SPUD. When I hear Tully opposing them, every one displeases me. Again, when I hear him defending them, straightway I suspend judgment. However, in my opinion the Stoics come closest to the truth; next, the Peripatetics.

HEDON. But no school attracts me more than the Epicurean.

SPUD. Yet none is more universally detested.

HEDON. Let’s disregard bad reputations – Epicurus was whatever you please – and consider the matter in itself. Human happiness, he holds, is the product of pleasure, and he deems that life most blessed which has the most pleasure and the least sorrow.

SPUD. So he does.

HEDON. What judgment could have been more holy than this?

SPUD. Not at all! Everybody protests that this is the sentiment of a brute, not a man.

HEDON. I know, but they’re mistaken about the names of things. In plain truth, there are no people more Epicurean than godly Christians^[159].

¹⁵⁶ In his introduction to this colloquium, Thompson points out that the name Hedonius signifies “devotee of pleasure,” while the name Spudaeus signifies “earnest” or “sober” (Erasmus, *The Colloquies* 536).

¹⁵⁷ “*At quanto satius esset quaerere bonorum initia quam fines?*” Thompson uses the word “better” instead of “more satisfying,” and an exclamation mark where the Latin text, as edited, shows a question mark.

¹⁵⁸ “*Sed Marcus Tullius finem boni appellat bonum omnibus numeris absolutum, quod qui sit assequutus, praeterea nihil desideret.*” Thompson uses the words “the ‘complete, perfect good’” instead of the words “the good complete in all its parts.”

(Erasmus, *The Colloquies* 538)

From this opening exchange, we learn that Hedonius problematizes the habit of seeking out the “ends” of goods (which he insists upon understanding as limits – rather than goals – of goods) and prioritizes seeking the beginnings or sources of goods. He also hones in on Epicurus’ principle, not on his reputation. Furthermore, he evokes the problem of language when he explains that “[Everybody is] mistaken about the names of things” (*ibid.*). As for Spudeus, he leads us to inquire upon truth, suspend judgment, and reconsider that which distinguishes animal (“brute”) from human.

Hedonius’ three-point position lays out the initial framework from which he posits two unexpected theses. First, he claims that, among the ancient schools of philosophy, the Epicurean school of thought seems closer to the mark (*i.e.*, to truth) than do its Stoic or Peripatetic counterparts (this was also Valla’s position). He then develops this notion into an even more surprising thesis by positing that the most Epicurean people are, in fact, godly Christians¹⁶⁰. Consequently, the main thesis, which Hedonius will attempt to explain and defend throughout the remainder of the colloquium, is that godly Christians are the most Epicurean people of all because they best pursue the *lifestyle* (note that he says “lifestyle,” not “end”) that was recommended by Epicurus; that is, the lifestyle in which human happiness (*felicitas*) is judged as being the product of pleasure

¹⁵⁹ In French, this sentence reads: “À vrai dire, il n’y a pas plus authentiques épicuriens que les chrétiens observant la piété” (Jones-Davies, Marie-Thérèse, ed. *Le plaisir au temps de la Renaissance*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010. p. 133).

¹⁶⁰ Hedonius does not evoke the scientific theories (esp. atomistic materialism) in which Epicurus’ hedonism is grounded; therefore, readers must bear in mind that his use of the adjective “Epicurean” is referring to a limited aspect of one who may identify as an Epicurean, focused only on ethics.

(*voluptas*) and the most blessed (*beatissima*) life is judged as being the one that has (*i.e.*, possesses?) the most pleasure (*voluptas*) and the least sorrow (*tristitia*)¹⁶¹.

Let us take note of what Hedonius is *not* saying, though: more prudent than Valla perhaps, he is not arguing that pleasure is judged to be the sovereign good or the *only* cause or producer of happiness/beatitude/felicity. He is merely saying that beatitude is at least in part linked to pleasure and it procures or possesses the most amount of pleasure and the least amount of pain; thus it can be one of the many things flowing from the fountainhead that is the *summum bonum*, which confers beatitude. Perhaps what Erasmus may be getting at is a shedding of light on the irony or paradox that, in using pleasure with reference to God (the sovereign good), we experience more and greater pleasure than if we were to pursue or enjoy pleasure in and of itself. In fact, Hedonius will explicitly make the claim that direct pursuit of pleasure for its own sake will *not* result in the greatest amount of pleasure nor the least amount of sorrow. Therefore, if the Epicurean were to seek the greatest sum of pleasure, s/he would best achieve this by means of the Christian route. But, in this route, s/he will need to perceive God to be the true sovereign good, and amity and union with God to be the necessary condition for beatitude to take place, from which, consequently, but not most importantly, s/he will possess the most pleasure and the least sorrow.

¹⁶¹ It seems that Erasmus is implicitly equating the expression "*vitam beatissimam*" with *eudaimonia*, which is sometimes translated as "happiness" but can also be translated as "well-being" or "well-living." As we have previously pointed out, Epicurus' theory was that such *eudaimonia* is achieved by a state of repose, which is comprised of the greatest amount of *ataraxia* (the absence of mental perturbation or fear in the rational soul) and the least amount of *algêdôn* (the physical sensation of pain in the non-rational soul). It should therefore also be noted that Hedonius is using the terms "*voluptas*" and "*tristitia*" instead of "*ataraxia*" and "*algêdôn*" without explaining why. Margolin argues that Erasmus, through his *porte-parole* Hedonius, performs a "retournement sémantique du terme *voluptas* (ou plaisir), selon une méthode qui rappelle Platon et surtout Socrate, dans sa recherche du sens véritable des mots" (Margolin 133). Yet his conclusion is that Erasmus takes his treatment of epicureanism a step further by *spiritualizing* the intrinsically materialistic philosophy (137).

Nor does Hedonius say that the godliest Christians are individuals who call themselves Epicureans. Presumably, this is due to the fact that a true Epicurean would not consider the source of pleasure to be God and, therefore, even though the Epicureans may theoretically conceive of the “lifestyle” (not end) (*i.e.*, possessing the greatest amount of pleasure and the least amount of pain) that is closest to the “right” one when compared to that of the Stoics and the Peripatetics, they are unable to pursue that lifestyle in practice, because they fail to begin the quest by first seeking the right source (*i.e.*, God) of that lifestyle. Unlike the traditional Epicurean, Hedonius and Spudaeus both agree upon the presupposition that “God is the supreme good, than which nothing is more beautiful, more lovely, more dear” (540)¹⁶². Later, Hedonius implicitly conflates this notion of the sovereign good with the notion of the *source* of the sovereign good as he asks Spudaeus to agree with him concerning the belief that God is indeed that “source” (542)¹⁶³. With that statement, Spudaeus does agree.

Is one to conclude, from these characters’ remarks, that God is (merely) a *means* to humankind’s beatitude? Yes and no. God is in a sense our “means” to beatitude but our beatitude is intended to refer us back to God: it makes literally no sense, as the effect or expression of our reunion with our “end” (*i.e.*, that which we were made for in the first place) to consider it an end in itself. God is therefore understood as that which gives us beatitude, which by definition includes all conceivable value, meaning, and goodness. Thus, God *is* the sovereign good and beatitude could not possibly be superior to the

¹⁶² “*Deum esse summum bonum, quo nihil pulchrius, nihil amabilius, nihil dulcius.*” One could also translate the adjectives *pulchrius*, *amabilius*, and *dulcius* as “more beautiful,” “more loveable,” and “more sweet.” Note that the supreme good is not only described, here, in terms of “pleasure” (“*dulcius*”), but also in terms of beauty and lovability (a Platonist like Ficino would agree). The implication is that beauty generates pleasure in those who partake in it: a move away from the risky business of making pleasure itself the supreme good?

¹⁶³ “*Deum summi boni fontem.*”

sovereign good from any perspective. Given that God, according to Hedonius, is the *only* source of all true pleasures, He is still understood as being the only (and necessary) provider and facilitator of humankind's beatitude. Said another way, the true beatitude of humankind exists in the first place because – and is entirely defined by the fact that – its source is exclusively God.

What does one *risk*, therefore, by pursuing pleasure exclusively or directly instead of first seeking the real source of true pleasure? The danger is summarized by Hedonius in the following manner:

Now just see how very far from pleasure are those who openly pursue nothing but pleasures¹⁶⁴. In the first place, their minds are stained and corrupted by the leaven of lusts, so that if anything sweet does happen to them it turns sour at once, as water from a polluted well necessarily has a bad taste. Secondly, there's no true pleasure except what is comprehended by a sound mind. Nothing is more agreeable to an angry man than vengeance, but this pleasure turns to sorrow as soon as the disease leaves his mind [...] Finally, those pleasures are taken from false goods; whence it follows that they are deceptions also. What would you say, moreover, were you to see a victim of magic eat, drink, dance, laugh, and clap his hands when none of the things he believes he sees was really present? (542)¹⁶⁵

This passage is key for any reader attempting to understand the crux of Hedonius' logic and overall argument. In essence, Hedonius is saying that even if humankind's beatitude were produced by an objective, universal pleasure, the purest and most pleasing experience of that pleasure can only be enjoyed when all corruption and illness is removed from the equation.

¹⁶⁴ Translated in a slightly more literal manner, this sentence would read: "Now see to me, how very far from pleasure are they, they who generally seem to follow nothing beside pleasures" (*our translation*). Note Thompson's decision to use the adverb "openly" rather than "generally."

¹⁶⁵ "Nunc mihi vide, quot parasangis absint a voluptate, qui vulgo videntur praeter voluptates nihil sequi. Primum animus illorum impurus est et cupiditatum fermento vitiatum, ut, etiamsi quid incidat dulce, protinus amarescat, quemadmodum fonte vitiato non potest non esse liquor insipidus. Deinde non est vera voluptas, nisi quae sano percipitur animo. Nam irato nihil vindicta iucundius: sed ea voluptas vertitur in dolorem, simul atque morbus animum reliquerit [...] Postremo voluptates illae sumuntur ex falsis bonis: unde consequitur et illas adesse praestigias. Quid porro diceret, si videres hominem magicis artibus delusum, vesci, bibere, saltare, ridere, plaudere, quum nihil earum rerum vere adesset, quas se videre credit?"

Consequently, one would need to screen and test the health of one's mind before trusting and pursuing that mind's conception of one's singular beatitude. According to Hedonius, in order to ensure that one's mind is healthy, one must first verify that one is reconciled to God – which is about as far from Epicurus' idea of virtuous self-satisfaction as one can get. This will ensure that one's beatitude is truly and maximally pleasurable, not a mere illusion¹⁶⁶.

Near the end of the colloquium, Hedonius reminds Spudaeus of the importance of focusing first and foremost on the *source* of all good things. With the (Epicurean and Augustinian) warning that “[i]mmoderate use even of permissible pleasures is not permissible” (547)¹⁶⁷, he suggests that even good things sourced from God, like nature or even humankind's beatitude, can be polluted, made into idols, or inordinately loved if they are not perceived and/or used merely as reflections of God or as signs pointing to the creator and giver of such things. As a result, dependence and relationship, not individuality and self-sufficiency, are inherent in one's beatitude. The pleasant consequence resulting for someone who does not idolize God's creation but, instead, allows such things to drive us to revere “the Creator's omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness” (548) is that s/he will

derive far more pleasure from [the sight of this world] than others do; for those, whilst they behold this admirable work with curious gaze, are tormented in mind because they fail to comprehend the causes of it all [...] But the godly man beholds with reverent, innocent eyes, and with surpassing inward delight, the works of his Lord and Father, marveling at everyone,

¹⁶⁶ Taken for granted here is the opinion that truth and reality are more valuable, thus more preferable and satisfying, than mere subjective perception or virtual reality. The assumption is that it is better not to be mistaken, which is preferable because people are inherently and intuitively interested in knowing the truth.

¹⁶⁷ “*Etiam licitarum voluptatum immodicus usus est illicitus.*” Note that Erasmus uses the Latin word “*usus*” (from the verb “*uti*”) rather than the verb “*frui*,” meaning “to enjoy”: in Augustinian terms, the lower pleasures are instrumentalized by excess, they become means to something else (which we could call addiction, for example).

finding fault with none but giving thanks for all, since he considers them all to be created for man's sake^[168]. (*Ibid.*)

To help Spudaeus better grasp the value and, consequently, the greater pleasure of comprehending the “causes” of God’s admirable work in creation, Hedonius provides an analogous scenario:

Just imagine, now, that there is really some such palace as Apuleius imagines for Psyche, or one more splendid and magnificent if possible. Bring to it two spectators: one a stranger who came only to view it, the other a servant or son of the man who built this building. Which will be more enthusiastic about it, the stranger to whom the building means nothing personally, or the son who to his immense delight beholds in the structure his beloved father’s genius, wealth, and splendor – and whose pleasure is enhanced when he reflects that this whole structure was made for his own sake^[169]? (*Ibid.*)

Hedonius’ argument does not merely suggest that one must identify the right source of true beatitude. He also maps out *how* one must go about pursuing that very source. What are the conditions for one to be a “godly Christian”¹⁷⁰? Hedonius explains that he regards

those who have been cleansed as [being] free of [anything that destroys amity^[171] between God and man]. Those who have washed away their stains by the lye of tears and the soap of repentance or the fire of charity are not only unharmed by sins but the sins often pave the way to a greater good. (539)

In fact, this starting point is so crucial that the very last sentence of the colloquium – which is also the final sentence of the *Colloquies* as a whole – urgently calls man[kind] to contritely beg God to forgive its sins:

If he cries with his whole heart, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies,” the Lord will take away the Tantalean stone, will grant him the sound of joy and gladness, and his bones broken by contrition shall rejoice for sins forgiven^[172]. (551)

¹⁶⁸ Note that Erasmus does not have Hedonius turn around and say that all this is done, in turn, “for God’s sake” in the end.

¹⁶⁹ Augustine (and Aquinas?) would criticize this anthropocentric worldview.

¹⁷⁰ “*Christiani pie viventes*,” which is more literally translated into English as “Christians living piously.”

¹⁷¹ “*Amicitiam*.”

¹⁷² This claim echoes Ps. 51 (esp. v. 8), which is a psalm of King David and a prayer for spiritual cleansing and pardon.

Such individuals are those who possess a good conscience and, as Hedonius explains earlier, “nothing is happier^[173] than a good [conscience]” (539).

Once a human comes to possess a good conscience and may once again enjoy amity with God, what types of goods will s/he enjoy as s/he comes to acquire the most pleasure and the least sorrow? Even though pleasures are not to be pursued directly, Hedonius finds it appropriate and useful to entertain such a question. He may have at least two purposes for doing this. First, reflecting on such goods/pleasures can help us to gain deeper understanding of who God is – a God who allows His creation to experience different and abundant types of pleasure. Second, such reflections are useful in that, even if humans intellectually recognize their need to pursue God rather than pleasure, their sinful condition may continue to prevent them from being motivated to actually pursue amity with God (by means of tears, repentance, and charity) unless they can, at the very least, begin to envision and evaluate the types of goods or – inextricably – pleasures that will result from pursuing their source. In this way, pleasure comes to be used as a motivational tool. And this, as we know, is acceptable according to Augustine (*cf.* our pp. 68 and 72-77).

Or, borrowing from the statement about immoderate use of permissible pleasures to which we referred previously, we may perhaps conclude that awareness and assessment of different types of goods may help one to envision them in moderation – ensuring that lust or pride or ambition will not corrupt that anticipation of enjoyment – which also ensures that pleasure or enjoyment will not be sought as the ultimate goal, in spite of appearances to the contrary. Yet experiencing (or, rather, envisioning) extreme

¹⁷³ “*Felicius.*”

pleasure as an added perk gratuitously received is acceptable so long as it leads us back to giving thanks to God for giving it to us in the first place: divine grace (starting with its promise and our humbled perception of our radical need for it) remains what most fundamentally distinguishes this Christian perspective from the ethical models it plays with – and what allows it to play with them without losing track of itself in the process.

In response to the question above (concerning the types of goods provide the most pleasure and the least sorrow), Hedonius first asks Spudaeus to concede that “false goods are not to be reckoned among goods” (540). Conflating the notion of “goods” and “pleasure,” Hedonius then asks the same concerning the presupposition that “true pleasure befalls only a sane person”¹⁷⁴; to which Spudaeus replies: “Of course. A blear-eyed man doesn’t enjoy the sun; a feverish man who has lost his taste doesn’t care for wine” (*ibid.*). Hedonius adds two more presuppositions: (1) one ought to embrace the type of pleasure that is greater and longer lasting than any agony that might accompany it; and (2) the principal pleasures come from (or are experienced in) the mind (*i.e.*, rational soul), not from the physical body, since even non-human animals can enjoy bodily pleasures¹⁷⁵. Moreover, such pleasures are principal because the mind is so powerful that “frequently it takes away the feeling of physical pain” and “[s]ometimes it renders pleasant what is in itself bitter” (*ibid.*). Standing confidently upon these assumptions, Hedonius proceeds to skillfully and somewhat amusingly sift through what ought to be considered true pleasures and what ought to be considered false pleasures.

¹⁷⁴ “*Veram voluptatem non cadere nisi in animum sanum*,” which can also be translated into English as “true pleasure does not lack if [one is] sane/healthy in the rational soul.”

¹⁷⁵ The assumption, perpetuated by Western thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas, is that pleasures from the mind (rational soul) are specific to human beings and, therefore, are superior to the pleasures shared with non-human animals.

Concerning those he identifies as being true pleasures, he proceeds to rank them. Throughout this attempt to discern whether a certain pleasure is true or false or high or low in the hierarchical chain, the interlocutors do not merely rely on what, to the general public, *seems* to be pleasurable. Instead, they methodically dissect a variety of possible pleasures by taking into consideration the (spiritual and physical) health of the one experiencing them as well as their site, composition, intensity, duration, cause, side effects or consequences, and outward manifestations.

Not surprisingly, Hedonius identifies Jesus as the one “alone [who] shows the most enjoyable life of all and the one most full of true pleasure” (549). Not only does Hedonius point to Christ as the model Epicurean for humankind to imitate, but the speaker also points to Christ as humankind’s *helper*¹⁷⁶:

HEDON. But if people who live agreeably are Epicureans, none are more truly Epicureans than the righteous and godly. And if it’s names that bother us, no one better deserves the name of Epicurean than the revered founder and head of the Christian philosophy, for in Greek ἐπίκουρος means “helper.” He alone, when the law of Nature was all but blotted out by sins, when the law of Moses incited to lusts rather than cured them, when Satan ruled in the world unchallenged, brought timely aid to perishing humanity. (*Ibid.*)

In essence, Jesus is identified as the helper because He is believed to be the one who makes it possible for our tears, repentance, charity, and plea to be cleansed of one’s sins to actually result in a clean conscience and pious living; so that, in turn, we may enjoy amity with God as well as the health, appetite, and understanding that result in more fully enjoying true pleasures from God. All of these things, Hedonius has argued, result in the individual acquiring the least amount of pain and the most intense and long-lasting true pleasure, which, as we read earlier, produces (at least in part) happiness (538). Yet this

¹⁷⁶ “*Auxiliatorem*.” In the French translation of this colloquium, this word is translated as “protecteur” (Margolin 140, borrowing from the French translations of Erasmus, *Érasme, Colloques*. Ed. E. Wolff. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, II, 1992. p. 392 and Erasmus, *ASD*, I-3. Eds. L.-E. Halkin *et al.*, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1972. p. 731, II. 421-423).

conclusion is also the locus of the *équivoque* on which Erasmus plays, which is constitutive of Christian truths as he understands them: they can (must) be conveyed in the form of paradoxes and parables instead of enforceable logical distinctions.

One of the effects of Hedonius' focus on the beginning or source of all goods is that it leaves room for one to imagine Heaven¹⁷⁷, not as a place where pleasures will eventually encounter their limit, nor as a place devoid of energy and movement but, instead, as a place where the pleasures of movement and variety continuously abound. One passage, in particular, alludes to this aspect of Heaven. Hedonius reassures Spudaeus that "Wherever is a pure heart^[178], there God [the fount of all joy^[179]] is" (546), and that pure heart will continue to "suffer no loss of happiness"¹⁸⁰ whether that heart is in the impoverished, suffering, mortal body or even, improbably, in the "depths of hell"¹⁸¹ (*ibid.*). Hedonius does not stop at the statement "there God is," as if it were enough to persuade the interlocutor to seek such a place. He continues by describing what it means to be where God is. In Latin, his description reads: "*ubicunque Deus est, ibi paradiscus est: ubi coelum est, ibi felicitas est: ubi felicitas est, ibi gaudium est verum et alacritas sincera*" (Erasmus, *Epicureus* n. p.). Thompson's English translation is slightly misleading in that it does not reproduce the exact word order of the original Latin text: "Wherever God is, there is paradise, heaven, happiness. Where happiness is, there is true gladness and unfeigned cheerfulness" (Erasmus, *The Colloquies* 546); which fails to

¹⁷⁷ On this see also Valla's *On Pleasure*, III.xv-xxv (pp. 279-319).

¹⁷⁸ "*Pura mens.*" Thompson translates *mens* as heart even though, in the Latin text, Erasmus shifts from writing about the good *animus* to writing about the pure *mens*.

¹⁷⁹ "*Omnis laetitiae fons Deus.*"

¹⁸⁰ "*Felicitatis.*"

¹⁸¹ "*Intima tartari*" (*i.e.*, the innermost part of Tartarus). The choice of this term instead of the *infernum* of Ps. 138:8 (*Vulgate*) adds literary embellishment to the notion of Hell, conflating the mythological with the biblical so as to avoid discussing the latter literally – which would make the paradox untenable since Hell is, by definition, the place from which God is absent and all hope of access to God has been removed.

convey the potential meaning behind the structural balance and the closing amplification that we find in the original Latin. The very structure of this sentence alludes to a notion that is meaningful to this study: “wherever God is, there paradise is: where heaven is, there felicity is: where felicity is, there true joy is, and sincere alacrity” (*ibid.*; *our translation*).

Hedonius’ words situate God at the top of the very notion of Heaven, as the only source of all goods or pleasures. The reader’s focus is then shifted to paradise (the term used to describe both the first Garden of Eden and the eternal Promised Land where humankind is to be restored to harmonious fellowship with its Creator). The shift from *paradisus* to *coelum* lifts the metaphorical eyes of the reader’s mind upward, thus deepening the mystery proclaimed in the previous statement, according to which God is present in the *pura mens* – even if the latter is situated within the weak physical body, promised to death and risking Hell. Following the final colon of this quote, we notice a break from the one-to-one structure of the previous two phrases, thus visually and aurally alluding to a sense of fullness concerning the pleasure(s) that will be experienced by the pure mind in Heaven. Not only will there be felicity but, where felicity is, there will also be joy that is true and there will be alacrity that is sincere (*i.e.*, not falsified, unadulterated). The nouns “joy” and “alacrity” are loaded with meaning. While the nominative singular *gaudium*, commonly translated as *joy*, carries with it connotations of gladness, rejoicing, and the feeling of pleasure or delight, the connotations of the nominative singular *alacritas* are even more abundant. This Latin word can be used to signify liveliness, briskness, cheerfulness, and even zeal, ardor, or eagerness. The decision to conclude this description with these terms leaves us with the impression that

the pleasure(s) experienced in Heaven will not merely involve static repose: rather, there will be some sort of mental, if not also bodily, dynamic pleasure as well; and it will be true, pure, and unadulterated even though, ironically, more and more words are necessary to communicate what it consists of. There is a danger of diversion or dilution: what should be self-evident is anything but, as long as we are not there; but Erasmus is betting – such is his faith in *copia* – that all of these quasi-synonyms, on the contrary, will make the vision sharper, more precise, without ever losing sight of its “source.” This is the kind of question we will return to when discussing Gabrielle de Coignard’s and Anne de Marquets’ conception and description of celestial pleasure(s) in the following chapters.

We should acknowledge that there is presently no indication that Coignard read any of Erasmus’ literary works. In fact, the contrary seems more likely, since “An Index of Pope Paul IV (1559) condemned all of Erasmus’ commentaries, annotations, and translations, as well as the *Colloquies*”; and “The Council of Trent likewise condemned the *Colloquies*” (Erasmus, *The Colloquies* xxxi), ignoring Erasmus’ declaration that “sentiments uttered in dialogue are those the author deems suitable to the characters and dramatic situation, not necessarily [his] own opinions” (xxix). Regardless, *The Epicurean*’s play with hedonism, with the Christian experience of pleasure considered as a possible “end,” remains a helpful model for understanding Coignard’s own notion of the *summum bonum* and its rapport with the pleasure (or pleasures) that the highest good is expected to provide.

How do we obtain the felicity of amity and union with God? Erasmus’ text highlights the need for our humility and repentance, and above all the paramount power of God’s grace, for this happy outcome to occur. Contrary to their pagan counterparts,

“Epicurean” Christians are not left in charge of engineering their happiness: their main task is not to create their own “good” by way of moderating the pleasures of their lives¹⁸². In *Epicureus*, Hedonius is clear that God *is* the highest good, qualified in terms of its beauty, lovability, and sweetness. To experience amity and union with God is to experience the ultimate pleasure, which deserves its own term and concept – beatitude, beyond any distinct or accessory pleasure we could name. The paradox that Erasmus (via Hedonius) reveals is that the godly Christian is *more* Epicurean than the Epicureans because s/he ends up possessing the most pleasure and the least pain, even though – and this is an important distinction – s/he does not (will no longer) perceive that pleasure as being the *summum bonum* in an of itself. Here is an implied distinction that Epicurus would not have made: Hedonius, like Augustine, separates God as the *summum bonum* from mankind’s beatitude. While the latter is the highest state of being that we can attain (which, he claims, remains thinkable in terms of pleasure as commonly understood), it can only be attained by virtue of God’s bestowing of that beatific state. God as the *summum bonum* is that which causes the transfiguration of pleasure into the ultimate happiness that is beatitude.

¹⁸² It is worth noting, however, that Montaigne, a half-century after Erasmus, will set out to do just that. See Krazek, Rafal. *Montaigne et la philosophie du plaisir. Pour une lecture épicurienne des Essais*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE, FAITH, AND CALLING OF GABRIELLE DE COIGNARD

We have seen that, in philosophical hedonism, pleasure is that which possesses intrinsic value and forms our ultimate end in that it causes our greatest flourishing. Upon reading Coignard's work, we began to wonder if (and to what extent) pleasure is liable to become her driving end-goal, with God (or union with God) implicitly relegated to the role of serving as her primary *means* of attaining that goal. In subsequent chapters, we will seek an answer to this question through a series of close readings. It is important to start, however, by situating Coignard's poems practically (via a focus on their author's actual life), just as we have done conceptually in Chapter I. Simply put: in order to determine if and how Coignard's writing balances her own experience of pleasure and a theological standard concerning the same, it is helpful to be aware of relevant aspects of her personal history, including her self-image as a poet: the last part of this chapter will widen the perspective again, by giving some preliminary indications as to what connects the life of our author and the making of the "voice" we hear in the *Œuvres chrestiennes*.

The most recent biographical accounts of Gabrielle de Coignard are those of Philippe Wolff¹⁸³, Pierre Salies¹⁸⁴, Colette Winn¹⁸⁵, and Melanie E. Gregg¹⁸⁶. Winn's "Notice" points out that, despite some studies, including the "enquête récente" published

¹⁸³ See our p. 6, n. 14 for the full reference.

¹⁸⁴ Salies, Pierre. "Gabrielle de Coignard: poétesse toulousaine du XVI^e siècle." *Archistra* 79 (March-April 1987): pp. 33-43.

¹⁸⁵ "Introduction: notice biographique," *Œuvres chrétiennes*, pp. 18-22.

¹⁸⁶ Coignard, Gabrielle de. *Spiritual Sonnets: A Bilingual Edition*. Trans. Melanie E. Gregg. Chicago: The U. of Chicago P., 2004.

by Salies in 1987, our author's biography remains "lacunaire"¹⁸⁷. In 2004, Gregg reiterated (in English) much of the information provided by Winn¹⁸⁸. Since then, two dissertations on Coignard's work have been defended: Marie-Laurentine Caëtano's in 2012, entitled: *'Moy qui suis, ô Dieu, ton humble chanteresse': Anthologie francophone de la poésie spirituelle et féminine du XVI^e siècle*¹⁸⁹; and Audrey Gilles-Chikhaoui's in 2014, entitled *D'une voix l'autre: plaisirs féminins dans la littérature française de la Renaissance*¹⁹⁰. Neither thesis was officially published¹⁹¹. The latter does not discuss Coignard's biography; the former contains a notice (pp. 113-114) that adds some details to those provided by Winn's edition.

Elements for a portrait

– Origins

Scholars seem to agree with Salies that Gabrielle de Coignard was likely born in or around 1550. She also appears to have been the only (at least surviving) child born to her parents, Jean de Coignard and Louise de Baulac. Although Gabrielle makes vague

¹⁸⁷ Scholars keep pointing out how little we know of Coignard's life. As Caëtano puts it: "Poétesse 'peu connue', 'méconnue', 'oubliée', 'négligée' ... Les adjectifs ne manquent pas pour qualifier le peu de renommée de Gabrielle de Coignard; pourtant les *Œuvres Chrétiennes* de cette poétesse du XVI^e siècle ont eu un parcours éditorial étonnant" (Caëtano, "Le remède..." 57) ("Le remède salutaire de ceste poésie spirituelle': une réception posthume orientée des *Œuvres Chrétiennes* de Gabrielle de Coignard." In *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* n°70 (2010): pp. 57-72. <<https://doi.org/10.3406/rhren.2010.3097>>). The epithets quoted were used by Philippe Wolff, Jeanine Moulin, and Marianne Fizet, respectively. One of the first scholars to shine the spotlight on Coignard by writing an entire article about her, Wolff explains that "Même si les allusions personnelles ne me paraissent pas totalement absentes de cet ensemble [...], elles sont plus nettes et fréquentes dans les sonnets. C'est une des raisons pour lesquelles je les considère comme la meilleure partie de l'œuvre de Gabrielle de Coignard" (Wolff, "Une poétesse..." 10). One effect of Coignard's lack of fame is this tendency to make the quality of her work contingent on what (if anything) it reveals of her life.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Coignard, *Spiritual Sonnets* pp. 4-5. Winn was Gregg's dissertation advisor.

¹⁸⁹ See our p. 20, n. 43 for the reference.

¹⁹⁰ See our p. 20, n. 43 for the reference. In her work, see pp. 599-618 in particular.

¹⁹¹ Caëtano's dissertation is available online in PDF format (<<https://grac.univ-lyon2.fr/anthologie-de-la-poesie-spirituelle-feminine-du-xvie-siecle-en-francais-685397.kjsp>>). The reference for her M. A. thesis is provided above, p. 7, n. 14.

allusions to her parents and to her loss thereof¹⁹², the poet mentions neither her father nor her mother explicitly in any of her poems. In fact, when she requests, in Sonnet CV¹⁹³, that her “chers parens” (2) cease speaking to her about getting married once more, we must deduce that she is referring to relatives but not to her father or mother because they were already dead (her father had passed away in 1569, then her mother in 1571) by the time she became a widow, in 1573¹⁹⁴. Nevertheless, her parents’ social status and her father’s involvement in the poetry society of Toulouse very likely informed Gabrielle’s ability to write poetry and interest in doing so.

Gabrielle’s father, Jean de Coignard¹⁹⁵, was born to Isaac Cornyard¹⁹⁶ and Johanna Danyella (Salies 33). Jean had an older brother, Aimond Corniard¹⁹⁷, and a

¹⁹² E.g., “Parmy le cours de mon pelerinage, / Durant l’Avril verdoyant de mon aage, / J’ay tout perdu ce que j’avois ça bas. / Tant qu’ay vescu en ce val de misere, / Je n’eus jamais une année prospere” (S. LII, lns. 9-13, Coignard 201-202).

¹⁹³ “Ne me parlez jamais de me remarier, / O vous, **mes chers parens**, si vous aymes ma vie, / Ne m’en parlez jamais, car je n’ay plus envie / A un second espoux oncques m’apparier. / Je veux garder ma foy sans jamais varier, / Ny rompre l’amitié que le ciel m’a ravie, / Encor qu’à maints travaux je puisse estre asservie, / Tousjours à la vertu on voit contrarier. / Je ne veux point chercher le repos de mes peines, / Non aux commoditez, ny aux grandeurs humaines, / Ny aux plaisirs trompeurs engeolant mes esprits. / Au seul Dieu tout benin j’ay mon certain refuge, / Il est mon advocat et pitoyable juge, / Qui bataillant pour moy m’adjuge le vray pris” (S. CV, Coignard 265-266).

¹⁹⁴ In *Familles nobles et notables du Midi toulousain aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles: généalogie de 700 familles présentes dans la région de Toulouse avant 1550*, André Navelle writes both that Pierre died in 1573 (Volume VII-M, p. 40) and 1574 (Volume III-C, p. 187) (Navelle, André. *Familles nobles et notables du Midi toulousain aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles: généalogie de 700 familles présentes dans la région de Toulouse avant 1550*. 11 vols. Fenouillet: Recherches historiques du Midi. 1991-1994). Kaiser believes that he died in November of 1573 (Kaiser 3); so does Salies (Salies 38). Fleury Vindry claims that Pierre died either before November 30th, 1573 or on May 12th, 1574 (Vindry 155) (*Les Parlementaires français au XVI^e siècle. Tome Second (Fascicule II): Parlement de Toulouse*, Paris: H. Champion, 1912. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k91419k/f241>>).

¹⁹⁵ Aliases: Jean Cornyard, Jehan Coigniard, Johannes Cornyardy, and Jean Corniard. Additional surname spellings: Cognard, Coignardi, and Cormardi.

¹⁹⁶ Alias: Ysaac. He received his “bac[helier en] droit” and became a “notaire criminel et civil du spirituel de Toulouse” (Navelle, Volume III-C, p. 186).

¹⁹⁷ Aliases: Aymond, Amon, and Raymond. He was “lic[encié en] droit [et] procureur du Roi en la Sainte Inquisition” (Navelle, Volume III-C, p. 186). He died some time between 1551 and 1558 (Navelle, Volume III-C, p. 186).

younger brother, Michel de Coignard¹⁹⁸ “Conseiller et Magistrat présidial au Sénéchal” (Salies 35). On June 30, 1526, it appears that Jean inherited his late father’s position as “notaire” (34). We also know that Jean attended the collège de Foix in Toulouse (Navelle Vol. 3-C p. 187). Eventually, he became “Conseiller au Sénéchal puis Conseiller au Parlement en septembre 1543” (Navelle 187) and, in 1545, Jean “est qualifié de Docteur en droit” (Salies 34). Salies also sheds light on some of Jean’s responsibilities in his capacity as a Conseiller au Parlement; more specifically as the “conseiller du Roy, en la Court du parlement de Tholoze” (Gélis, *Histoire critique* 351)¹⁹⁹:

Il y exercera pleinement ses fonctions, étant plusieurs fois désigné par le Roi pour faire partie de commissions pour:

- commissaire des vacants (1555)
- en 1561 et 1563 le Parlement confirme des Ordonnances prises par lui, concernant diverses communautés d’Aure ou de Bigorre;
- jugement des affaires relatives à l’Edit de Pacification (1565)
- surveillance de l’emploi des deniers de la Commutation destinés à la construction du Pont(-Neuf) (1566)

(Salies 34)

In the realm of poetry, Jean de Coignard enjoyed the title of “maître” at the *Jeux Floraux*²⁰⁰ for twenty years, and then became a “mainteneur” of the same²⁰¹. This annual poetic contest, established in Toulouse in 1323, spans three days at the beginning of each

¹⁹⁸ Michel de Coignard is mentioned in Gabrielle de Coignard’s final will and testament. He is also present at the opening of the will and testament after her death (Salies 41-42).

¹⁹⁹ Gélis, François de. *Histoire critique des Jeux Floraux: Depuis leur origine jusqu’à leur transformation en Académie (1323-1694)*. Toulouse: Imprimerie et Librairie Édouard Privat, 1912. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k55439700>>.

²⁰⁰ Beginning in 1323, the literary association responsible for establishing the *Jeux Floraux* was called the *Consistori del Gay Saber* (a.k.a. the *Consistoire du Gai Savoir* or *de la Gaie Science*). In the early 16th century, it became the *College de l’Art et Science de Rhétorique*. It would not be until 1694, under the reign of Louis XIV, that it would be renamed the *Académie des Jeux Floraux* (Dawson 3 and 11) (Dawson, John Charles. *Toulouse in the Renaissance; the Floral games; university and student life; Etienne Dolet (1532-1534)*. New York: Columbia U. P., 1923).

²⁰¹ Kaiser explains that he was the “maître ès-Jeux Floraux de 1535 à 1555” (Kaiser 1), then elected “mainteneur et vice-Chancelier en 1555, fonction qu’il résigna en 1569” (Kaiser 1). This is confirmed in François de Gélis’ *Histoire critique*, pp. 277 and 281. Winn writes that “Il fut durant plus d’une trentaine d’années maître ès jeux floraux et exerça, en cette qualité, une influence considérable sur ses collègues” (Coignard 19), no doubt because the position of “mainteneur” also includes that of “maître.”

May. The title *Maître ès Jeux* was given only to the participants of the *Jeux Floraux* who had been awarded not just one but, rather, all three prizes: the *Violeta del aur*, the *Ayglentina*, and the *Gauch*²⁰². In 1555, Jean was the “Commissaire des vacants” (Salies 34) and was elected “Mainteneur,” a position he held until 1562 (or 1569)²⁰³. Jean de Coignard died on January 18, 1569 (Navelle Vol. III-C, p. 187).

Gabrielle de Coignard’s mother, Louise de Baulac²⁰⁴, had married Jean de Coignard some time before November 27, 1542²⁰⁵. Louise is the daughter of Jean de Baulat, conseiller au Parlement, and his wife Françoise Guine²⁰⁶. Louise has two siblings, Jean and Jacme. She dies in February of 1571, just three months after Gabrielle marries Pierre de Mansencal. She is buried in the “église St Etienne, chapelle St Jacques tombe des ancêtres CORNYARDI” (Navelle Vol. III-C, p. 187).

²⁰² We looked to see whether the winning poems written by Jean de Coignard were included in the *Livre Rouge* (edited in the 20th century by François de Gélis and Joseph Anglade: *Actes et délibérations du Collège de Rhétorique (1513-1641), textes publiés par F. de Gélis et J. Anglade, mainteneurs des Jeux Floraux, collationnés sur l’original par Fr. Galabert, archiviste. Introduction, notes et arguments, par M. F. de Gélis*. 2 vols. Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1933-1940). First published in 1550 by Bernardi Coderci, the *Livre* is missing records from the years 1514-18, 20-34, 36-38, and 46 (Gélis, *Histoire critique* 72, n. 5). Since Jean de Coignard became *Maître ès jeux* in 1535, his winning pieces would have been entered the previous year(s). Therefore, they were unfortunately not conserved. No games were held in 1563, 71, 74, 80, and 82 (*idem*, 296 and 298-300). Gélis describes the first pages of the *Livre Rouge*: “Au verso de la première page est une enluminure représentant le Christ en croix, avec la Vierge et saint Jean à ses pieds. Au-dessous de l’image, on lit: ‘À Dieu. / Les saints escriptz qui luysent dans ce livre / Sont æternels par ton nom ô Seigneur / Doncq ici bas par toy auront honneur / Et après mort hault les feras vivre” (*idem*, 350). The footnote he adds in reference to the quatrain above reads: “Ce quatrain a été attribué successivement à de Coignard, du Cèdre, Trassabot, Pierre-Pascal et Samson de Lacroix. Nous inclinierions plutôt pour l’un des deux premiers” (*ibid.*, n. 2).

²⁰³ Gélis says that Jean was a “Mainteneur” from 1555-1562 (*Histoire critique* 277) and in 1568 (*idem*, 81), though in the latter case he was too ill to attend: “Le 3 Mai 1568, deux Mainteneurs seulement, MM. Coignard et de Papus, représentaient à Toulouse le corps des Jeux floraux. Encore le premier était-il malade et très incapable de prendre part à la célébration des Jeux.” The latter reference, however, may concern Jean de Coignard’s younger brother Michel (though certainly not to their older brother, Aimond, who died some time before 1558; see Navelle Vol. III-C, p. 186), but Gélis does not mention Michel anywhere else in the work; so this seems an unlikely option to us.

²⁰⁴ Aliases: Loysse de Baullac and Louise de Baulat.

²⁰⁵ Navelle thinks that Jean de Coignard may have remarried before 1568. He records that this first marriage was to the daughter of Bertrand d’Orbessan and Marie de Garrané (Navelle Vol. III-C, p. 186 and Salies p. 39). This seems surprising, however, since Louise de Baulac did not die until February of 1571.

²⁰⁶ Also spelled “Guyne.”

– *A poet's education*

Although Coignard never mentions her late father in her *Œuvres chrestiennes*, she does appear to adopt the same priority his literary society gave to the religious use and mission of poetry, instead of considering it a secular art. As John Dawson points out, “the tradition of the Floral Games was more religious than poetic”²⁰⁷, most often awarding its prizes to poems honoring this particular priority. Dawson cites the 14th-century poet Guilhem Molinier’s *Leys d’Amors*, where the purpose of the *Jeux Floraux* was first recorded as being “to give good doctrines and good instructions, in the praise and honor of God, our Lord, and of his glorious Mother, and of all the Saints in Paradise, for the teaching of the ignorant, for restraining mad and foolish lovers, enemies of the Gay Science”²⁰⁸. This purpose would be re-articulated by the poets of the College of Rhetoric in the *Livre Rouge* as late as 1573 (Dawson 15).

We will not conduct here (although a later study should) a comparative analysis of Coignard’s poetry and the poems that received prizes at the *Jeux Floraux* when her father was *Maître ès jeux*, or even after she had become a widow. We do know that the *Jeux*, perhaps incited by Du Bellay’s attack, in his *Deffence et illustration*, against “toutes ces vieilles poësies Françoises aux Jeuz Floraux de Thoulouze et au Puy de Rouan: comme rondaux, ballades, vyrelaiz, chants royaulx, chansons, et autres telles episseries, qui corrompent le goust de nostre langue, et ne servent si non à porter temoingnaige de

²⁰⁷ John Charles Dawson, *Toulouse in the Renaissance*. p. 17.

²⁰⁸ Dawson, *Toulouse in the Renaissance*, p. 4, translating Molinier’s *Las Leys d’Amors* (ed. Joseph Anglade. Toulouse: Privat, 1919-1920, 4 vols; vol. I, p. 8) as quoted by Anglade in his study “Origines du Gai Savoir” (in *Recueil de l’Académie des Jeux Floraux*. Toulouse: Imprimerie Douladoure, 1919, p. 179).

notre ignorance”²⁰⁹, began to incorporate tenets of the new poetics promoted by the “Pléiade” poets. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that we need a better sense of the Academy’s (if not Jean de Coignard’s) possible influence on Gabrielle de Coignard’s poetic approach. On the one hand, as we just mentioned, she seems to adhere to the subject matter embraced by the Academy; but she is undoubtedly encouraged to do so by the development of devotional poetry at century’s end. On the other hand, she does not share the Academy’s preference for traditional forms (specifically, the *ballade* and the *chant royal*). According to Dawson, “The year 1554 marks the introduction into the records of the *sonnet*, but at no time was a prize ever awarded for a poem of this genre,” although “In the course of time, the sonnet became the only one used in the *Essay*, an impromptu trial by which the merits of the various candidates were tested” (Dawson 12). In the absence of a closer study, we may surmise that while Coignard certainly owed something to the poetic context of her upbringing, the poetry that she actually wrote owed more to the movement that, in her own time and in a context of acute religious crisis, took on secular poetry (the sonnet first and foremost) and turned it toward the sacred.

According to Jeanne and Catherine de Mansencal, her daughters, Coignard did not consider herself “une grande clergesse” (preface “Aux dames devotieuses,” Coignard 130), which Winn points out is to be taken “Dans le sens de savante” (*ibid.*, n. 2); “non qu’elle n’honorat les sçavantes dames, mais elle disoit que c’estoit savoir tout que n’ignorer point les moyens de son salut” (*ibid.*). The same preference for “ardeur de devotion” over knowledge animates Coignard’s own claim “Je ne veux rien sçavoir, pour

²⁰⁹ Du Bellay, Joachim. *La Deffence et Illustration de la langue Françoise*, II, IV. Ed. Jean-Charles Monferran. Geneva: Droz, 2001, pp. 131-132.

scavante paroistre” (S. CXXIV, ln. 1, 288), which is less directed against “sçavoir” *per se* than against its uses and abuses (starting with our urge to “know” what our neighbors are up to). A longer poem entitled *Combat de plusieurs ennemis qui nous assaillent*, taking the form of a full *mea culpa* set against “Ce superbe ennemy nommé presumption” (17, 359), confirms that what the poet rejects so firmly may also be what tempts her personally, compelling her to accuse herself of that very sin:

J’ay grand sollicitude aux curiositez,
Delectant mon esprit à toutes vanitez.
[...]
Mon ame est submergée au lac d’ambition,
M’estimant singuliere en ma condition,
[...]
Ne vois tu pas, mon Dieu, ce mien interieur
Qui ne peut retenir le silence du coeur?
[...]
Je parle volontiers un superflu langage,
Voulant qu’en mes discours l’on m’estime fort sage.
(*Combat*, lns. 29-30, 37-38, 57-58, 67-68, 360-362)

We will have to keep in mind that poetic ambition, poetic talent, and the “sçavoir” entailed by the art of poetry are all liable to appear before a tribunal of the soul, lest it become a subject of pride. Coignard writes poems, among other things, to warn herself and others about the peril of deeming oneself important. Lest it be unduly glorified in turn, the danger of styling herself a poet is not singled out by this *Combat*; nevertheless, it falls within the general scope of what flatters her lust for recognition and power.

– *A devout Catholic*

Poetic aspirations and humility aside, it is assumed that Coignard was in fact a highly educated, learned woman by the standards of 16th-century France. Winn proposes that, given her father’s status and disposition, Coignard would likely have received a

privileged, though closely supervised, education in Toulouse (Coignard 19, 93, and 399). Winn's introduction provides significant information on the hyper-Catholic, ultra-conservative ethos in which our author was reared, and into which she later married. The poet's father was a member of the "parti catholique intransigeant" and, as "conseiller au Parlement," was involved in judging Protestant actions during the May 1562 riots of Toulouse (19, n. 13)²¹⁰. Coignard's marriage in 1570 to Pierre de Mansencal was, according to Winn, "une promotion sociale très appréciable" (*ibid.*) and, even though Jean de Mansencal died before Coignard married his son, the former was "réputé pour son savoir et son intégrité" (*ibid.*) and, like his son, played a prominent role within the Parlement de Toulouse, notably as its "président"²¹¹.

The poet's own ties with conservative Catholicism are made evident in Sonnet LXXXIV, where she presents herself as a member of the "Eglise militante" (ln. 4, Coignard 241), praying for souls in Purgatory, and in Sonnet CVIII, which refers to the Catholic sacrament of penance through the act of confessing to one's priest. Her *Hymne sur la louange de la charité* draws on the Catholic view of the redeeming role of good works in combination with faith: "Car le tres-sainct Esprit nous dit es escritz saintz / Par l'aumosne et la foy les pechez sont estaintz" (lns. 31-32, p. 588). The Catholic doctrine concerning free will is also alluded to in Coignard's poetry (*cf.* S. C, ln. 12 and S. CXXVIII, ln. 6). It is no surprise that, in Sonnet LXIX, she criticizes the Protestant sect for refusing the crucifix (lns. 10-11) and, elsewhere, for condemning the Catholic vow of

²¹⁰ See Gelis, Anglade, and Galabert, [*Le Livre Rouge*]. *Actes et délibérations*, vol. 1, p. 21 (*cf.* Coignard 19, n. 13).

²¹¹ On Jean de Mansencal, see Winn's richly detailed note (Coignard 19-20, n. 14).

chastity: “O folle opinion et secte pestilente, / Qui blasmes à grand tort la vie continente” (*Hymne de la vertu de Continence*, lns. 125-126, p. 623)²¹².

Nevertheless, Winn makes clear that, in general, “l’œuvre de Gabrielle de Coignard n’est pas partisane. Il n’est fait que de rares allusions à la ‘guerre heretique’ (Sonnet XXVIII)” (Coignard 399, n. 100), even though Toulouse was a fulcrum of the conflict and, as Caëtano points out, the very publication of the *Œuvres* may have had a militant purpose²¹³. Winn further suggests that Coignard’s poetry shows certain Protestant influences. For example, the “tutoiement de Dieu” that we see throughout the work is a “marque d’influence réformée” (141, n. 1). We counted 39 sonnets in which God is addressed using *tutoiement*²¹⁴, and 7 sonnets in which *vouvoiement* is preferred²¹⁵. Caëtano notes that the *vouvoiement* Coignard uses in Sonnet L is not used in Psalm 51 (50) v. 11, which the sonnet paraphrases. She suggests that this *vouvoiement* “est peut-être le signe que le péché éloigne de Dieu”²¹⁶. Winn also attributes “l’emploi de l’Eternel pour nommer Dieu,” which occurs in sonnets XIV, LXIII, LXXXIII, XCIII, CXX, and CXXVI, to some “influence réformée” (156, n. 4).

²¹² For a taste of her predecessor Anne de Marquets’ anti-Protestant polemics, see below, Chapter IV, p. 251, n. 386.

²¹³ Winn: “Bastion catholique en un pays dominé par les huguenots, Toulouse a particulièrement souffert des troubles religieux. A la suite de l’expansion du calvinisme (1547-1548) et des événements de 1562, les affrontements deviennent quotidiens dans les rues de la ville” (Coignard 135, n. 2). Caëtano: “Cette situation politico-religieuse permet alors de mieux comprendre pourquoi l’œuvre de Gabrielle de Coignard est utilisée par les libraires et les jésuites comme un moyen de lutter contre la Muse protestante, même si la poétesse n’évoque que très rarement les conflits religieux de son époque” (*Je suis Chrestienne*, 79).

²¹⁴ Sonnets 2, 4-8, 12, 15, 17, 25, 34, 41, 43-44, 55-56, 62, 64-65, 67, 71, 77-79, 82, 87, 89-90, 94, 97, 100, 103, 108-109, 112, 115-116, 118, 127.

²¹⁵ Sonnets 31, 36, 50, 70, 85, 113, 124. Sonnets in which neither “tu” nor “vous” are used to refer to God are: 53 (God is only addressed using “ô bon Dieu” (ln. 9)), 117 (Christ addresses God as “Pere” (ln. 8)), and 126 (the poet exclaims “Mon Dieu” (ln. 5), although this interjection could also be interpreted as a spontaneous expression of delight or surprise rather than an actual address to God).

²¹⁶ Caëtano, “‘Quel sentiment as tu, ô mon ame’ [...]”, art. cit., §16.

In terms of Coignard's religious culture more generally, it is hardly surprising that the *Œuvres chrestiennes* exhibit their author's deep familiarity with the Bible²¹⁷ (and with the Psalms especially). Among their other models are liturgical pieces recited in her day, as well as commonly sung hymns (*Crudelis Herodes Deum*; *Jesu, Redemptor omnium*; *Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae*; and *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*)²¹⁸. Augustine's *Civitas Dei*²¹⁹ is undoubtedly present in the theological background. Above all, as we have seen, much of Coignard's poetry is not so much influenced, in the traditional sense, by Luis de Granada's *Vray chemin*²²⁰ as *shaped* by it, in that it performs (not merely conforms to) a meditation program: see *e.g.*, sonnets XLI, LXVIII, and CXXIV, as well as *De la gloire et felicité de la vie eternelle*, *Combat de plusieurs ennemis qui nous assaillent*, *Discours sur la Passion de nostre Sauveur Jesus-Christ*, *La Mort et Passion de nostre Seigneur sur le Mont de Calvaire*, *Complainte de la Vierge*

²¹⁷ Coignard, like many 16th-century writers in Europe, takes an interest in paraphrasing numerous biblical passages, which is partly due to the Bible's developing, though disputed, accessibility.

²¹⁸ Caëtano's M. A. thesis (*'Je suis Chrestienne,'* 47-61) provides many comparisons of Coignard's poems with various liturgical pieces and hymns that inspired them, or from which she borrowed directly. Specifically: *O Rex gloriae, Domine virtutum, qui triumphator hodie super omnes coelos ascendisti* (47-48); *Ave Maris stella* (48); *Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria* (49); *Salve Regina* (49); "l'office du Mercredi des Cendres où le prêtre dit '*Memento, homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris*'" (49); "la phrase qui précède la communion: '*Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea*'" (49-50); *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* (50-53); *Assumpta est Maria in caelum* (53-54); *Stabat Mater* (55-58); *Jesus Redemptor omnium* (58); *Quod solus a sede Patris Mundi salus adveneris* (58); "'Le Magnificat chanté aux Vêpres de la Nativité de Jésus: '*videbitis Regem regum procedentem a Patre, tamquam sponsum de thalamo suo*'" (59, quoting Winn in Coignard p. 321, n. 2); *O quot undis lacrymarum* (59); "l'hymne de l'Ascension, *Salutis Humanae Sator*" (60); *Veni sponsa Christi* (61).

²¹⁹ To which Winn refers in her annotation to S. LXVII. See, too, Caëtano (*'Je suis Chrestienne,'* 112-114) for her discussion of Augustine's influence. As mentioned above, we wonder if the expression "guerre intestine" (ln. 12) in Sonnet LXXXV was borrowed directly from Augustine's expression "intestine war" [*bello intestino*] (*City of God* XIX.iv.3).

²²⁰ See especially Coignard p. 45 and Winn's footnotes on pp. 188, 222, and 289. Winn's citations from *Le vray chemin*, available in the footnotes of Part II of the *Œuvres chrétiennes*, show the extent to which eight of Coignard's longer poems are inspired by Granada's words. Our introduction summarizes Cave's and Kaiser's discussion of his influence on Coignard's *Discours sur la Passion*.

*Marie, La descente de nostre Seigneur aux limbes, Hymne sur la louange de la Charité, and Sommaire de sept sermons faitz par monsieur Eimond*²²¹.

Loyola is also likely to have been a model in this respect, although both Kaiser and Winn point out a key distinction between the intended audience of his *Exercitia spiritualia* (1548)²²² and Granada's *Libro de la Oración y Meditación*, which may explain Coignard's preference for the latter as a source of devotional inspiration and, above all, provider of devotional method. Loyola's spiritual exercises were "destinés à n'être donnés que sous la direction d'un religieux qui les présentait à chaque fidèle de la manière qu'il jugeait la plus profitable" (Kaiser 39). The work of Granada, on the other hand, was considered "une sorte de manuel, de guide détaillé dont le chrétien pouvait se servir seul, sans l'aide d'un directeur" (*ibid.*). As Winn puts it: "*Le vray chemin* balise le chemin pour l'expérience personnelle de l'exercitant. Ce guide peut être utilisé sans l'aide d'un directeur. Les *Exercices spirituels*, par contre, ne sont pas écrits pour l'exercitant, mais pour son instructeur. Ils doivent être transmis par l'instructeur qui se charge de les adapter à l'exercitant de la manière qu'il juge la plus profitable, ou de lui indiquer comment les utiliser" (Coignard 46, n. 48).

Yet Caetano specifies instances where Coignard does seem to follow Loyola:

Pourtant plusieurs sonnets peuvent se lire comme une réécriture des *Exercices Spirituels*. Ils développent tout au moins les mêmes idées. Loyola écrit au paragraphe 23 '... en sorte que [...] nous ne cherchions pas la santé plus que la maladie, ni ne préférons les richesses à la pauvreté, l'honneur au mépris, une vie longue à une vie brève' et ces lignes nous rappellent les derniers vers du sonnet CIII:

Sans plus me soucier de mourir ou de vivre,
Mais de ta sainte main; ô Dieu plein de bonté,
J'embrasseray mon mal ou ma douce santé,

²²¹ Eimond (Edmond) Auger, a Jesuit, was Henri III's confessor and translated the *Imitation* (1578).

²²² Loyola, Saint Ignatius de (Ignacio of Loyola; Ignace de Loyola). *Les exercices spirituels*. Trans. Jean-Claude Guy. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982.

Car ton divin vouloir est ce que je veux suivre.
(v. 11-14)

(*'Je suis Chrestienne,'* Caëtano 116)

Melanie Gregg concludes, for her part, that

It is most likely the influence of [Granada's and Loyola's] writings that encouraged the introspective nature of [Coignard's] poetry. The numerous ethical contemplations, self-evaluations, accusations, and chastisements also indicate the influence of Granada and Loyola. (Gregg 17)²²³

In sum, Gabrielle de Coignard was not merely a Catholic who also happened to be a poet due, in part, to a milieu that had long emphasized both aspects (the creed and its militant expression in verse). Her practice of poetic meditation, as guided by Granada's teaching, demanded a new synthesis, a personal fusion of faith and art, making use of the latter's power while refraining from calling attention to it for its own sake.

– *A lay woman (and poet) from Toulouse*

It would be wrong to ignore the secular dimensions of Coignard's life, however discreetly they are alluded to in her work; yet they too are subjected to a religious inflection. Like so many other poets of her time, for example, she opposes "le bruit et les rumeurs / Des superbes citez abondamment peuplées" (S. XCII, 1-2, 250)²²⁴ to the simple enchantment of the countryside, which, as we know from Ronsard and others, is more favorable to poetic inspiration. Sonnet CXXVI, describing an idyllic "lieu champêtre" (1, 291), denounces the urban *milieu* and its "vulgaire babil" (12, 292), opposed to the "ramage gentil" (13) of little birds. Ronsard had said as much. Yet this familiar contrast is framed by the larger opposition of a "monde miserable" corrupted by man (S. CXXVII,

²²³ See also Kaiser p. 131, and Cave pp. 5, 27, and 29. In sum, Coignard does seem to have applied the meditation techniques of Loyola, and her poems could be considered miniature spiritual exercises.

²²⁴ This sonnet denouncing "les plaisirs des villes" has satirical overtones that make one think of Du Bellay's *Regrets*, except that the attack remains very generic.

2, *ibid.*) and the God-given natural world: “Loué soit l’Eternel qui tous ces biens nous donne” (S. CXXVI, 14, *ibid.*). Beautiful Nature incites poetry, but demands above all a thanksgiving prayer to “Ce grand ouvrier si soigneux des mortels” (S. XCI, 9, 249), instead of encouraging the poet to focus on her own inspiration and talent.

This does not mean that Coignard was not personally familiar with the pastoral environments²²⁵ evoked by her bucolic poems (see also S. XCVI, quoted in our introduction); nor does it mean that she would not have been equally familiar with an urban setting, seeing as she likely lived in one of the two homes her father owned that were located within the bustling city’s limits²²⁶. Be this as it may, her stern rejection of “superbes citez” does not prevent her from composing a eulogy, in Sonnet XVI, of the Garonne river and of the brilliant minds it has nourished. As mentioned above, this is the only poem of the collection that seems devoid of religious intent²²⁷:

Fleuve coulant par ce pays fertile,
Qui enrichis les champs et les citez,
Nous apportant mille commodités,
Battant les murs de ma fameuse ville.

O si j’avois un doux et grave stile,
Dessus le bort de tes concavités,
Je chanterois tes grandes raretez,
Et du rocher ta source qui distile.

²²⁵ Salies points out that, upon the deaths of her parents and husband, “Gabrielle se retrouve, seule, avec deux petites filles, et des **biens ruraux considérables** à maintenir et gérer” (Salies 40). He provides a list of the rural properties that she inherited and passed on, and deems her “fort avertie des problèmes d’économie rurale” (*ibid.*) which she handled alone. For Salies, it is from experience that she describes “la forêt, le pré, la moisson, la vigne du poème sur *La Gloire de la Vie Eternelle*” (*idem*, 43) or that she is able to “voir ‘les fleurs par les champs s’estaler’, entendre ‘parmi les bois gémir la tourterelle’” (*ibid.*), or enjoy “‘des verts prez les fleurettes riantes’, ‘les plaines blondoyantes’, ‘les ombrageux halliers d’aubespins fleurissant, de chesne ou de peuplier’” (Salies 43, quoting various lines from Coignard’s poems), *etc.*

²²⁶ His smaller home, at 43 rue des Filatiers (Vindry, Fleury. *Les Parlementaires français au XVI^e siècle: Tome second (Fascicule II)*, p. 209, n. 224. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k91419k/f263.image>>), is today a toy store that appears to have kept some of the building’s original features. His larger home, which Gabrielle inherited and passed on to her daughter Jeanne (Salies 40), is located at 11 place Saint-Étienne (Vindry 209, n. 224). This large building hides a courtyard that is said to date back to Coignard’s era.

²²⁷ While some of the poems that oppose city and country and celebrate the latter do not refer to God, the opposition itself, as we just saw, is interpreted spiritually.

Tu as nourris maints excellents esprits
 Qui font tes eaux jaillir dans leurs escrits,
 Ja l'Indien sçait le nom de Garonne.

Puis que je suis née dessus tes bors,
 Ayant appris quelques simples accorts,
 A ton honneur ma muse les entonne.
 (S. XVI, 159-160)

Interestingly, Coignard's would-be father-in-law and her own father were, among other prominent men of Toulouse, named and celebrated in a 1551 poem entitled "Ode de Garonne" by Bernard du Poey de Luc en Béarn²²⁸:

De ton **Mansencal** l'excellence,
 Fait parler ta longue silence:
 Maugré le temps trop envieux:
 Contre l'heur present se despit,
 Par sa mutation subite,
 N'estimant que le bruit des vieux.
 (61-66, du Poey 24-25)

Ton immortalité tesmoigne
 Ton nom: qui de ton bruit m'esloigne,
 Tant plus que j'en cuide approcher,
 Admirand **Cognard** [*sic*], et saint Pierre,
 Mon esprit plus loing en erre:
 Quand veux tes louenges toucher
 (121-126, du Poey 27)²²⁹

²²⁸ Du Poey de Luc en Bearn, Bernard. *Odes Du Gave, Fleuve en Bearn. Du Fleuve de Garonne, avec les tristes chans à sa Caranite. A Tolose. Par Guyon Boudeville, Juré de la ville et Université d'icelle. 1551.* Toulouse: Boudeville, 1551. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1512248s>>. See Appendix for our complete transcription of this 253-line ode, which came to our attention thanks to Nathalie Dauvois, who notes that in "l'Ode de Garonne", Bernard du Poey de Luc en Béarn fait un court éloge de Jean de Mansencal" (*L'humanisme à Toulouse: 1480-1596. Actes du colloque international de Toulouse, mai 2004*, dir. N. Dauvois. Champion: Paris, 2006, p. 11. Winn (Coignard 159, n. 1) cites other poetic models for odes of this type (e.g. Petrarch and Scève honoring the Rhône, and Ronsard the Loir). Du Poey compares the Garonne to the Seine: "Tu reluis comme une lumiere, / Dessus toutes es la premiere. / La Seine n'en peult approcher" (lms. 91-93, p. 26).

²²⁹ It is likely that the "Cognard" mentioned here is in fact referring to Jean de Coignard, because du Poey later publishes a sonnet dedicated "Au Seigneur Jean Cognard Conseiller": "L'ame et le sens de la Romaine loy, / (Qui l'équité sous tes grâces balance / Et ton renom dedans le Tibre élance) / Bien qu'en ton cueur assiegent l'esperance / De leur pouvoir, et leur premiere foy: / Bien que tes yeux ne soient plus desireus / A veoir en vers l'erreur de ma jeunesse. / Pour derider le soing de ma tristesse / Or' toutesfois quelques chans douçereus / De mon Prince, ose offrir à ta viellesse [*sic*]. / Comme l'on voit les mouches ménageres / Parmi les chams resuçer maintes fleurs, / S'emmieller et de douces liqueurs / Ainsi mes vers de langues estrangeres / Sont emperlés, pour mieux complaire aux Sœurs. / Jusques à quand?" (Du Poey de Luc en Bearn, Bernard. *Poésie en diverses langues. Sur la naissance de Henry de Bourbon Prince trèsheureus, né*

While we do not have absolute proof that Gabrielle de Coignard read du Poey's piece, it seems plausible that her Sonnet XVI may have been inspired by it to some extent. For example, just as Coignard celebrates the Garonne's renown, which extends as far as India (ln. 11), du Poey hails the same river in a similar movement:

Changeons propos: sus donc ma plume,
 Aux Muses tost le feu allume,
 A fin que de chants tous divers,
 A tant de mes chansons latines,
 Chantent les ondes cristalines
 De Garonne par l'univers.
 (13-18, 22)

"Ton loz s'estand par les provinces, / Tu es souhaitée des princes" (43-44, 24), "Ainsi ton renom par tout luit" (57, *ibid.*), "Les Bertrans te feront entendre, / Plus que n'a l'Asie Alexandre" (76-77, p. 25), "Je voy que par tout on le chante, / Toute estrange peuple te hante" (79-80, *ibid.*); and finally:

Il n'y faut aucun artifice,
 Doxe y bastit maint edifice
 La grand Arabie en odeurs,
 Ne tant Phalerne en vin abonde,
 Ne l'Inde en baume tant feconde,
 Comme produisent tes humeurs.
 (217-222, 32)

Where Coignard's opening quatrain celebrates the "pays" of France, whose fields and cities are enriched and made fertile by the "[f]leuve coulant" (1) and then specifically praises her "fameuse ville" (4) of Toulouse, du Poey's fourth through seventh stanzas eulogize the same entities in reverse order:

Sus donc saisons son bruit durable,
 Je luy suis beaucoup redevable,
 Aiant receu don precieux,

au Chasteau de Pau au mois de decembre. 1533. Tolose: Jacques Colomies. 1554. Avec Privilege. Toulouse: Jacques Colomies, 1554, pp. 10 r°-10 v° [or Cj v°-Cij r°]. <<https://books.google.fr/books?id=Cd9mAAAacAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>).

Par l'ordonnance clementine,
M'a fait present de l'**Esglantine**.
Me reservant encore mieux.

Le Souci qui commence à croistre
Promet de me faire cognoistre
Un jour si bien, que les neuf sœurs
Me feront chapeaux de fleurettes,
Entrelassant des **violettes**,
Avec leurs sucrées douceurs.

Alors par ta cource legere
Diray que tu es menagere,
D'avoir si belles fleurs produit.
Les arrousant de ta claire onde,
Dont merites par tout le monde
Que soit entendu ton bon bruit.

Si la **France** en avoit de telles,
Feroit ses terres immortelles,
N'auroit **champ** qui ne fut **fertil**
Sans y faire aucun labourage,
Du Nil n'estimant le rivage
Oseroit dire estre inutil.

(19-42, 23-24)

His fourth through sixth stanzas refer to three of the trophies awarded at the city's famed *Jeux Floraux* (i.e., the trophies of a silver "Esglantine" (ln. 23) – a wild rose –, a "Souci" (ln. 25) – a marigold –, and a "Violette" (alluded to in ln. 29) – a golden violet). The poem then continues with a stanza that evokes France and fertile fields. The terms "coulante" (229), "fertillité" (230), and "coulant" (236) which are found near the end of Du Poey's piece also remind us of the very first line of Coignard's sonnet.

It is not surprising that both poets would have made such a work reflexive, loading it, as is often the case in lyric poetry, with terms having to do with singing and music. But Coignard begins by deploring her lack of an adequate talent: "O si j'avois un doux et grave stile," "Je chanterois tes grandes raritez" (lns. 5 and 7, p. 159), and goes on to say that while she has, in fact, sung the praise of her object, she has done so in the

simple manner of a beginner: “Ayant appris quelques simples accorts, / A ton honneur ma muse les entonne” (lns. 13-14, p. 160). Du Poey, in the more confident manner of a poet à la Ronsard, shows no such humility when he treats this theme:

Changeons propos: sus donc ma plume,
 Aux Muses tost le feu allume,
 A fin que de chants tous divers,
 A tant de mes chansons latines,
 Chantent les ondes cristalines
 De Garonne par l’univers.
 (13-18, 22)

Brief je voy que rien ne te faut
 On chante autour chansons et hymnes.
 (213-214, 31)

Or donc tresheureuse riviere
 A nous faire bien coutumiere
 Entenz de ma plume les sons
 Sois moy benine et secourable
 Et si veux m’estre favorable
 Recompense auras de chansons.
 (247-252, 33)

Not only do both poets extol the Garonne river’s contribution to the land, they also remind us, in spite of their different tones, of the relation between the river and the many excellent minds that it has nourished. The first *tercet* of Coignard’s sonnet proclaims “Tu as nourris maints excellents esprits / Qui font tes eaux jaillir dans leurs escrits” (lns. 9-10, Coignard 159). Here again, du Poey is far more prolix:

De vertu et lois es la source.
 Voy que chacun vers toy prend cource.
 Pour les perles chez toy chercher.
 En admirant du Paul ta guide,
 Tu n’as rien en toy qui soit vuide
 D’honneur: voire jusque au nocher.
 (97-102, 26)

Pavie en Coras attente,
 Combien qu’envie la tormente
 Est contrainte de t’avouêr.
 Eygua est de telle eloquence,

Que bien prisée es de la France,
Comme la source du sçavoer.
(133-138, 28)

Lon cognoit ta ville changée,
Contre l'ignorance vengée.
[...]
Et plusieurs escoliers s'y jouënt
Sur leurs lucs ton renom s'estend.
[...]
Ignorance y est abbatue,
Et la jeunesse s'esvertue,
(151-152, 155-156, 169-170, 29)

La jeunesse arrouses civile,
Tresor precieux de la ville:
Les sçavans te font adorer
Car par la Perriere es cognue,
Contre l'envie maintenue:
Heureux qui en peult savourer.

Divins esprits de leur nature,
Prennent icy leur nourriture,
Les Dieux les t'ont voulu choisir:
Te serviront pour tesmoignage
Les Faus encore de jeune age,
Desquels as receu maint plaisir.
(181-192, 30)

On a more personal note, the male poet adds:

Il n'y a lieu qui tant m'agrée,
Ou mon esprit plus se recrée
Contemplant les dons plantureux.
L'excellente beauté des femmes,
Sans deshonneur, et sans diffames.
Qui s'en approche est tresheureux.
(199-204, 31)

This panegyric of Toulouse and Garonne is not without merit, but from our perspective its chief interest is to make us appreciate, by contrast, how sparingly Coignard uses the same rhetoric in the lone sonnet that adopts a secular theme to honor the writer's hometown on human grounds. It is not just that she adopts, in this case, the

modest demeanor that is expected of her sex; implicitly at least, and even though it is not religious itself, this unique sonnet confirms that a poet as devout as Coignard would not boast about her “singing” as her (male) secular colleagues tend to do.

– *A poet’s ambition (or lack thereof)*

Yet a poet she is. In addition to the religious models mentioned above, the *Œuvres chrestiennes* reveal her exposure to secular poetic works as well: most notably those of Pierre de Ronsard (*cf.* sonnets I, VIII, CXXIX, and perhaps CXXII-CXXIII) and Joachim du Bellay (*cf.* sonnets CXIV²³⁰ and XCVIII); to say nothing of Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, himself a religious poet: see Coignard’s *Imitation de la victoire de Judich*, which as Winn points out includes numerous borrowings from Du Bartas’ *La Judit*²³¹. As we just saw, the ways in which Coignard could celebrate her own literary merit were necessarily limited: the integrity of her religious message demanded this. Instead, she owed her readers and herself an explicit rejection of the messages of profane

²³⁰ About which Winn quotes Du Bellay’s words in *La deffence et illustration du langue françoise*: “ly donques et rely premierement (O Poëte futur), feuillette de main nocturne et journalle les exemplaires Grecs et Latins” (Coignard 156, n. 2, citing Du Bellay; *cf.* ed. Monferran, p. 131).

²³¹ See pp. 93-95, and Winn’s footnotes on pp. 418, 434, 440, and 455-456. The first two chapters of Caëtano’s M. A. thesis (*‘Je suis Chrestienne’*) are particularly enlightening in their exploration of some of the secular and spiritual literary influences on the works of Coignard. Other poetic sources which Winn suggests very likely influenced our poet include Jean-Baptiste Chassignet (*Le mépris de la vie et consolation contre la mort*) as well as major *classiques* like Homer and Ovid, and perhaps Hesiod, Pindar and Theocritus as well. On p. 38 of the *Œuvres chrétiennes*, Winn lists the mythological references that Coignard makes throughout the collection and highlights lns. 91-96 in *Stances sur la Nativité de Jesus-Christ* (2^e partie), in which “la naissance de Jésus-Christ a exorcisé le monde” of all the gods of paganism. However, Caëtano wonders about the extent of Coignard’s first-hand knowledge of such poets (the Greek ones especially), since most of the images she employs (*e.g.* allusions to Pegasus or Icarus) were widely known and cited. Caëtano rightly notes that “elle a pu aussi reprendre ces légendes des œuvres de Ronsard et Du Bellay, qui connaissaient ces textes antiques et qui étaient des poètes très lus” (Caëtano, *‘Je suis Chrestienne,’* 8). On this subject, see also Paula Sommers, “Gendered Distaffs: Gabrielle de Coignard’s Revision of Classical Tradition.” *Classical and Modern Literature* 18.13 (spring 1998): pp. 203-210.

poetry. Yet what is most striking about this *recusatio* is that it uses the very language (allusive, figurative, mythological) that the author learned from Ronsard and his peers:

Je n'ay jamais gousté de l'eau de la fontaine,
Que le cheval aëslé fit sortir du rocher,
A ses payennes eaux je ne veux point toucher,
Je cherche autre liqueur pour soulager ma peine.

Du celeste ruisseau de grace souveraine,
Qui peut des alterez la grand soif estancher:
Je desire ardemment me pouvoir approcher,
Pour y laver mon coeur de sa tasche mondaine.

Je ne veux point porter le glorieux laurier,
La couronne de myrte ou celle d'olivier,
Honneur que l'on reserve aux testes plus insines.

Ayant l'angoisse en l'ame, ayant la larme à l'oeil,
M'irois-je couronnant de ces marques d'orgueil,
Puis que mon Sauveur mesme est couronné d'espines?
(Sonnet I, Coignard 139-140)

The pagan symbols of poetic inspiration (Pegasus and the Hippocrene spring on Mount Helicon) and reward (Apollo's laurel, Venus's myrtle, Athena's olive) must be refused, although the dexterity with which the poet uses them makes one doubt that she "never" enjoyed them. The example of Christ imposes a radically different approach²³²: the contrast of the crowns could not be more eloquent²³³.

²³² Hence Coignard's rejection, in S. VIII, of Ronsard's *Hercule Chrestien*, which offers an allegorical reading of Hercules as Christ (and is Ronsard's sole poem of this kind), even though she deeply admires its "docte invention" (10, 147) and dreams of "manier ceste lire d'ivoire, / Que le grand Vandomois fait si haut retentir" (5-6). No matter: "Ah! non divin Ronsard, je ne puis avouer / Telle comparaison: leur payenne insolence / Offence le Seigneur au lieu de le louer" (12-14, 148). For Michèle Clément, this particular sonnet "montre cet effort des baroques pour condamner, malgré eux, toute résurgence purement culturelle, en l'occurrence païenne": "il ne s'agit pas, à travers leurs œuvres, de promouvoir une langue, un type de création littéraire, ni une culture, celle de la Renaissance, mais de dire et redire l'essentiel des Écritures. Peu leur chaut la filiation littéraire: tout est subsumé par la parole de Dieu. Au rebours de la volonté d'imitation des poètes de la Renaissance, ils vont jusqu'à renier une filiation littéraire, une donnée intertextuelle si elle vient contrarier le projet chrétien" (*Une poétique de crise. Poètes baroques et mystiques*, p. 229; see below, p. 334, n. 500, for a caveat regarding Coignard's status as a "baroque" poet).

²³³ On Sonnet I, see, in particular, pp. 46-49 in Deborah Lesko Baker, "Gabrielle de Coignard's *Sonnets spirituels*: Writing Passion within and against the Petrarchan Tradition." *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 38.3 (2015): pp. 41-59.

Our next chapter will present a more systematic analysis of what separates Coignard from the secular love poetry of her time (with which she was undoubtedly quite familiar). For now, in order to get a sense of the cultural proximity against which this separation must be measured, let us read the decasyllables of her Sonnet XCVIII:

Ceste beauté à nulle autre pareille,
 Qui embellit et la terre et les cieux,
 Me mignarda d'un regard gracieux,
 J'ouy sa voix sonner à mon oreille.

A ce doux bruit mon ame se reveille,
 Se secouant du somme oblivieux,
 Dressant au ciel ma pensée et mes yeux,
 Je tressailli de si douce merveille.

Jamais mon coeur ne puisse retenir
 Autre penser que le doux souvenir
 De la beauté dont le feu me devore:

Heureux desirs dressez si hautement,
 Heureux vouloir d'aymer parfaitement,
 Ceste beauté qu'en silence j'adore.
 (S. XCVIII, 257-258)

As noted by Winn (Coignard 258, n. 3), this sonnet was certainly inspired by one of Du Bellay's most "Platonician" creations, Sonnet CXIII of *L'Olive*:

[...]
 Que songes-tu, mon ame emprisonnée?
 Pourquoi te plaist l'obscur de nostre jour,
 Si pour voler en un plus cler sejour,
 Tu as au dos l'aele bien empanée?

Là, est le bien que tout esprit desire,
 Là, le repos où tout le monde aspire,
 Là, est l'amour, là le plaisir encore.

Là, ô mon ame au plus hault ciel guidée!
 Tu y pouras recongnoistre l'Idée
 De la beauté, qu'en ce monde j'adore.^[234]

²³⁴ *L'Olive*, CIII, lns. 5-14. Ed. E. Caldarini. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1974, p. 163.

Coignard's version is almost a pastiche. Thanks to the use of Platonician imagery (but also that of verbs like "mignarder"), this particular sonnet of Coignard's *could* be read as a secular love poem in the style of *L'Olive*; albeit a very chaste and allusive one, implicitly assimilating an unnamed object of affection to a higher, universally beloved figure. Yet where Du Bellay's poet, apparently no less idealistic, ended his "flight" with a reference to the beauty he adores *in this world* (whereas her "Idea," offered to the contemplation of his soul alone, resides above), Coignard makes sure that no such ambiguity or division subsists: the beauty that *she* adores with both soul and heart embellishes both earth and Heaven. Desire is not split: while it aims to go "high," it carries the speaker's whole being with it, and has only one object. An example like this suffices to prove that Coignard knows exactly what she is doing with respect to a poetic culture that she both admires and works to "rewrite."

Hence the unexpected, but all the more significant, deploration of Ronsard's death that closes the sonnet section of the *Œuvres chrestiennes*:

Muses, sçavez vous point la piteuse avanture,
 Qui a d'un coup mortel affligé l'univers?
 Ouy, vous le sçavez, d'un nuage couvers,
 Vos beaux yeux vont pleurans ceste mesadventure.

Vostre Apollon est mort, couvre[z] sa sepulture
 De vos cheveux dorez, faictes cent mille vers
 A celui qui premier planta vos lauriers vers,
 Et vous faict honorer d'un los qui tousjours dure.

Dieu l'a voulu tirer du cloistre de ce corps,
 Sa belle ame a trouvé les celestes accords,
 Ayant vollé plus haut que le mont de Parnasse.

Ronsard est immortel en la terre et aux cieux,
 Nous heritons icy ses labeurs precieux,
 Il possede le ciel voyant Dieu face à face.

(S. CXXIX, Coignard 295-296)

As Winn notes again, this sonnet may have been influenced by Ronsard's own *Derniers vers*, which had appeared posthumously, in February 1586 (Coignard herself would die in November); and especially by Sonnet VI and the epitaph "Pour son tombeau"²³⁵, which mark the separation of the poet's body and soul, leaving his art and glory hovering in between. Coignard's sonnet (in *alexandrins*) is itself very "Ronsardian," and genuinely celebrates the (very profane) "Prince des Poètes" upon his death. Coignard praises Ronsard's art on his terms, and without reticence: it is as though the final image of his meeting "face à face," closing what is also the last sonnet of Coignard's collection, sufficed to "convert" secular into devotional poetry and reunite them under God.

For all this, Coignard's own ambition does not fail to denounce itself. Sonnet XIV turns the deep erudition and constant labor that the Pléiade poets had assigned to their art into arguments against the publication of Gabrielle's work, which, it is implied, cannot reach such a high standard. Yet this is less a matter of authorial modesty than a lesson of Christian humility before a God much higher still. The poems' imperfection is not a reason to offer them to Him rather than to connoisseurs, but a reminder that they were *not* written for the latter (*i.e.*, to please human vanity) in the first place. As defective as their tune is, they were inspired by God (whose goal is not to make Gabrielle an expert poet but one burning with love) and are destined to Him only:

Mes vers, demeurez coys dedans mon cabinet,
Et ne sortez jamais, pour chose qu'on vous die,
Ne volez point trop haut, d'une aesle trop hardie,
Arrestez vous plus bas sur quelque buissonnet.

Il faut estre sçavant pour bien faire un sonnet,
Qu'on lise nuit et jour, qu'Homere on estude,

²³⁵ *Les Derniers vers*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. P. Laumonier, vol. XVIII-1, Paris: STFM, 1967, pp. 180-181.

Et le riche pinceau des muses l'on mandie
Pour peindre leurs beautés sur un tableau bien net.

Demeurez donc mes vers enclos dedans mon coffre,
Je vous ay façonnez pource que je vous offre
Aux pieds de l'Eternel, qui m'a fait entonner

Tout ce que j'ay chanté sur ma lire enroutée:
Je me suis à luy seul entierement vouée,
Ne voulant mes labeurs à nul autre donner.
(155-157)²³⁶

Yet the rejoinder is obvious: many poetic words inspired by God are in fact public, and fulfill a sacred mission. Accordingly, the poet is allowed to solicit, for a higher purpose, what she does not claim to have at her disposal:

Guide mon coeur, donne moy la science,
O Seigneur Dieu, pour chanter saintement
Ton haut honneur que j'adore humblement,
Reconnoissant assez mon impuissance.

Je n'ay nul art, grace, ny eloquence,
Pour ton saint nom entonner dignement,
Mais ton clair feu de mon entendement
Escartera les ombres d'ignorance.
(S. II, 1-8, 141)

Rejecting the “Muse des payens” (ln. 9) for the divine “flamme” of Christian inspiration, she includes her “escrits” (ln. 14) in the offering that she makes of her entire being. In this respect, there is no difference between poetry and prayer: both can be offered to God and both are to be inspired by the divine “flamme.” And when she allows herself to think of posterity (Ronsard’s obsession), she makes sure to do so in a manner that justifies it:

Je te louay, Seigneur, et la posterité
Lira des vers de moy, qui chauds de charité,
Rendront de ton amour nos ames enflammées.

²³⁶ On this sonnet, see Winn’s annotation (with a reference to Du Bellay’s *Deffence et Illustration*: “Ly donques et rely premierement [...]”), and, again, Lesko Baker’s article “Gabrielle de Coignard’s *Sonnets spirituels*” pp. 50-51 (*rapprochement* with Du Bellay’s *Regrets*, Sonnet IV: “Je ne veulx feuilleter les exemplaires Grecs [...]”; and with Ronsard’s opening sonnet in the *Continuation des Amours*: “Je veux lire en trois jours l’Iliade d’Homere [...])).

(S. XC, 12-14, 248)

The love-burning poet will now help convey God's burning love to future readers²³⁷ so that they may, in turn, love Him all the more. Even though neither sonnet offers explicit marks of gender (except for a few grammatical ones), these rare references to Coignard's own "vers" (which, good or bad, remain entirely attributable, like the Psalms, to divine charity) individualize the voice of their author, and mark it with a deep ambivalence. This is a case where the (pejorative or meliorative) highlighting of the poet *qua* poet would seem to imply her identification as a feminine voice, as the woman she was; but does not necessarily do so; which may well be intentional on Coignard's part, as though she became, in this indirect way, a fuller equivalent of the poets she has in mind: the prideful-sounding Ronsard, the modest-sounding Du Bellay – and, behind them, King David.

On the other hand, a feminine voice is very much present elsewhere in Coignard's poems – thus allowing her poetry to speak of (as) an individual *female* poet as well. As Gary Ferguson forcefully points out:

²³⁷ The publication's immediate posterity may have been a militant one: Caëtano ('*Je suis Chrestienne*, ' 59-73) suggests that the second edition of *Œuvres chrestiennes* (1595) may have been published and housed in the library of the Jesuit college of Tournon as an "outil de propagande de la Contre-Réforme" (59). "[Les trois premières éditions posthumes] sont le signe d'une réception orientée [...]. [Elles] nous montrent bien que ce qui prime pour les éditeurs, les ecclésiastiques et les lecteurs de l'époque, c'est le caractère spirituel de l'œuvre, auquel s'ajoute **un caractère prosélyte donné par l'Église et les éditeurs eux-mêmes**" (66). On the other hand, it seems to us that the immediate posterity Coignard herself had in mind – along with and before further ambitions – were her daughters. It was not uncommon for mothers to leave behind a diary or some sort of written work for their children to inherit. Moreover, Jeanne and Catherine make plain that they are not aware of any intention that their mother had to publish the collection, and that it was their own choice to dedicate the published work to "dames devotieuses" (129). They use a hypothetical to speak of Coignard's intentions: "Si elle estoit en vie et vouloit publier ses vers, nous ne doutons point qu'elle n'eust fait mesme choies que nous pour les dedier" (130). As for the daughters' own intentions for publishing and dedicating this work, they are clear and made known. At one level, they wish to use their mother's writings for the same purpose that the widow Dorcas (also known as Tabitha) used "les ouvrages qu'elle souloit faire" (131): "pour esmouvoir davantage et susciter le plus grand des Disciples à ramener en vie par ses prieres et par la vertu de Dieu qui l'assistoit" (130-131). Yet Jeanne and Catherine have one more reason to "desployer et estaler" their mother's poems: "à fin de vous inciter à luy moyenner encore sur la terre par vos saintes faveurs, une seconde et plus belle vie de renommée" (131). The spiritual goal is explicitly complemented by a preoccupation with fame that is typical of secular poets but at times worn less comfortably by their devotional counterparts.

Her style is also unique for her constant reassertion of the female subject: her use of “je” (“I”) throughout her *Sonnets* and *Vers* positions herself (and women in general) as the actor within her works, offering the wife, the widow, the mother as the central character and agent in her poetry. (“The Feminisation of Devotion,” Ferguson 195)²³⁸

Kathleen Llewellyn’s view of this subject sounds more restrained:

in emphasizing her femaleness while undertaking such a masculine occupation as writing, Coignard is perhaps attempting to justify her poetry, to justify herself as a poet. (“Passion, Prayer...,” Llewellyn 84)²³⁹

Yet the two diagnoses are compatible, and Llewellyn too emphasizes Coignard’s individualizing strategies, notably with respect to the inscription of her own body in a devotional rhetoric that does not necessarily ask for it. Indeed, a number of poems reflect

²³⁸ Ferguson, Gary. “The Feminisation of Devotion: Gabrielle De Coignard, Anne De Marquets, and François De Sales.” In *Women’s Writing in the French Renaissance: Proceedings of the Fifth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium, 7-9 July 1997*. Eds. Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1999. pp. 187-206. This positioning of woman as actor or agent is highlighted in Coignard’s *Imitation de Judich*, where the hero and central character is a female biblical exemplar. However, there are limits to Coignard’s representation of this heroine. For example, Judith is reminded (via the voice of Ozias) that it is the “saint mouvement” (ln. 1385, p. 449) of God’s grace that “t’a si bien poussée.” Moreover, Paula Sommers’ comparative analysis of Coignard’s account with those found in the Vulgate and du Bartas’ *La Judit* demonstrates the restraint Coignard uses in her representation of Judith: the former “represent Judith as a leader in the masculine mode. Coignard’s protagonist adopts a style of leadership that is based on gentle, deferential discourse and identification with the group” (Sommers, “Gendered Readings” 217). Furthermore, Coignard “distinguishes her Judith from the seductive stereotypes that du Bartas exploits and then transcends. Her rigorously detached heroine is, in a sense, enclosed within a protective, spiritual cocoon” (*ibid.*). Sommers also demonstrates how, unlike du Bartas, Coignard does not take risks by highlighting Judith’s sexual attractiveness. Coignard’s conservatism “links her with other women writers who dealt cautiously with sexuality”; and because she is “a writer within the devotional tradition, the chastity issue assumes even greater importance. Judith’s cocoon can, therefore, be seen as a protective of both the protagonist and the author who sings with her. It shields Judith in her role as divine avenger and displays the purity of Coignard’s own imagination” (p. 218). While Sommers finds that Coignard “adapt[s] her representation of Judith to contemporary expectations of female propriety,” thus not provoking any “questioning of the political or social status quo,” the conclusion to Coignard’s retelling also “celebrates the enduring fame of a heroine whose achievements derive from her submission to the faith and culture of her people” (*ibid.*). (Sommers, Paula. “Gendered Readings of *The Book of Judith*: Guillaume du Bartas and Gabrielle de Coignard.” *Romance Quarterly* 48.4 (fall 2001): pp. 211-220). See also John Nassichuk’s enlightening analysis of Coignard’s treatment of the biblical story and how it compares, for example, with St. Jerome’s Latin translation used for the *Vulgate*, as well as with Du Bartas’ account (Nassichuk, John. “Le couronnement de Judith, représentation littéraire au XVI^e siècle d’une héroïne deutérocanonique.” In *Camenae* n°4: *L’Héroïque* (June 2008). <<http://sapat.ephe.sorbonne.fr/medi a/d6de5db1c23f997205e13b52136f144a/camenae-04-jnassichuk-sandra.pdf>>).

²³⁹ Llewellyn, Kathleen M. “Passion, Prayer, and Plume: Poetic Inspiration in the *Œuvres chrétiennes* of Gabrielle de Coignard.” *Dalhousie French Studies* 88. Nova Scotia: Dalhousie U.P. (2009): pp. 77-86. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40838093>>. See also Paula Sommers, “Female Subjectivity and the Distaff: Louise Labé, Catherine des Roches, and Gabrielle de Coignard,” *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 25 (1999): pp. 139-150; and “Spatial Dynamics and the Female Poet: Gabrielle de Coignard and Catherine des Roches,” *Romance Notes* 41.3 (spring 2001): pp. 363-373.

the particularities of Coignard's own situation and material circumstances (*cf.* Marquets, *Sonets spirituels* 192). Likewise, scholars have studied the manner in which her physical experience often informs her art, and how, when compared to other female poets like Marguerite de Navarre²⁴⁰ and Anne de Marquets, Gabrielle de Coignard proves to more frequently embrace, rather than limit, physical descriptions²⁴¹. Accordingly, let us now complete her portrait with two more elements: first, a brief account of the *formal* presence of the feminine in her voice, in the situating of her "je," as it were; second, an overview of the *actual*, physical "presence" of the woman – as a mother, widow, and victim of various ailments promised to an early death – in her poems.

– *A feminine "je"?*

Because the gender of the "*je lyrique*" may or may not be determined, and because the same is true of a devotional "je" (cast as a generic believer or as a female one in particular), we are led to ask whether the "je" found in Coignard's poetry tends to dissolve into a neutral subject or to signal a gendered one. A quantitative study (limited to Coignard's *Sonnets spirituels* to avoid the many distortions inevitably caused by the longer poems' variety of genres and subject matters) only shows so much; but it will give a first indication in this respect.

Out of 129 sonnets, only 24 present a "je" that is clearly recognized as a feminine subject, one that can be reasonably thought to signal the poet's own person or persona. In 2 of those, the plural "nous," or adjectives such as "nostre" or "nos," appear as well (but

²⁴⁰ Marguerite de Navarre died either just before Gabrielle was born (if Salies is right) or soon afterward.

²⁴¹ See Llewellyn, "Passion, Prayer, and *Plume*," pp. 77-80.

the “nous” is not modified by any feminine markers)²⁴². We counted 30 instances in which the plural pronoun “nous” (or its corresponding adjectives), used without the mention of (or reference to) a “je,” is masculine by default; 36 instances in which, conversely, the “je” is masculine (at least by default) and appears without reference to a “nous”; and 30 instances in which the “je” and the “nous” appear in the same sonnet and are both masculine (at least by default). Even though Coignard does allow her sonnets to be marked by a feminine “je” at times, this clearly does not appear to be a top priority or part of an outright “feminist” project for her, since the masculine, be it by default, is more present than the feminine. Yet grammar and convention are not everything (especially as far as poetic expression is concerned), and it is possible that a “nous” be grammatically masculine and, affectively, not just gender-neutral but feminine, as an extension of the person of Coignard herself. Be this as it may, and setting aside the matter of gender, Coignard seems as comfortable writing from (and about) a collective “nous” as from or about a “je,” whether generic or individualized. In fact, a “je” often paves the way for a “nous” within the same poem: readers may be drawn in by a self-referring voice, and then further engaged when integrated within a “nous.” Nevertheless, an additional “je” often reappears at the very end of these sonnets – out of a need to re-individualize the speaker and/or to conclude by converting the many into one entity, on behalf of which this final “je” becomes implicitly collective.

Aside from the “je,” the only other voice frequently heard – breaking the sonnets’s apparent univocity – is that of God (the Father or the Son); which is the case in

²⁴² One particular case is found in Sonnet XXV, where Christ is described as “nostre espous” (13, 171), a collective placing all the faithful (women and men) in the same (symbolically feminine) position *vis-à-vis* Christ, and referring to the Church (“l’Église,” grammatically feminine in French).

sonnets XXVIII, LXXIV, CXII-CXIII, CXV-CXVIII, and CXXVIII. Only very rarely do we encounter other voices. In Sonnet L, it can be assumed that the “je” is King David²⁴³, and in Sonnet LXVI, Simeon²⁴⁴ is heard addressing the Virgin Mary at the Temple. Outside the sonnets, we should at least mention that the (interior²⁴⁵) voice of the Virgin herself is heard in no few words in the *Complainte de la Vierge Marie* (Ins. 257-330). In the *Hymne sur la louange de la Charité*, Elijah and/or the Lord addresses the widow (ln. 294). In the *Imitation de la victoire de Judich*, a plethora of voices are encountered²⁴⁶.

Even though her own “je” is not as quantitatively dominant as one might think it is, scholars tend to contrast this feature of Coignard’s poetry with the practice of her predecessor Anne de Marquets, a pioneer of the genre. Chapter IV will offer a more general comparison of the two authors. For now, let us quote from Ferguson’s “Introduction” to his edition of Marquets’ *Sonets spirituels* (1605):

Le plus souvent, au lieu de mettre en scène une âme transportée, dont la prière servirait de modèle au lecteur, Anne de Marquets fait appel à la conscience du lecteur, en se servant, comme dans le dernier exemple, d’une question rhétorique. Autrement dit, du point de vue linguistique – et c’est là encore une des caractéristiques les plus distinctives de la voix poétique d’Anne de Marquets – la dominicaine a tendance à éviter l’expression à la première personne du singulier, s’exprimant plus facilement à la troisième personne du singulier (‘il’, ‘elle’, ‘l’homme’, ‘celuy’) ou à la première personne du pluriel (‘nous’). [...] Dans son Introduction aux poèmes de Pierre de la Croix, Lance Donaldson-Evans a remarqué que ‘l’appel évangélique au lecteur est médiatisé par la *persona* du poète. C’est lui qui représente tous les pécheurs; c’est lui le premier visé et lui le destinataire premier de sa propre poésie’ [Pierre de Croix, *Le Miroir de l’amour divin*, édition critique par Lance K. Donaldson-Evans. Geneva: Droz, 1990, p. 18]. Il n’en va pas ainsi chez Anne de Marquets. Ce n’est pas qu’un ‘je’ lyrique soit complètement absent des *Sonets spirituels*, mais une comparaison avec d’autres poètes dévots

²⁴³ 16th-century poets have a particular affinity with this figure – an emotional and penitential poet-king, bold enough to relate to his God on a more personal, intimate level.

²⁴⁴ Luke 2:25.

²⁴⁵ “Elle ne peut parler tant la douleur l’atteint, / Mais dans son triste cuer, muette elle se plaint, / Disant [...]” (255-257, Coignard 555).

²⁴⁶ To name just a few (in their first occurrences): Nebuchadnezzar (Ins. 41-60), the assembled people of Israel (Ins. 239-268), the priest Eliachim (Ins. 285-308), Holofernes (Ins. 321-334), Achior (Ins. 343-418), a Bethulian soldier (Ins. 460-468), and of course Judith (Ins. 645-716).

contemporains nous conduit forcément à la conclusion que la présence du ‘je’ dans les *Sonnets spirituels* est extrêmement discrète. (53-54)

If, taking a similar approach, we take a look at Coignard’s use of interrogative forms, we observe that her need to engage a collective by dramatizing a presupposed argument (as rhetorical questions do) frequently yields to another priority: the need to engage herself and her God. In fact, we find rhetorical questions, assuming self-evident responses, in only three of her sonnets (to which we could add a question for the Muses at the opening of Sonnet CXXIX): one, in Sonnet LII²⁴⁷, happens to be intensely personal, asked on behalf of a very present “je”; the other two, in Sonnets CX²⁴⁸ and CXIII²⁴⁹, imply a no less intensely collective emotion (of adoration or astonishment) rather than the hammering of an argument. All of her other questions are very much intended as such, aimed at one of only two targets: either herself (Sonnets I, VII, and XXII) or, and more often, God (Sonnets L, LV, LXXIX, LXXXII, XCV, CIX, CXII, CXIII, and CXXVII). In other words, while Marquets’ questions tend to present (in a form that is interrogative for emphasis) a dogmatic content to a generic audience, Coignard’s have the effect of foregrounding her own soul in its dialogue with her Creator, either directly or through various intercessors²⁵⁰. It follows that the intended (human) audience of such poems (to

²⁴⁷ “S’esbahit-on de me voir souspirer / A chasque mot sans penser à moy-mesme? / S’esbahit-on de me voir pasle et blesme, / Et tous les jours je ne fais qu’empirer? / S’esbahit-on de me voir desirer, / D’un coeur ardent d’affection extreme, / Le doux repos de la vie supreme, / Où le Chrestien doit tousjours aspirer?” (S. LII, lns. 1-8, Coignard 201).

²⁴⁸ “Quel soleil radieux, quelle grande splendeur, / S’esleve doucement à ceste terre basse? / Mais qui est celle là qui hautement surpasse / De tous les bien-heureux la gloire et la grandeur?” (S. CX “Pour l’Assumption de nostre Dame”, lns. 1-4, Coignard 271).

²⁴⁹ “Le voyant si meurtry qui eust peu recognoistre / Ceste douce beauté, lumiere des pecheurs?” (S. CXIII, “*Amen dico tibi*”, lns. 5-6, Coignard 275).

²⁵⁰ God (including Jesus) is the addressee of 49 sonnets. 25 sonnets address others (the Virgin Mary, the archangel Gabriel, Saint Peter, Mary Magdaleine, Saint Stephen, the people of Poitiers, the thief on the cross, John the disciple, those humble in spirit, a penitent confraternity, souls in purgatory, blessed souls, numbed minds, all saints, all who are burdened by sin, her relatives, the *Pénitents bleus*, the Apostles, martyrs, prophets, and confessors). In 14 sonnets, the poet addresses herself (including her heart, soul,

the extent there is one, since it is not a given that Coignard herself, who, as we have seen, was ambivalent on the subject, would have published them in this form) moves from the position of addressee to that of witness.

– *A hurting widow, an anxious mother*

Gabrielle de Coignard was Pierre de Mansencal's second wife. He had married his first wife, Françoise Monier, on August 1, 1553 (Navelle Vol. VII-M, p. 40), and was likely no older than 21 years old at that time. On May 8, 1568, he became an "avocat général au Parlement de Toulouse" (*ibid.*). He and Gabrielle de Coignard married in 1570²⁵¹. On March 20, 1572, just four months after becoming a father, Pierre was made "Président au Parlement" (*ibid.*). He would die only a year later, in 1573²⁵². The couple's first daughter, Jeanne, had been baptized on December 8, 1571 (*ibid.*). Their second daughter, Catherine, was likely²⁵³ baptized on August 21, 1573.

Navelle mentions a detail that has never, to our knowledge, been noted by scholars: Gabrielle was engaged to be married to a man by the name of Domenge de Beraud²⁵⁴ during the final five or six months of her life. The engagement occurred in June

flesh, desires, or a collective of which she is a part). In 10 poems, she addresses something more abstract or poetic in nature (*e.g.*, the night, her verses of poetry, the Garonne river, jealousy, the Cross, death, her distaff, the miserable world, and the Muses).

²⁵¹ Winn relies on Salies' calculations for this date: "Décidé au début de 1570 (*cf.* P. Salies, p. 38), le mariage de Gabrielle de Coignard aurait donc été célébré le 21 décembre 1570" (Coignard 260, n. 1).

²⁵² Again, there is some slight variation in the date given for his death. See p. 105, n. 194 above.

²⁵³ According to Salies: "Dans le désordre régnant aux registres des baptêmes de Saint-Etienne, il faut en deviner la mention, dans ce curieux libellé, à la date du 21 août 1573: – Catherino filio de Pierre de MASQUO. Pa(rrain) Johan MARCIAL. Ma(rraine) Catherino COTALLO. Ces actes de baptêmes mal rédigés, infectés de lapsus, d'omissions et d'à peu près, ne cessent de poser des problèmes aux chercheurs" (Salies 38).

²⁵⁴ We have looked for the de Beraud family (including variations of the name such as Beral, Berail, Berald, Berard, and Berat) in Navelle's *Familles nobles* but have, thus far, been unable to locate anyone associated with those families whose first name was Domenge.

or July of 1586; she died in November, before the marriage could take place²⁵⁵. While this detail does not necessarily contradict our vision of Coignard's widowhood and spirituality, it subtly shifts, if true²⁵⁶, our understanding of her words and affirmed resoluteness (on which more in a moment) as a widow entirely devoted to her new spouse, Christ; even the widow's characteristic chastity could be brought back into question. The detail of this possible engagement also sets Coignard apart from other female authors who were widows but were, to our knowledge, never engaged to remarry – Christine de Pizan for example, or Madeleine des Roches²⁵⁷.

Above all, it highlights the complexity of her thoughts concerning her marital status – which, as it happens, is also expressed in her poetry. Thus, in Sonnet V we read:

Ha! mon Dieu, qu'est cecy? ay-je perdu courage?
Où sont les bons desirs que j'allois poursuivant?
Seray-je point subjecte à la pluye et au vent,
Suivant les passions maistresses de nostre age?

Ce n'est pas le chemin d'une jeunesse sage,
De reculer arriere au lieu d'aller avant.
Où est ce bon espoir qui m'animoit devant,
Et ce chaste project d'un resolu vefvage?
(1-8, Coignard 144)

In line 8 especially, we get a glimpse of the poet's struggle with the widowhood ideal²⁵⁸.

As Wolff notes, Sonnet CV answers the question by affirming the widow's resolution to never remarry²⁵⁹. One needs only to read the sonnet's opening *quatrain*:

²⁵⁵ “[Elle épouse] en secondes noces en juin ou juillet 1586 Domenge de BERAUD. Elle teste le 18.11.1586 fait codicille le 24.11.1586 (Dujarric notaire) avant que le mariage ci dessus ait pu avoir lieu” (Navelle, Vol. 3-C, p. 187).

²⁵⁶ There are some inconsistencies and oversights within Navelle's 11-volume work. The detail about Domenge de Beraud would therefore need to be verified by looking at original sources.

²⁵⁷ Though Gilles-Chikhaoui does not discuss Coignard's life in her dissertation, she does compare her with Madeleine des Roches: “veuves toutes les deux, mères de filles, l'écriture poétique apparaît comme une consolation et témoigne d'une tension constante entre douleur et plaisir” (Gilles-Chikhaoui 600).

²⁵⁸ The tension is discussed by Winn in her very useful footnote to S. CV: “Aux veuves qui disposaient de biens et de considération sociale [...], s'offraient d'excellentes possibilités de remariage. ‘Or, c'est

Ne me parlez jamais de me remarier,
 O vous, mes chers parens, si vous aymes ma vie,
 Ne m'en parlez jamais, car je n'ay plus envie
 A un second espoux oncques m'apparier.
 (1-4, 265)

Yet Wolff goes on to explain that Coignard's resoluteness had a more specific, less spiritual reason: "La raison, c'est qu'elle aimait son mari. Le n° 101 ne nous laisse aucun doute" (Wolff 13). We quoted, in our Introduction (p. 16), the last lines of this sonnet (CI), which does indeed mourn, ten years after his death, an "espoux / Plain de toutes vertus, sage, courtois et doux" (2-3, Coignard 260), and makes clear that Gabrielle hopes to be reunited with him in Heaven.

The next two lines of Sonnet CV, however, certainly strike a less intimate tone:

Je veux garder ma foy sans jamais varier,
 Ny rompre l'amitié que le ciel m'a ravie,
 (5-6, *ibid.*)

Line 6 affirms the author's enduring love, but does so in a manner that affirms, above all, the sacramental indissolubility of marriage²⁶⁰. As we discussed earlier, Sonnet CI is more

précisément chez ces femmes,' remarque Claudia Opitz, 'que s'affirmait, même s'il n'était pas toujours réalisable, le penchant à un 'veuvage chaste', requis et encouragé par la doctrine ecclésiastique' ('Contraintes et libertés [(1250-1500),] in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*. Dir. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot; Vol. 2: *Le Moyen Age*. Dir. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. Paris: Plon, 1991. pp. 277-355], p. 324). Ce choix allait non seulement contre la volonté, mais aussi contre les intérêts de la famille car les biens de la veuve étaient en général dépensés en aumônes aux pauvres et en donations pieuses aux institutions ecclésiastiques. Voir à ce sujet le testament de Gabrielle de Coignard, Toulouse, Archives notariales, n° 2046" (Coignard 265, n. 1).

²⁵⁹ "Et pourtant sa résolution de ne pas se remarier – en un temps où le remariage des jeunes veuves apparaissait si normal – est nettement affirmée par le n° 105" (Wolff 13).

²⁶⁰ As Winn notes again, "Le refus de se remarier est justifié d'une part, par ce que s. Augustin appelait *sacramentum* – l'indissolubilité du lien matrimonial, d'autre part, par la recherche de la vertu qui est comme 'contrariée' par l'état du mariage. Cf. l'*Hymne de la vertu de Continence*, 2^e partie, vv. 142-165, dans laquelle l'auteur considère les multiples dangers moraux que comporte le mariage" (p. 266, n. 2). This dynamic is dramatized in *Imitation de la victoire de Judich*. When the heroine of the epic finally enters the scene, she is described as "Judit, femme à feu Manassez" (619, p. 404). Winn brilliantly points out the resonance between Judith, "la veuve de Manassé" and Coignard, "la veuve de Mansencal" (p. 405, n. 118). Coignard describes the widow's chastity in the following terms: "Mais parmy les vertus dont elle estoit douée, / Sa chasteté sur tout fut hautement louée, / Pource apres que la mort eust ravy sa moitié, / Elle ne voulut plus donner son amitié / A un second espoux, mais chaste, jeune et belle, / Fit vivre apres sa mort son amitié fidelle, / L'ayant tousjours au cœur comme s'il fut vivant, / Toutes les loix d'honneur

ambiguous: the reader is left unable to decide what the poet's desire to go to Heaven owes to her late husband or to the "souverain" with whom he now resides. In other words, the poem does not clarify whether the widow wants to be reunited with Pierre de Mansencal or with her God. Both desires, of course, are genuine. Sonnet CV clarifies the matter in a sense, by making it less personal and more practical: the obligation of fidelity to the *sacramentum* concerns life on earth, widowhood itself.

The spiritual counterpart to this fidelity, on the other hand, is unequivocally affirmed by Sonnet LXII, where the poet identifies her true spouse (or father just as well). Such a declaration makes the slightest allusion to her late husband downright impossible:

Tu es ma portion, mon loier, ma fiance,
Mon appuy, mon repos, mon amour, mon desir,
Ma consolation, ma joye, mon plaisir,
Mon pere, mon espoux, ma foy, mon esperance

Mon liberal Sauveur, ma force, ma constance,
D'où je ne veux jamais mon ame dessaisir.
Puis que tu es mon tout, escoute le souspir,
Qui sans oser parler te faict tres-humble instance.
(1-8, 213-214)²⁶¹

As we already know, the battle for devotion and resolution against the "winds" of human passions and desires for earthly comforts is life-long for Coignard, and constant in her poetry. Her engagement to Domenge de Beraud, if confirmed, is a detail that merely reinforces the notion that such a battle was bound to continue even into the final months

sainctement observant" (629-636). However, this love is *immediately* eclipsed by a divine one that moves her beyond the mere existence of observing the laws of honor and living as though her husband were still alive to an existence of great courage and heroism in which she would carry out "ce faict glorieux" (640) that was just "enfanté" in their union: "**Or cest amour divin** logeant dedans son ame, / **Embraza tout son cœur de sa divine flamme**, / **Et poussa son esprit d'un courage indompté**, / **A ce faict glorieux** du dessain enfanté" (637-640).

²⁶¹ See also, in the *Vers chrestiens, La Mort et Passion de Nostre Seigneur sur le Mont de Calvaire*, where the poet prays "[...] qu'avec toy, Seigneur, je sois tousjours unie; / **Que l'amour estranger ne me semble plus doux**, / **C'est toy, Dieu tout puissant, que je prends pour espoux**, / Toy qui as espousé, ô Redempteur du monde, / Ceste divine croix d'une amitié profonde" (lns. 125-130, Coignard 528; *emphasis ours*).

of her life. It also reminds us that a series of devotional sonnets is not a diary, let alone a memoir: while the poems reflect the accidents and ambiguities of life itself, they do so in a refracted and disjointed manner. Each one of them creates its own perspective: typically, a human truth that coexists with or is contradicted by another, higher truth. One sonnet mourns a true (literal) husband, another celebrates an even truer (figurative) one. We, as readers, are left with the gap that separates them.

In any case, Coignard did not choose to enter a convent: she remained a lay woman. There can be little doubt that her sense of duty toward her two young daughters played a major role in this decision²⁶². Yet while she frequently identifies with widows and mothers throughout her poems, she only refers to Jeanne and Catherine (without ever naming them) twice. Sonnet XI makes clear that motherhood, too, is a source of spiritual conflict, and shows us the poet dreaming of an alternative:

Si ce mien corps estoit de plus forte nature,
Et mes pauvres enfans n’eussent de moy besoing,
 Hors des soucis mondains, je m’en irois bien loin
 Choisir pour mon logis une forest obscure.

[...]

Et là j’admirerois en repos gracieux
 Les oeuvres du haut Dieu, l’air, la terre et les cieux,
 Les benefices siens saintement admirables.

²⁶² Salies tells us what Coignard, in addition to land, bequeathed to her daughters: “A Jeanne ung quarquand d’or garny de perles. A Catherine une bague d’or ou il y a ung rubis garni de perles. Les priant de les garder en mémoire et souvenance de l’amytié et affection que je leur ay porté... Heretieres universelles et generalles damoiselles Jeanne et Catherine de MANSENCAL mes filhes... Ausquelles mesdites filhes j’enjoinctz et ordonne se gouverner en tous leurs affaires et se marier par le conseil et advis de Madame la premiere presidencte de MANSENCAL leur ayeulle, et Monsieur de Venerque leur honcle, Et de Monsieur le president PAULO... et dudit sieur COIGNARD mon honcle, Et de Monsieur DU BOURG advocat en la Court, lesquels je prie me faire ceste faveur d’avoir le soing de leur sancte et de leurs meurs et de leurs affaires, et de les pourvoir de quelque honneste femme pour estre avec elles en madite maison...” (Salies 41, citing Coignard’s final will and testament). On February 11, 1589, Jeanne de Mansencal would marry Michel de Cheverry, Seigneur de la Reole (Navelle Vol. III-C, p. 168), who becomes a capitoul ten years later, in 1598 (Navelle Vol. VII-M, p. 40). Jeanne dies on July 4, 1605, at the age of 33 (Navelle Vol. VII-M, p. 40). Years later, on October 14, 1648, Catherine de Mansencal dies around the age of 75 (Navelle Vol. VII-M, p. 40). There is no record that she ever married or had children.

Et en pleurs et souspirs requerant son secours,
 Je passerois ainsi le reste de mes jours,
 Recevant de mon Dieu les graces secourables.
 (1-4 and 9-14, 151-152)

Sonnet CXIX does not exactly contradict this, but takes a different perspective. It is now where she is, and nowhere else, that the poet, desperately sick, hopes and prays for divine “graces”; but admits also that if she is not afraid to die, it is not thanks to this hope or faith, but because her worry about her daughters’ welfare is even worse:

Le coeur plain de regret, les yeux chargés de pleurs,
 Je passe ainsi les nuicts longues et solitaires,
 Ayant comme un marteau mes importuns affaires,
 Qui vont frappant le clou de mes fortes douleurs.

Mon mal estant causé de diverses humeurs,
 Consomme peu à peu mes forces necessaires,
 Mais j’attends du seul Dieu les graces salutaires,
 A sa doulce bonté j’adresse mes clameurs.

Mes amis estonnez ont crainte de ma vie,
 Voyant mon pasle teint et ma face ternie,
Non, la peur de la mort ne m’espouvante pas.

**Le souvenir de veoir mes filles en enfance,
 Orphelines de pere et sans nulle defence,
 M’est un plus grand tourment que le mesme trespas.**
 (12-15, 283)

Again the contrast of these two sonnets adds to their meaning. Coignard’s calling, as a poet, is not to “sing” of her motherhood, nor to praise her daughters. But her very reticence to do either of those things makes these two allusions all the more powerful.

– *Illness and death*

As we just saw, Coignard’s poems do not hesitate to describe her sick state – be it to criticize it or to criticize her complaints about it: thus, in Sonnet XXXI, she mentions a

“fiebvre bruslante” (1), a “rheume picquant” (3), about which she implores her Creator’s help – and, turning around, chastises herself for it:

Et pour cinq ou six jours que ceste maladie
A privé de santé ma delicate vie,
Il me semble des-ja qu’elle a duré dix mois.
(12-14, 177)

In Sonnet LXXXI, she describes herself (“Vos pas sont lentz, vostre haleine se pert, / [...] vous avez la couleur fort mauvaise” (lns. 2 and 4)) through the eyes of concerned acquaintances, who think she is dying and hiding “quelque ennuy” (7). She replies by welcoming “ce pas de la mort” (10), beyond which her soul will be able to

Jouyr du bien où tousjours elle aspire.
(14, 238)

In Sonnet CIII, she denounces the vanity of “mille herbes salutaires” (1) or “drogues” from the “Levant” (2), which she hoped would cure her. Likewise,

L’on m’a tiré le sang et seiché les arteres,
Me faisant avaler d’un breuvage puant,
Mais avec tout cela je suis pis que devant,
Endurant tous les jours des douleurs tres-ameres.
(5-8, 263)

She now resolves to “port[er] patiemment” her incurable “peines et tourments” (ln. 10), offering them to God and ready to accept whatever He will send her. Llewellyn points out that “Uncharacteristic of an early modern woman, particularly one as pious as the author of these *Œuvres chrétiennes*, Coignard deliberately exposes her body to God and to her reader. She gives voice to those who observe her physical state, reveling in their descriptions of her pallor, her faltering gait, and her weakening breath. ‘Chacun me dit: vous estes en mes-aise’ (LXXXI), she recounts” (Llewellyn, “Passion, Prayer...” 82). The point of these medical vignettes is not to elicit pity out of self-pity, however, but to cure a

moral disease by turning her gaze *away* from her body and toward the “divin vouloir.” In this sense, each of these sonnets becomes a personal “medicament,” without having to indulge in the graphic descriptions of physical decay one finds in Jean-Baptiste Chassignet’s *Mespris de la vie et consolation contre la mort*. The argument may be the same, but Coignard’s rhetoric remains intimate where Chassignet’s becomes hyperbolic.

Coignard’s references to her time and place’s endless calamities (war²⁶³, persecutions, massacres, recurrent attacks of the plague, famines²⁶⁴) are even more discreet. A d’Aubigné she is not; devotional poetry is not militant poetry. Sonnet XXVII allows itself a rare allusion to a recently concluded “paix,” hoping that the “Tout Puissant” will choose to uphold it (Ins. 1-2, Coignard 172); but seizes this opportunity to

²⁶³ E.g., sonnets XLIII, LXIII, and LXXXIV.

²⁶⁴ Here, for perspective, is a local summary. According to Vol. 2 of the *Annales de la ville de Toulouse* by Germain de Lafaille, the plague attacked the city in 1548 (p. 151); the next two years saw efforts to construct brick walls between houses in order to prevent the spread of both fires and epidemics (p. 153). In 1552, various “livres de chansons spirituelles” are collected and burned (p. 168). In 1554, a man who had claimed to be Saint John the Baptist is burned at the stake (p. 167). In 1555, another famine occurs (p. 182). The plague comes back, hard, in 1556; public prayers are held and it begins to wane, only to return along with famine the following year (p. 183 and 188); and again in 1561 (p. 247), when Gabrielle de Coignard is about 11. 1562 is a significant year of political and religious turmoil; the infamous Riots of Toulouse commence on Thursday, April 4. Due to the plague, famine, and violence, public readings and assemblies are prohibited. Throughout the next five years (1563-1568), religious leagues are created. On June 5, 1566, adherents of the Reformation in Pamiers (south-east of Toulouse) massacre the town’s clergymen; as a result, the Jesuits seek refuge in Toulouse (p. 278). A similar event occurs the following year, on October 5, 1567, when the Protestants of Castres (east of Toulouse) destroy La Chartreuse de Saix. The Chartreux, too, seek refuge in Toulouse. In fact, the annalist claims that 30,000 men arrive by foot or horse on November 23 (p. 285). On September 13, 1568, the Crusade is preached at the Église Saint-Etienne (Gabrielle de Coignard’s parish; cf. S. LX, ln. 14, p. 211); the Catholics in attendance adopt the motto “*Eamus nos, moriamur cum Christo*” (Let us go and die with Christ) (Baird 278) (Baird, Henry Martyn. *History of the Rise of the Huguenots of France*, Vol. 2. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1879). In January of 1570 (just one year after the death of Gabrielle’s father), Protestants pillage the area surrounding Toulouse again; the Faubourg Saint-Michel is partially burned down (Lafaille p. 300). In 1572, ten years after the Riots of Toulouse, the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in Paris (August 23-24) is echoed by a massacre of Protestants in Toulouse (October 3-4) (311). By August 1580, the *coqueluche* (whooping-cough) epidemic reaches the city; few people die from it but many catch it (367). In 1585 (the year before Coignard’s death), the plague attacks Toulouse again, in weaker form it seems (391). In 1586, as Marguerite de Valois is imprisoned at Usson, Gabrielle signs her testament (November 18). The following year, 112 houses in Toulouse are infected with the plague, and public prayers are ordered again (399-400) (Lafaille, Germain de. *Annales de la ville de Toulouse [...] Seconde Partie. [...] Par M. G. de Lafaille, Ancien Capitoul, de l’Academie des Jeux Floraux de Toulouse. A Toulouse, De l’Imprimerie de G. L. Colomyés. M. DCCI. Avec Privilege du Roy*. Vol. 2. Toulouse: Colomyés, 1701. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1040123m>>).

focus on the poet's own heart and "conscience" (ln. 14), which have their own wars and need their own peace. Most striking is Sonnet XXVIII, which offers a religious interpretation – not of the plague, which had been rather quiet of late, but of the (far less deadly) 1580 whooping-cough epidemic (identified in the title "Sur la coqueluche"), as divine punishment for the "lascheté publique" shown by the Catholic flock faced with "la guerre heretique" (lns. 8 and 1, Coignard 173). We can only wonder if this rare flash of prophetic anger²⁶⁵ has anything to do with the poet's likely concern for her daughters (who were 9 and 7 at the time). But it is striking that the full power of God's wrath ("Je vous frapperay dans vos fortes citez" (ln. 12)) be evoked about an epidemic that was not quite "Biblical" in its effects (according to records of the time, few died of the illness, though many caught it). Coignard may have thought of it as a warning, which she felt duty-bound to interpret and convey.

On November 18, 1586, Gabrielle de Coignard signed her final will; it is clear that she was already quite ill²⁶⁶. On Saturday, November 29, she died, and her testament was opened. Her daughters were 15 and 13 years old. Thanks to her poems, we have a few vivid images of her anticipation of her own passing: eager from a spiritual perspective – yet anxious, if not heart-broken, from a human one.

²⁶⁵ See our comments below, Chapter IV, pp. 278-279.

²⁶⁶ Some sort of illness was very likely the cause of Coignard's death. Salies quotes from archival documents: "le 18 novembre [1586] 'détenue de maladie corporelle' [Gabrielle de Coignard] fait son testament 'escript par aultruy main et signé de la sienne propre'. [...] Gabrielle meurt le samedi 29 novembre 1586" (Salies 41).

Coignard's moral outlook: the problem of "vouloir"

Since we closed the "portrait" above with a few notes on our poet's ailments and torments, it is fitting to ask, as a conclusion to our second chapter, whether the spiritual perspective that guides the *Œuvres chrestiennes* suffices to deal with this suffering, or whether a specific moral doctrine brings its own contribution to the matter. The final tercet of Sonnet XXIX²⁶⁷ leads Winn to write the following about Coignard's implied ethics, centered around the notion of a "hardi vouloir":

Gabrielle de Coignard préconise ici l'engagement actif de l'homme dans la lutte contre le mal où l'on retrouve la notion éminemment stoïcienne de volonté. Cette force volitive au cœur même de l'action joue chez Chassignet un rôle fondamental dans sa conception d'un idéal de conduite [...] et chez Sponde. (Coignard 175, n. 2)

Three sonnets later, Winn comments likewise on the final tercet of Sonnet XXXII²⁶⁸; in lns. 12-13, she reads again "stoïcisme chrétien et toute confiance dans la récompense patiemment attendue" (Coignard 178, n. 2)²⁶⁹. The implication is that Coignard was influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Christian Neo-Stoicism that was taking shape in the second half of the 16th century.

Coignard obviously honors and pursues certain virtues, and there is no doubt that her ethical vocabulary tends to revolve around a "je veux," an act and assertion of will, tested over time: for its real test and key value is "constance"²⁷⁰ in its pursuit of a good object. Sonnet V, about the "resolu vefvage" discussed above, focuses on chastity, a

²⁶⁷ "Au moins que nous jeunions des inclinations / Qui mettent en nos coeurs ces fortes passions, / **Et d'un hardi vouloir faisons la guerre aux vices**" (S. XXIX, lns. 12-14, Coignard 17). These lines may bring to mind Col. 3:5 and 1 Pet. 4:2, the latter of which exhorts us to suffer in the flesh like Christ and to live for God's will rather than for passions.

²⁶⁸ "Ce n'est rien d'endurer en la vie mortelle, / Pour avoir le repos de la gloire eternelle, / Et combattant en terre, au ciel avoir le pris" (S. XXXII, lns. 12-14, Coignard 178).

²⁶⁹ Winn adds the following references: Mt. 10, 22; 24, 13; Mk. 13, 13; Lk. 21, 9; Jn. 16, 22.

²⁷⁰ Let us recall that Justus Lipsius' *De constantia in publicis malis*, the "manifesto" of Neo-Stoicism, was published in 1584; see Jan Papy, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justus-lipsius/#DeCons>>, 2019.

virtue that is central to orthodox Christian doctrine, but not necessarily to the Stoic tradition. However, positing that chastity is good for a widow, the sonnet then puts a great deal of emphasis on courage, resolution, constance, and mastery of the passions²⁷¹. For the “good” in question to be reached and upheld, the key ingredient seems to be a “force volitive”: we are indeed in (Neo-)Stoic territory. Except that in this case the poet laments the *disappearance* of her “courage,” the dissolution of her “chaste projet.” It turns out that “constance” is impossible without God’s “douce bonté,” “grace,” “faveur”; which is not quite the same thing as the Neo-Stoic requirement to steel one’s “constance” by accepting, via rational volition, the iron necessity of God’s Providence. So it appears that a Stoic virtue like courage needs the infusion of God’s grace. This infusion itself cannot be willed, and it is intimately *felt* by the subject²⁷².

In this sense, the poet’s very emphasis on the will (on which all behavior depends) may trigger the recognition of its absence, *unless* it is sustained by God’s benevolence, on which the will depends in turn. Harmony may prevail between the two wills, provided that one obey the other: “Vous le voulez, et je le veux aussi,” states the first line of Sonnet LXXXV (Coignard 242). But then, “Je veux la Croix et puis elle me fache,” confesses line 9 (p. 243). The poet’s will is subject to a “guerre intestine” (ln. 12),

²⁷¹ “Ha! mon Dieu, qu’est cecy? ay-je perdu **courage**? / Où sont **les bons desirs** que j’allois poursuivant? / Seray-je point **subjecte à la pluie et au vent**, / Suivant les **passions** maistresses de nostre age? / Ce n’est pas le chemin d’une jeunesse **sage**, / De reculer arriere au lieu d’**aller avant**. / Où est ce bon espoir qui m’animoit devant, / **Et ce chaste project d’un resolu vefvage**? / Helas! Je cognois bien quand ta douce bonté / Me soustient, qu’en mon coeur par ta grace indompté / La **constance** fleurit, et que rien ne l’empesche. / Mais quant tu viens de moy ta faveur retirer, / Mon ame qui se sent de son tronc separer, / Chet comme quelque branche ou quelque feuille seiche” (S. V, Coignard 144).

²⁷² This is what happens in the exemplary case of Judith (see above, p. 136, n. 260), whose “chasteté sur tout fut hautement louée” (*Imitation de la victoire de Judich*, ln. 630, 405): after her husband Manasses’ death, “Elle ne **voulut** plus donner son amitié / A un second espoux” (lns. 632-633, *ibid.*); but this act of will is undistinguishable from her love for her late husband, which itself fuses with the “amour divin” (ln. 637) that burns in her heart. It is from (God-inspired) “amour” that “courage” proceeds, be it that of remaining a widow or that of taking on Holofernes. Coignard does not claim such perfection for herself.

which only God can bring to an end. Sonnet LXXVII states that one's "félicité" in this world "Consiste à saintement sa volonté ranger, / Unissant son vouloir à celui de son maître" (lns. 3-4, 233). In Sonnet LXXIII, the overwhelming intensity of the contemplation of the Crucified (expressed by an anaphoric "Je voy" at the beginning of each line in the tercets) makes the poet's task paradoxically impossible ("Je ne puis plus chanter, je ne puis plus écrire," she writes in the first line²⁷³) and reduces her will to its own negation:

Je veux ores mourir sous la divine croix,
Je ne veux plus bouger de l'ombre de ce bois,
Je veux estre à jamais subjecte à son empire.
(6-8, 228)

Yet this does not mean that the will (with God's backing) is relieved of its duty. "Tu as un franc vouloir dont tu dois m'honorer," says God in Sonnet CXXVIII (6, 294), unequivocally reaffirming this central Catholic concept. Sonnet XXXIII explains that "Celuy qui veut aymer d'une amour toute pure" (1, 178) has to *will* that love in the right direction: love carries the will, but the reverse is also true. Sonnet LXXXIII is one of its most striking statements, a mini-hymn to the virtue of self-control and resistance to adversity²⁷⁴. Everything follows from the subject determining and affirming what "she wants" and "does not want." First, she rejects the perverse pleasure that would come from voicing her complaints, whether to her fellow humans or to herself. Then, she announces

²⁷³ Compare S. LXIX: "Je ne sçauois écrire d'autre chose / Que de la croix" (1-2, 223).

²⁷⁴ While Winn does not label Coignard a Neo-Stoic, she does note that the poet "refuse de s'épandre sur ses maux, de décharger son cœur afin de trouver réconfort dans l'acte d'écriture. Point ne suffit de diminuer la peine. Il faut apprendre à la **dominer** pour se rendre **maître** de son corps et de soi" (Coignard 41). In this respect, Winn quotes and discusses lines 1-2 and 5-8 of S. LXXXIII (above): "Le refus de la poésie-consolation n'est donc pas pour Gabrielle de Coignard une prise de position *vis-à-vis* de telle ou telle poétique. Motivé par la volonté de dompter l'indomptable afin de résoudre temporairement la dualité naturelle, le refus aboutit à une nouvelle affirmation du credo religieux: à la constatation que 'nostre chair [est] fragile' et à l'exaltation de la toute-puissance de Dieu" (*idem*, 41-42).

her desire to submit her tongue and (more generally) her body to reason, whose authority is not a soft one: it must be feared (ln. 8).

Non je ne veux aucunement me plaindre,
Non je ne veux mes ennuis racompter,
Non je ne veux mon esprit contenter,
Pour en parlant faire ma douleur moindre.

Je veux plustost dissimuler et feindre,
En me taisant ma langue surmonter,
Il faut ce corps severement dompter
Par la raison qui se doit faire craindre.
(1-8, 240)

The perspective changes with the tercets, however: in the end, everything must be left in God's hands.

Que me sert il de me plaindre aux humains?
C'est l'Eternel qui change leurs dessains,
Il les defaict ainsi qu'un pot d'Argile.

Devant ses yeux toute chose se voit,
Sans luy parler noz desirs il cognoit,
Prenant pitié de nostre chair fragile.
(9-14, 240-241)

There is a shift, but no contradiction: this *sizain* insists on God's awesome power, a view wholly compatible with the tenets of Neo-Stoicism, which places God's Providence in the role of the ancient Stoics' natural necessity. The clear notion and application of what "I want" presupposes that I accept what God wants, instead of complaining about it. This is what Coignard proposes to do here. In particular, the fact that God knows her desires gives her a chance to master and orient them within herself instead of dissolving them through human communication. Yet the tone changes again with the very last line, which focuses on God's "pitié" for our fragility. It would be arrogant for the subject to presume that her will is unbreakable or capable of functioning without God's assistance; she is still in need of divine "pitié," a virtue that is debilitating and corrupt in man (according to the

Stoics, from Seneca to Lipsius) but eminently good in God. The Stoic heroine remains “fragile”²⁷⁵, but knows that God’s grace will sustain her.

It follows that while she is loath to relieve her pain by exposing it to human witnesses, as Sonnet LXXIX explains:

Las **je veux** arroser de larmes mon visage,
Pour allenter le mal que **je veux** oublier.
Aux villes **je ne veux** ma douleur publier,
Je la veux enterrer en ce desert sauvage.
(5-8, 235-236)

She remains prepared to do so before God. Her crying, paradoxically, remains somewhat compatible with Stoic impassibility because she *wants* to do it, yet *does not want* to broadcast it to anyone but her Lord²⁷⁶, the one legitimate witness to her pain. Yet she is not immune to lapses into despair, including when she is alone: thus Sonnet LXXX²⁷⁷ describes in concrete and prosaic terms (“Je trouve le lict dur”) a cruel night marked by a complete dereliction of “constance,” of any form of self-control for “corps” and “penseurs.” A collapse of this sort is sinful before God; but the poet’s analysis incites us to think that it is also deficient from an ethical perspective, in terms of what the “hardi vouloir” expects of itself²⁷⁸.

²⁷⁵ “Plus fragile qu’un verre,” states Sonnet XLIV (14, 191).

²⁷⁶ “Mais qui sera tesmoin de l’ennuy que je sens? / Ce sera toy, Seigneur, espoir des innocens, / Support des orphelins, et consolant la vefve. / Tu daigneras secher les larmes de mes yeux, / Appaisant de mon cœur les regrets soucieux, / Donnant à mes combats ou la paix ou la treve” (lns. 9-14, 236).

²⁷⁷ “Je trouve le lict dur, la nuict m’est une année, / Il semble que mes draps soient de chardons poignans / [...]” (lns. 1-2, Coignard 236); see our comments below, Chapter IV, p. 271. In contrast to this nocturnal suffering, the sonnet evokes the quiet nights enjoyed by shepherds in their natural setting. A Stoic perspective may inform this idyllic image: the idea that obeying Nature’s commands would cure our artificial unhappiness. Several sonnets (XL, LXVIII, XCIII, CXI...) suggest that Nature should be followed and enjoyed – and would be, were it not for the interference of unwarranted passions.

²⁷⁸ Let us recall that the passions to be avoided, according to the Stoics, include **distress** (*lupē*), the irrational opinion that something bad is occurring; **fear** (*phobos*), the irrational avoidance of expected danger; **lust** or **appetite** (*epithumia*), the irrational desire or pursuit of an unworthy good; and the **pleasure** (*hēdonē*) obtained from its irrational (and illusory) possession. To this catalog of errors, the Stoic oppose three *eupatheiai*, i.e., good, serene, rational passions: **joy** (*chara*), the opposite of unruly pleasure; considered **wish** (*boulēsis*), the opposite of lust; and **caution** (*eulabeia*), the opposite of fear.

At its strongest, this logic of “vouloir” and “constance” seems to minimize the role of grace. Thus Sonnet XXXV describes the prowess of a (future) Christian hero:

Celuy qui **domptera**, comme dit l’Ecriture,
Et qui **vaincra constant** ses divers ennemis,
Recevra le **loyer** que Dieu luy a promis,
Non en ce monde icy subject à pourriture.

Ce monde est lasche, aveugle, errant à l’aventure,
Que tout **coeur genereux** doit avoir à mespris,
Pour avoir **ce guerdon d’ineestimable pris**,
Que Dieu **garde au vainqueur** en la vie future.

Ha! qu’il **nous payera pour un peu de constance**,
Que **nous luy garderons en la perseverance**
De sa divine loy, nous conduisans au port,

Et havre de salut, de sa gloire infinie,
Après avoir couppé le fil de nostre vie,
Revivans dans le ciel, affranchis de la mort.

(181)

It would be hard to go further in this direction: Salvation will “pay” a warrior’s “constance,” the willful performance of a “generous” heart in the service of divine law. Only the qualification “**un peu de constance**” suggests that God’s reward far exceeds the objective merit of this performance.

Such a hero could be Saint Jerome, whose life of austerity proves, according to Sonnet XXXVIII, that “Pour un peu de travail qui passe avec la vie, / Nous pouvons acquerir un repos eternel” (1-2, 184); and incites us, when we put this example “devant nos yeux” (9), to do the same, so as to be “recompencé[s]” like him, who is now “Jouyssant dans le ciel du fruict de son attente” (14). Therein, of course, lies a crucial difference with the Stoic notion that virtue, practiced for its own sake, is its own reward. Here it hopes to be rewarded in a different currency, which is not merely the moral “joy” one feels when doing the right thing, but the ulterior and ultimate spiritual *jouissance* of

something else entirely – eternal repose. To the extent that he expects to “acquire” such a reward in exchange for his good deeds, the Christian hero is not a Stoic hero at all, on two counts: not only does he have an ulterior motive, but this motive is delight. Virtue is but a partial means to please and access God, in the hope of a “payment” to be received in Heaven; and because this payment consists of pleasure (whatever its kind), it confirms that virtue was never its own end²⁷⁹.

Likewise, as we have already seen and will see again, Coignard is actively seeking and expecting certain pleasures as recompense for her virtuous activity, and this expectation (rather than the virtuous activity itself), in turn, is supposed to give her some tranquility of mind and soul in the present moment. It turns out, however, that even this preliminary benefit is doubtful. Sonnet XXXII is particularly clear in this respect: should all kinds of “maux” (3), “tristesse” (1) and “regret” (7) invade this life to the point of depriving me of “tous mes plaisirs” (4), it would be all right, says she,

Pourveu qu’au dernier jour [...]
 [...]
 Je sois du nombre esleu des bien-heureux esprits.
 (9 and 11, 178)

That is, that she enjoy the repose of eternal glory, which is the *prize* expected in Heaven. Does it follow that she *should* be indifferent to her present ordeal, and full of “constance” while facing it? Yes it does, and the sonnet itself demands this indifference of her, with a self-persuasive *a fortiori* argument (even if I suffered horribly all the time, it would be all right, because...). But it is no less clear that indifference is not achieved yet. The fight is

²⁷⁹ Cf. S. LXXVI: “Perseverez en vos devotions, / Pour le guerdon de vos afflictions, / Vous recevrez la couronne eternelle” (12 -14, Coignard 233). Furthermore, the language of S. XXXVIII does not emphasize, in Jerome, the indifference toward one’s fate that one would expect of a truly Stoic attitude. Clearly the perspective of future enjoyment allows the Saint to endure present hardship.

anything but impassible: all we have is a contrast of present travaux and future delight, with the latter compensating for the former²⁸⁰.

So the poet's "hardi vouloir" may not bring her torments under control after all: the "divin vouloir" of which Sonnet CIII speaks is the true remedy²⁸¹. While Coignard hopes for an ulterior reward, she knows that she will not acquire it on her own. More than on her efforts and virtues, she depends on God's unmerited intervention. Thus Sonnet XLIV admits that she is not always able to "vaincre [s]es passions" (ln. 6, 191); that she can be "pleine d'un bon desir," but that "ce dessein ne dure pas tousjours" (lns. 10 and 12, *ibid.*): in which case the only "secours" is God. So it would seem that God and the will can cooperate, with grace taking over whenever the will falters. But the latter occurs often, if not "tousjours," always. Sonnet XLI shows a sinner who fails two philosophical tests at once (Stoic and Aristotelian): not only is she unable to tame her "passions" on her own, but she cannot trace a middle road between them either²⁸². Only God will do that for her. Sonnet CXXIV goes further, confessing the will's radical weakness:

Je n'ay **rien** de ma part que ce **foible vouloir**,
Armez moy s'il vous plaist d'un assuré pouvoir,

²⁸⁰ As we saw in our Introduction (pp. 12-13, n. 24), this contrast was heavily emphasized by Calvin, who refused to assign any merit to our suffering. For him, what makes the "reward" so appealing is not that it "pays" us, but how far it takes us from our present predicament. It is interesting to see that Coignard's catholicism (see, in the next chapter, the section "The logic of 'loyer'") is capable, at times, of such an insight, according to which the reward is above all a "recompense," a compensation.

²⁸¹ We have already quoted most of this, but it bears reminding. Sonnet XXIII: "Bien-heureux sont ceux-là qui forçant leurs desirs, / Quittent joyeusement du monde les plaisirs, / Pour avoir **les vertus de celui qui les donne**" (Coignard 168). Sonnet CIII: "Mais de ta sainte main, ô Dieu plein de bonté, / J'embrasseray mon mal ou ma douce santé, / **Car ton divin vouloir est ce que je veux suivre**" (263). Sonnet XCVII: "**Donne, Seigneur, la douce patience**" (255). Sonnet CXIX: "Mais j'attends **du seul Dieu les graces salutaires**" (283).

²⁸² "Ha! que je suis extreme en ma condition, / Je ne garde jamais le milieu de la voye: / Car en mes actions quelque part que je soye, / Je n'ay jamais le sel de la discretion. / Je suis ores trop douce, or' sans compassion, / Ores j'ay trop de pleurs, ores j'ay trop de joye, / Je ne me puis facher pour chose que je voye, / Et puis je suis esmeue à toute occasion. / **Helas! qui domtera ces passions estranges? / Ce sera toy, bon Dieu**, qui façannes et changes, / Les coeurs plus inconstans en un ferme rocher. / Delivre moy, Seigneur, de l'orage et tempeste, / Qui pour me submerger s'eslance sur ma teste: / Car tu es mon espoir, ma nef, et mon nocher" (S. XLI, 188).

Et pour sauver mon ame animez ma foiblesse.
(12-14, 290)

An even starker opposite of Sonnet XXXV's heroic performance is Sonnet XII, which assumes powerlessness. It is based on the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:3-23):

Fauche Seigneur de ton glaive trenchant
Tous les chardons qui prennent accroissance
Aux plus beaux lieux de nostre conscience,
Et vont tousjours les vertus empeschant.

Ce sont les grains que l'ennemy meschant
Jette sur nous par sa fauce semence.
Vien donc, Seigneur, car la moisson s'avance,
Vie[n] de ta main ces herbes arrachant:

Ne permets point que la ronce et l'espine
Gastent le fruit de la bonne racine:
Envoye nous de la pluye d'en haut,

Pour arroser ceste terre infertile,
Qui dans son champ **ne porte rien d'utile,**
S'il ne te plaist reparer son deffault.
(152-153)

The parable lists different outcomes for the seed, depending on the type of soil (or soul) that receives it. But in the sonnet, the Devil threatens to suppress *all* difference between fertile and infertile ground, lest God intervene. It is now as though nothing good would happen to the sinner on her own volition: she is as passive as dry earth awaiting rain. Not only is virtue not sought as an end in itself, it cannot be sought at all, because it is being blocked by our “deffault” (original sin: *cf.* Coignard 153, n. 2). Evil is in and on us; only grace can fix that. Nor does praying for grace presuppose that the virtue that grace will “repair” is, in itself, the ultimate good: the field must produce something “useful,” grow the crop. The point is not to repair virtue *qua* virtue, but to make it apt, as the parable shows, to receive the Word of God, whose own purpose exceeds it infinitely.

It seems clear, therefore, that the lionizing of human “vouloir” that one encounters at times in Coignard’s work is contradicted by the opposite movement, calling for a surrender to its divine counterpart: grace. The ethical command is not disqualified on its own terms (and may still help to an extent); it is both reaffirmed and inevitably superseded by the spiritual and eschatological reality of our condition. Thus Sonnet LIII opens with the claim that “Grand passion est une maladie,” meaning (in reverse) that illness is a great passion “Qui fait sentir au corps mille douleurs” (1-2, 202) and makes life miserable. Then comes an even more troublesome “ennuy,” affecting not the body but the heart and soul, yet enslaving all, body included. Then again, death is worse than either of these “calamitez,” in that it (terminally) afflicts body, heart, soul – the latter with the ultimate “passion” of fear and loathing –, and even negates our “glory”: by burying and forgetting us, or – worse – by denying us the “glory” of Salvation²⁸³. In the three sonnets that follow, the poet’s conscience proceeds to climb back out of this horrific hole by remembering that the Passion of Christ, born of His love (S. LIV, 11) and marked by His own suffering and death (S. LV, 8), will in fact save us, if we repent (that is, if we receive the grace of repentance, S. LVI, 7), transforming death itself:

Entre les actions, c’est la plus sainte et belle
 Pour guider tout d’un vol nostre ame dans les cieux,
 Et la faire jouyr du repos gracieux,
 Ravissant le loyer de la vie eternelle.
 (Sonnet LIV, 5-8, 203)

Such is the only true remedy to the “crainte de la mort” (S. LVI, 1). No “hardi vouloir” could stand before the Last Judgment, given the stakes and the evidence of “ma

²⁸³ Sonnet LV reminds us that one’s soul could end up in “l’eternel torment” (6, 204), while, in Sonnet LVI, the poet begs her God to not let her “aux abismes descendre” (14, 206).

transgression” (S. LVI, 7). From this perspective, the Stoics’ critique of passions and their reliance on pure will are entirely beside the point.

Which sends us back to the nature of the “good” that is being pursued by the faithful; and to Coignard’s “passionate love” for her God²⁸⁴, which is anything but impassible, be it to celebrate its fire or bemoan its absence. It is hardly necessary to remind ourselves that this type of love is integral to the devotional revival and to its literature. As we saw in our Introduction, Terence Cave describes devotional language as entailing “incitement to emotion,” wielding the “*stimulus amoris*” (Cave 20). Fervor and *douceur* are omnipresent (33 and 35). In his commentary on Marin Le Saulx’s *Theanthropogamie en forme de dialogue par sonnets chrestiens*, Cave shows how “the mystical language of love, fire and ravissement” is deployed by Marin’s sonnets, and justified in his preface:

Ceste façon de parler peut sembler dure: O que d’amour divin la douceur est cruelle, mais il la faut prendre comme poétique, et est à vray dire une façon de parler excessive, par laquelle l’Eglise est ravie en admiration de l’extreme bonté de Dieu, qui pour sauver l’homme pecheur, n’a point espargné son Fils innocent. (Marin Le Saulx, quoted by Cave, p. 72)²⁸⁵

Cave further characterizes devotion as mobilizing “above all sweetness and extremes of emotion,” with hyperbolic terms (Cave 85). Let us agree that such “extremes” – sanctified by the “theological” virtue of charity, and expressed by creations such as Sonnet XV (“Perce moy l’estomach...”), which we will study later – do not practice the cardinal virtue of temperance; let alone the serene *apatheia* advocated by Stoicism.

²⁸⁴ See e.g., Sonnet C (discussed further on pp. 238-239): “Que tu sois en tous lieux mon soigneux pensement, / Ma delectation, ma joye, mon delice, / Et que pour ton amour sans cesse je languisse, / Cherchant en toy mon bien et seul contentement” (5-8, Coignard 259).

²⁸⁵ Le Saulx, Marin. *Theanthropogamie en forme de dialogue par sonnets chrestiens*. London: Thomas Vautrolier, 1577. p. 31.

In truth, it would be a sin for the poet – as well as a denial of her own inspiration – to reject such “passions” as her love for God or regret for not feeling it ardently enough. Even fear of death plays a “useful” role in this process, in that “charité” is shown to be the *only* response that vanquishes it. Coignard’s poetry does make space for the strong expression of a Stoic (and Catholic) “vouloir,” yielding only to the supremacy of God’s own will. All told, however, yielding is not enough: the poems also express a wish to burn away human will, along with all other passions and faculties, on the altar of divine love.

CHAPTER III
CELESTIAL REWARDS AND THE *SUMMUM BONUM*
IN THE SONNETS OF GABRIELLE DE COIGNARD

*Et erunt homines [...] voluptatum amatores magis quam dei, Habentes speciem
quidem pietatis, virtutem autem eius abnegantes. Et hos devita.*
(II Tim. 3:2-5)²⁸⁶

In our Introduction, we cited Sonnet III and excerpts from *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle* as examples of Coignard's interest in pursuing heavenly pleasure(s). Sonnet XXXII, to which we alluded a moment ago, is also a poem in which she could be interpreted as pursuing pleasure in Heaven and making that pleasure a priority:

Que j'aye dans le coeur une amere tristesse,
Et qu'on jette sur moy des mots injurieux,
Que j'endure des maux cruels et furieux,
Et que tous mes plaisirs se changent en destresse.

Que je n'aye jamais en ce monde liesse,
Que nuit et jour les pleurs descoulent de mes yeux,
Que le regret m'assaille et me suive en tous lieux,
Et que ce corps mortel soit affligé sans cesse.

Pourveu qu'au dernier jour quand la machine ronde,
Recevra jugement du Redempteur du monde,
Je sois du nombre esleu des bien-heureux esprits.

Ce n'est rien d'endurer en la vie mortelle,
Pour avoir le repos de la gloire éternelle,
Et combattant en terre, au ciel avoir le pris.
(S. XXXII, 177-178)

²⁸⁶ “Car les hommes seront [...] amateurs de voluptés plustost que de Dieu: Ayans l'apparence de pieté, mais renians la force d'icelle. Destourne-toy donc de iceux” (Seconde Epistre de saint Paul Apostre à Timothée. In [La Sainte Bible...] *Le Nouveau Testament de Nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, Latin François, chacune version correspondante l'une à l'autre, verset à verset. Avec annotations et expositions des lieux les plus difficiles: et principalement de ceux qui ont esté depravés et corrompus par les heretiques de nostre temps. Par M. René Benoist, Angevin, Docteur Regent en la faculté de Theologie à Paris. A Paris, Chez Sebastien Nyvelle, aux Cicognes, ruë Saint Jacques. 1568. Avec Privilege du Roy. Vol. 3. Paris: Nyvelle [also spelled Nivelles], 1568. p. 124 r^o. <https://books.google.com/books?id=CrRbAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>). On René Benoist's translation and the other two volumes of this edition, see below, p. 159, n. 290.*

The poet explains why she desires to be “du nombre esleu des bien-heureux esprits” (11) on Judgment day – even if such a status would require enduring the pains of “la vie mortelle” (12) such as “une amere tristesse” (1), “les mots injurieux” (2), “des maux cruels et furieux” (3), and even if all the mortal life’s “plaisirs se changent en detresse” (4). At the very end of the sonnet, we learn that the reason for such a desire is that the blessed elect will “avoir le repos de la gloire eternelle / Et combattant en terre, au ciel avoir le pris” (13-14). Thus, experiencing the phenomenon of repose (specifically a post-combat repose) is underscored here as the reason for which she desires to be one of God’s elect on Judgment day.

Later, in Sonnet LII, the poet once again makes clear her desire for heavenly repose. After asking

S’esbahit-on de me voir desirer,
D’un cœur ardent d’affection extreme,
Le doux **repos de la vie supreme**,
Où le Chrestien doit tousjours aspirer?
(4-8, 201)²⁸⁷

the ailing poet eventually declares “Je veux chercher **mon bien** par le trespas” (14). Concerning the nature of this “bien,” readers easily deduce that it must be up high, as opposed to “ça bas” (11). Furthermore, one may conclude that the “bien” to which she is referring in ln. 14 is the “doux repos de la vie supreme” (7) – a repose that she desires with a heart of great affection (2-3). With this interpretation, one can appreciate how it is

²⁸⁷ “S’esbahit-on de me voir souspirer / A chasque mot sans penser à moy-mesme? / S’esbahit-on de me voir pasle et blesme, / Et tous les jours je ne fais qu’empirer? / S’esbahit-on de me voir desirer, / D’un cœur ardent d’affection extreme, / Le doux repos de la vie supreme, / Où le Chrestien doit tousjours aspirer? / Parmi le cours de mon pelerinage, / Durant l’Avril verdoyant de mon aage, / J’ay tout perdu ce que j’avois ça bas. / Tant qu’ay vescu en ce val de misere, / Je n’eus jamais une année prospere, / Je veux chercher mon bien par le trespas” (S. LII, 201-202).

the sweet “repos” of beatitude (*i.e.*, of “la vie supresme”) that is brought to the forefront as an object of desire.

In Sonnet XXXVIII, one learns more about Coignard’s notion of eternal repose. She characterizes the “repos eternel” (2) in Heaven as a recompense “suivy d’une joye infinie” (4). The argument that follows is that, in order to have these goods (repose and joy), one ought not desire to offend God while one inhabits one’s mortal body. Rather, one is to love well all that invites her/him to seek the path of Heaven (5-6)²⁸⁸. In other words, the poem implies that, if one does not offend God, then God will be happy and, consequently, He will allow the human being to possess the desired goods of repose and joy. In this instance, therefore, God is portrayed as a part of one’s *means* to the desirable good or pleasure that is repose, and joy is the surplus form of pleasure flowing from it.

The logic of “loyer”

Readers will note that much of the language conveying the pleasures intended to invite the Catholic author and her readers toward Heaven is composed of economic terms. Winn also picks up on this tendency. She explains that the type of piety envisioned by Coignard is one “qui suppose entre Dieu et le fidèle l’exécution réciproque de clauses de contrat” (Coignard 233, n. 3). Coignard remains fully committed to a works and reward paradigm throughout her literary endeavour – a paradigm reaffirmed at the Council of Trent, which was held on three occasions between 1545 and 1563:

²⁸⁸ In order to know how to live in such a manner, the author invites us to look at St. Jerome’s life – that of a penitent living in the desert, spending this painful lifetime in austerity. The word “peu,” first used in ln. 1 to emphasize how small the amount of “travail” in this world is that will earn eternal repose and infinite joy, is used again in ln. 12 to emphasize how small the amount of “temps” was that St. Jerome spent in the desert mortifying his body. The interjection “Ah!” (13) implies the author’s happy relief at the notion that such a short period of suffering could be (and was) recompensed with “precieux thresors” (12) and the enjoyment of the “fruit de son attente” (14) in Heaven.

Rappelons, d’une part, le chapitre XVI accordé à la question du rôle des œuvres dans le salut “De fructus justificationis, hoc est, de merito bonorum operum, deq. ipsius meriti ratione” ainsi que le Canon VII dans *Canones, et decreta sacrosancti oecumenici, et generalis Concilii Tridentini: sub Paulo III, Iulio III, Pio IIII, Pontificibus Max, Romae: apud Paulum Manutium, Aldi f., 1564, p. 31b à 32b et p. 33a*. Il vaut la peine de rappeler le contenu de ce canon sur la doctrine qui jette l’anathème sur la justification par la foi seule de Luther sans la nommer: “*Si quis dixerit, opera omnia, que ante justificationem fiunt, quacumque ratione facta sint, vere esse peccatu, vel odium Dei mereri, aut quanto vehementius quis nititur se disponere ad gratiam, tanto eum gravius peccari, anathema sit*” (*ibid.*, p. 33a). (“Les béatitudes,” Dunn-Lardeau, 168)²⁸⁹

From a Protestant perspective, in contrast, this works and rewards paradigm would be identified with a “commodification” of God – an unwarranted and abusive calculation of the “good(s)” that one is liable to obtain.

Indeed, motifs of services rendered, merit, and just payment appear frequently throughout both parts of the *Œuvres chrestiennes*. For example, in the poem we just read (S. XXXVIII), Coignard employs the word “guerdon” (*i.e.* reward or compensation for good works) as a synonym for eternal repose. In Sonnet LXXVI, dedicated to a highly particular class of “œuvres,” the same term is used to characterize the “couronne éternelle” (14) that the “penitentes bandes” (5) shall receive in exchange for the “afflictions” (13) they endure:

Il est fort grief de jeusner de viandes,
Porter le sac, coucher tout revestu,
Aller piedz nudz apres s’estre battu,
Et faire encore d’austeritez plus grandes.

Il est fort grief aux penitantes bandes
D’estre de faim et de froid combattu,
Mais le loyer qu’apporte la vertu,
Faict adoucir l’aigreur de ces offrandes.

Heureux troupeau qui d’un commun accort,
Vous affligez d’un merveilleux effort
Pour surmonter ceste escorce charnelle:

²⁸⁹ Dunn-Lardeau, Brenda. “Les Béatitudes comme source d’inspiration dans la poésie de Gabrielle de Coignard et d’Anne de Marquets” in *Échos poétiques de la Bible*. Eds. Josiane Rieu, Béatrice Bonhomme, Hélène Baby, Aude Préta-de Beaufort. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012, pp. 165-177.

Perseverez en voz devotions,
 Pour le **guerdon** de voz afflictions,
 Vous recevrez la couronne eternelle.
 (S. LXXVI, 231-233)

Winn's footnote *ad loc.* (p. 233) reminds us that there are many biblical references to a spiritual, metaphorical "crown" rewarding the saved. Winn references II Timothy 4:8 and James 1:12, which we will quote from René Benoist's translation²⁹⁰. In the former, a crown of *justice* (*corona justitiae*) is mentioned; in the latter, a crown of *life* (*corona vitae*)²⁹¹. Coignard's Sonnet LXXVI likely refers to James' crown of life rather than to Paul's crown of justice: she may have the two passages in mind, but the "life" concept seems a wider, better match in this case, and her vocabulary corresponds perhaps more closely to that of James 1:12 than to that of II Timothy 4:8. Either way, what is most striking is the displacement manifested by the sonnet compared to either source.

Sonnet LXXVI is addressed to a collective (the "confréries de pénitents"²⁹² present in Toulouse), whom she calls "Heureux troupeau" (9). Similarly, the addressees

²⁹⁰ Benoist (the confessor of Henri IV) had published a translation of the entire Bible in 1566, which was printed multiple times (including, as we saw above, a separate edition of *Le Nouveau Testament*). Winn refers to the original edition of *La Sainte Bible contenant le Vieil et Nouveau Testament, Traduite en François, selon la version commune. Par M. René Benoist, Angevin, Docteur Régent en la faculté de Théologie à Paris*. Paris: Chez Gabriel Buon, au Clos Bruneau, à l'enseigne Saint Claude, 1566. Caëtano thinks that Coignard may well, in fact, have read the Bible "dans la traduction de René Benoist" ("Comme nous dit tresbien ce bon Roy pénitent", les Psaumes de David dans les *Œuvres chrétiennes* de Gabrielle de Coignard" in *Graphè* (n°27): *Les Psaumes de David*. Arras: Artois presses université, 2018. p. 115, n. 12), and refers, for her part, to the 1568 bilingual edition, which prints the Latin text of the Vulgate alongside its French version: *La Sainte Bible: Contenant le Vieil et Nouveau testament, latin françois, chacune version correspondante l'une à l'autre, verset à verset. Avec annotations necessaires pour l'intelligence des lieux les plus difficiles: et Expositions contenant briefves et famillieres Resolutions et Observations tant des lieux qui ont esté depravez et corrompus par les heretiques de nostre temps, que de ceux qui ouvertement confirment la Foy et Religion Catholique. Aussi les figures et argumens sur chacun livre, declarans sommairement tout ce que y est contenu. Par M. René Benoist, Angevin, Docteur Regent en la faculté de Theologie à Paris*. A Paris: Chez Sebastien Nyvelle, aux Cicognes rue saint-Jaques. 1568. This is the edition that we will quote from in what follows.

²⁹¹ Revelation 4:10 also uses the image of a crown in the vision of twenty-four elders bowing before God and casting their crowns before His throne; but what they symbolize is not explained.

²⁹² About which see details in Winn's note 2, p. 232. Three such groups are active in the city in 1583.

of James 1, which we quote extensively below, are a group of individuals: “Mes freres” (v. 2) and, soon thereafter, the author describes “l’homme qui endure tentation” (v. 12) and the “faiseur de l’œuvre” (v. 25) as being “[b]ien-heureux” (vv. 12 and 25):

[1] Jaques serviteur de Dieu, et de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ aux douze lignees, qui sont esparses, salut. 2 Mes freres, tenez pour une parfaite joye, quand vous cherrez en diverses tentations: 3 Sçachans que **l’esprouve de vostre foy engendre patience**. 4 Mais il faut que **la patience ait une œuvre parfaite**: à fin que vous soyez parfaits et entiers de sorte que rien ne vous defaille. 5 Que si quelqu’un d’entre vous a faute de sapience, qu’il la demande à Dieu, qui la donne à tous abondamment, et qui ne la reproche point: et elle lui sera donnee: 6 Mais qu’il la demande en foy, ne doutant nullement: car celui qui doute, est semblable au flot de la mer, agité du vent, et demené. [...] 12 Bien-heureux est l’homme qui endure tentation: car quand il aura esté esprouvé, **il recevra la couronne de vie, que Dieu a promise à ceux qui l’aiment**. [...] 21 Parquoy rejettans toute vilenie, et superfluité de malice, recevez en douceur la parole plantee en vous, laquelle peut sauver vos ames: 22 Et soyez faiseurs de la parole, et non point seulement auditeurs, en vous decevant vous-mesmes. 23 Car si quelqu’un oit la p[a]role, **et ne la met point en effect**, il est semblable à l’homme qui considere en un miroir sa face naturelle: 24 Car s’estant consideré soy mesme, et s’en estant allé, il a incontinent oublié quel il estoit. 25 Mais celui qui aura regardé en la Loy parfaite, qui est de liberté, et **aura perseveré ainsi**, n’estant point auditeur oublieux, mais **faiseur de l’œuvre**: cestui-là sera bien-heureux en son fait. [...] 27 La religion pure et sans macule envers Dieu et le Pere, **est de visiter les orphelins, et les vefves en leurs tribulations**, et se garder sans estre souillé de ce monde.

(Epistre Catolique de saint Jaques apostre 1:1-27; 159 r^o-v^o)

Paul’s letter to Timothy, for its part, is addressed to one individual, similarly admonished to endure and perform:

[1] Je t’adjure donc devant Dieu, et devant Jesus Christ, qui jugera les vifs et les morts, en son advenement et regne: 2 Presche la parole, insiste en temps et hors temps, argue, tance, exhorte en toute douceur d’esprit, et doctrine. [...] 5 Mais toy, veille en toutes choses, **endure les afflictions, fay l’œuvre d’Evangliste**: ren ton administration approuvee, sois sobre. 6 Car de moy, je m’en vay maintenant estre sacrifié, et le temps de mon departement est prochain. 7 J’ay combatu le bon combat, j’ay achevé mon cours, j’ay gardé la foy. 8 Quant au reste, **la couronne de justice m’est gardee**, laquelle me rendra le Seigneur juste juge en ceste journee-là, et non seulement à moy, mais aussi à ceux qui aiment son advenement.

(II A Timotée 4:1-8; 124 v^o)

Coignard praises the manner in which her addressees inflict a variety of torments (extreme fasting, walking barefoot, flagellation, *etc.*) on themselves “pour surmonter ceste escorce charnelle” (11). She then exhorts them to persist in such “devotions” (12): the term refers specifically, in this case, to the practices in question. Both James and Paul

focus on (God-inspired) work, on the suffering that accompanies it, on the need for perseverance, and on the reward that will follow. The difference, of course, is that the works described by Coignard, typical of the catholicism of her time, are “austeritez” performed publicly and collectively for the sake of penitence; and that the suffering they entail is self-inflicted. The term “afflictions,” used in line 13 to refer to these torments, may have come from Paul: while Benoist uses it to gloss “tentations” in James 1:2, Paul himself encourages Timothy to endure “afflictions” (v. 5). The crown of justice has been reserved (“gardée”) for the writer and those who love the second coming of Christ: Benoist’s (very Catholic) gloss adds that “Ce lieu est tresmanifeste pour monstrier le merite et retribution **des bonnes œuvres** des Chrestiens” (*ibid.*). Coignard’s “Vous **recevrez** la couronne eternelle” (ln. 14) would seem to echo James, however: “il **recevra** la couronne de vie, que Dieu a promise à ceux qui l’aiment” (v. 12). Yet where Paul spoke of the hard “œuvre d’Evangliste” and James of visiting widows and orphans, with both authors insisting on the reward of “love” in the process, Coignard focuses on activities whose *very point* (instead of side effect) is the pain they cause, considered (in that it mortifies the flesh) as its own reason for reward.

Some of the themes and language incorporated in the sonnets that follow this one also seem to echo James 1; but, as we saw, it is risky to presume too much as far as the order of the poems is concerned. On the other hand, if Coignard held to a similar perspective as that preached by Luis de Granada, perhaps she would have allowed for her readers to (responsibly) read her sonnets in any sequence that they wish, especially if it is understood that the Holy Spirit will need to intervene and illuminate one’s mind no matter the text read or order of reading. Indeed, Granada’s manual allows for some

liberties to be taken on the part of the more advanced meditator. For example, in the passage entitled “Autre maniere d’oraisons, et meditations desquelles usent ceux qui sont les plus exercez,” Granada explains:

D’Avantage fault noter que celles meditations desquelles avons parlé au commencement pour tous les jours de la sepmaine, sont pour ceux qui ne font que s’adextre à tel exercice pour s’en aider comme d’une guide qui les conduise: mais estans exercez ne faut que aillent tousjours par une mesme voye, ains là où le S. Esprit les acheminera, lequel attire ses disciples de ceste escole pour aller à une meilleure: comme sont ceux qui viennent à la contemplation des perfections divines, afin de croistre par ceste consideration en l’amour de Dieu, comme de celui qui est infiniment bon, et liberal, et admirable en toutes ses œuvres. D’autres s’adonnent à contempler les saints escritz (qui est une mer d’infinies merveilles) ainsi que ont fait les saints docteurs, et plusieurs de ces bons peres qui ont vescu jadis és solitudes. Il y en a qui s’arrestent sur la meditation de ce qui leur est advenu, et de ce qu’ils ont experimenté de la grace, justice, et jugements du tout puissant en ses benefices, et providence à nous gouverner et conserver, et nous deffendre d’infinis dangers esquels nous pouvons tomber de jour à aultre. D’autres son plus allegez des fardeaux de ce monde, ostez de la trop grande speculation, ont de Dieu l’affection ouverte, afin que l’entendement estant en repos, la volonté s’arreste, et esjouisse en un seul Dieu, qui est son bien souverain: qui est l’estat parfait de la contemplation auquel il nous fault aspirer, comme au poinct où il a l’accomplissement de ce qu’il desire, disant avec l’espouse és Cantiques: j’ay trouvé celui que mon cœur ayme: je le tiens, et n’ay garde de le laisser.

(*Le vray chemin*, II, chapitre 5, titre 18, 330 r°- v°)

Winn also suggests in her notes to Sonnet LXXVI that Coignard’s “considérations sur les œuvres de charité” were “inspirées du *Traitté sur l’aumosne* de Louis de Grenade (*Le vray chemin*, fol. 332 et passim)” (233, n. 3)²⁹³. However, it is not entirely clear to us how this comment (and the reference) applies to this particular sonnet. While it is true that the penitential confreries would likely have conducted acts of charity – specifically works of “misericorde” and the distribution of alms –, such acts are not highlighted in the poem. If Coignard is indeed borrowing from Granada, we believe the content of her poem more closely reflects the messages and vocabulary found in Part II, Chapter 2, §10-12 of *Le vray chemin*. Chapter 2 is entitled “Des choses aidans à obtenir la vraye devotion: et premierement du grand desir d’icelle” (Granada 216 v°). To the subsections 10-12,

²⁹³ See “Troisiesme traité contenant les fruicts et efficace de l’aumosne et de la misericorde” (p. 402 r°).

Granada attributes the following titles, respectively: “De la dixiesme chose aidant à la devotion: à sçavoir la perseverance és bons exercices” (237 v^o), “De la unziesme chose servant à la devotion, qui sont le temps et lieu, et autres considerations y estans propres” (240 r^o), and “De la douziesme chose aydant à la devotion: qui sont les travaux et aspretez corporelles” (244 r^o). It is also possible that Coignard is borrowing from the handbook’s Part III (“Troisiesme partie consistant en la continuation et perseverance de l’oraison,” (366 r^o), second treatise (“Second traité contenant la vertu et efficace du jeusne et aspretez corporelles pour affoiblir la chair,” 371 v^o). The latter title reminds us that self-punishment was not merely designed to inflict pain in this life so as to earn bliss in the next, but to weaken the flesh and its imperious desires.

Also worthy of note in this sonnet is its very reference to a crown – a common image likely to evoke enticing notions of honor, power, and wealth alongside its impeccable Biblical credentials – instead of explaining more literally what the “guerdon” consists of, namely eternal life. While the phrase “la vie eternelle” appears elsewhere in Coignard’s poetry²⁹⁴, the image of a crown subtly enhances one’s sense of pleasure to be received in Heaven and, consequently, just like the “loyer” mentioned in line 7, this image of a crown may “adoucir l’aigreur” (ln. 8) of their extreme “devotions.” Finally, we must note how the author chooses to focus on her addressees and their practices rather than on God in this poem. In the first part of line 14, the *pénitents* are made to see *themselves receiving*, rather than *God giving*, the eternal crown. In fact, God is never explicitly mentioned in this poem (contrary to what happens in the two New Testament sources we quoted). Rather, the main focus in the poem rests upon the addressees and the

²⁹⁴ On which see our Chapter V in particular.

reward they can expect to receive for their penitential acts: the fact is that God may not be the primary recipient of such acts, at least not in the sense He would be in the case of direct offerings, or of gifts to the poor (who represent Him at all times).

The term “loyer” also appears in Sonnet XXX, at the end of which the poet exhorts her own exhausted heart:

Tousjours au cœur le souvenir me ronge,
Du temps heureux que je vay regrettant,
Où je vivois ayant l'esprit content,
Sans les ennuis où mon ame se plonge.

Tout le passé ne me semble qu'un songe,
Et le present s'eschappe en un instant,
Le souvenir me demeure pourtant,
Du bien, du mal, du vray, et du mensonge.

Mets en oubly, ô pauvre cœur lassé,
Tous les destroys auxquels tu as passé,
Et les plaisirs de ceste vie humaine.

Marche tout droit, de rien ne t'esbahis,
Voyant de loin le celeste pays
Qui t'est promis pour loyer de ta peine.
(Coignard 176)

Winn references Hebrews 12:12-14 in relation to this final stanza, and this is certainly an accurate pairing. However, Coignard's words appear to borrow from Hebrews 11:1-12:29 more broadly. Again it is useful to quote at some length:

CHAP. XI

[1] Or la Foy est un soustenement des choses qu'on espere, et une certification des choses qu'**on ne voit point**. [...] 6 Or il est impossible de plaire à Dieu sans Foy: car il faut que celui qui vient à Dieu, croye qu'il est, et qu'il est **remunérateur** à ceux qui le requierent. 7 Par Foy Noé apres qu'il fut divinement admonesté des choses lesquelles **ne se voyoyent point encores**, craignant, appareilla l'arche pour la sauveté de sa famille [...]. 8 Abraham estant appelé, obeit par Foy, pour **venir au lieu** qu'il devoit prendre en heritage, et **se partit, ne sachant où il alloit**. 9 Par Foy il **demeura** en la terre promise, comme estranger, habitant en des tentes avec Isaac et Jacob heritiers avec lui de la mesme promesse: 10 Car **il attendoit la cité** qui a fondement: et de laquelle Dieu est l'ouvrier et fondateur. [...] 13 Tous ceux-ci sont trespasés en Foy, n'ayans receu les promesses: mais les ayans **veuës de loin**, et saluées: et ayans confessé qu'ils estoient **estrangers et pelerins sur la terre**. 14 Car ceux qui disent ces

choses, demonstrent qu'ils cherchent **leur païs**. 15 Et certes **s'ils eussent eu memoire de celui dont ils estoient sortis**, ils avoyent temps pour y retourner: 16 **Mais ils en desirerent un meilleur, c'est à dire, le celeste**. Parquoy Dieu mesme ne prend point à honte d'estre appelé leur Dieu: car il leur a préparé une cité. [...] 24 Par Foy Moyse estant ja grand refusa d'estre nommé fils de la fille de Pharaon: 25 Elisant plustost d'estre **affligé avec le peuple de Dieu**, que d'avoir pour un peu de temps **les delices de peché**: 26 Estimant l'opprobre de Christ plus grandes richesses, que les thresors qui estoient en Egypte: car il avoit **esgard à la remuneration**. [...] 39 Et tous ceux-là ayans obtenu tesmoignage par foy, n'ont point receu la promesse: 40 Dieu ayant pourveu **quelque chose meilleure pour nous**, à fin qu'ils ne vinssent à perfection sans nous.

CHAP. XII

[1] Nous Donc aussi, veu que nous sommes environnés de si grande nuee de tesmoins, oston toute charge, et le peché qui nous environne, et **par patience poursuivons la course** qui nous est proposee; [...] 7 Si vous endurez chastement, Dieu s'offre à vous comme à ses enfans: car qui est l'enfant que le Pere ne chastie point? 8 Si donc vous estes sans chastement, duquel tous sont participans, vous estes bastards, et non point fils. 9 Et puis que nous avons eu pour chastieurs les peres de nostre chair, et nous les avons en reverence: ne serons-nous point beaucoup plus sujets au Pere des esprits, et vivrons? 10 Car ceux-là nous chastioient pour peu de temps, comme bon leur sembloit, mais cestui-ci nous chastie pour nostre profit, à fin que nous soyons participans de sa sainteté. 11 Or tout chastement sur l'heure ne semble point estre de joye, ains de tristesse: mais puis apres il rend **fruict paisible de justice** à ceux qui sont exercés par icelui. 12 Levez donc vos mains qui sont lasches, et vos genoux qui sont desjoins: 13 Et **faites les sentiers droits à vos pieds: à fin que aucun clochant ne se desvoye**, mais que plustost il soit remis en son entier. 14 Suivez paix avec tous, et sainteté, sans laquelle nul ne verra le Seigneur: [...] 22 Ains vous estes venus à **la montagne de Sion, et à la cité du Dieu vivant, la Jerusalem celeste, et à la frequence de beaucoup de milliers d'Anges**, 23 Et à **l'Eglise des premiers qui sont escrits és cieux, et à Dieu, qui est Juge de tous, et aux esprits des justes parfaits**: 24 Et à **Jesus Mediateur du nouveau testament, et au sang espandu**, parlant mieux que celui d'Abel. [...] 28 Parquoy prenans **le royaume qui ne peut estre esbranlé**, retenons la grace, par laquelle nous servions à Dieu, tellement que lui soyons agreables avec reverence et crainte.

([Epistre de saint Paul Apostre] Aux Hebreux XI.1-XII.28)²⁹⁵

Much of the vocabulary of Coignard's poem that is also found in the above passages: "temps" (2), "esprit" (3), "demeur" (7), "droit" (12) "de loin" (13), "celeste" (13), "pays" (13), and "promis" (14). In addition, actions, terms, or expressions such as "coeur" (1 and 9), "souvenir" (1 and 7), "me ronge" (1), "heureux" (2), "content" (3), "ennuis" (4), "passé" (5 and 10), "le present s'eschappe en un instant" (6), "Mets en oubly" (9), "destrois" (10), "plaisirs de ceste vie humaine" (11), "Marche tout droit, de

²⁹⁵ *La Sainte Bible*, trans. Benoist, vol. 3, 132 r°-133 v°.

rien ne t'esbahis" (12), "Voyant de loin le celeste pays" (13), "loyer" (14), and "peine" (14) find close equivalents in the text we quoted²⁹⁶. When read in juxtaposition with those excerpts from Hebrews, however, Sonnet XXX stands out with respect to what it seems to leave out: the word "foy" – to which the passages from Hebrews are entirely dedicated – is missing. Its presence is all the more implied in the tercets, however, as it is clear that the pivot presupposed by the exhortation, and the straight walking that should ensue, could not occur without faith. Another, different omission concerns the reward. The basic elements are there: the celestial country was promised, and will be reached by the faithful. At the moment, though, it is only seen from afar. Chapter 11 of Hebrews speaks of the earthly land promised by God to Abraham, as well as of its celestial counterpart, of which it is merely the foreshadow. The key notion is that the promise made to the patriarchs of the Old Testament was not entirely fulfilled in spite of all their faith, and will not be until something *even better*, a true "perfection" (v. 40) is fully accomplished by the New Alliance. Most exemplary is the case of Moses, who, correctly esteeming "l'opprobre de Christ [...] plus grandes richesses, que les thresors qui estoyent en Egypte" because he was focused on the true "remuneration" (v. 26), guided his people through the desert – but was not allowed to cross into the earthly promised land.

Chapter 12, by contrast, focuses on the celestial reward, which it names and locates with increasing force and precision: the faithful are heading for (and will reach)

²⁹⁶ Though they may have very different implications. For example, the "souvenir" that "me demeure" (ln. 7) carries quite negative connotations in Sonnet XXX; she would rather not have that memory "demeurer" (*i.e.*, remain, reside, dwell) in her heart and, within this particular sonnet, there is no allusion to that memory ever disappearing, even when she does eventually mention a celestial country that will be the "loyer" (ln. 14) for her pain. By contrast, the verb "demeurer" is used, in Heb. 11:9, in a more positive scenario: "Par Foy il demeura en la terre promise, comme estranger." This act of dwelling is framed differently in the Biblical passage; it is, in fact, something temporary, to be experienced while Abraham awaits the time when he can reside eternally, in "la cité qui a fondement" (11:10), "le royaume qui ne peut estre esbranlé" (12:28), where all things "qui sont immuables demeurent" (12:27).

“la montagne de Sion, [...] la cité du Dieu vivant, la Jerusalem celeste” (v. 22). Most importantly, they will not merely arrive at a *place* (a celestial mountain or city): what is emphasized is that they will end up in the company of Angels, of the true Church, of the souls of the Just; in the presence of God and that of Jesus. Such is “le royaume qui ne peut estre esbranlé” (v. 28). In Sonnet XXX, Coignard does not allow herself to go that far: the poem ends on a note of humility. Faith in the “remuneration” does not always allow one to name and describe it as though it were already obtained. Yet the sonnet’s apparent omission in this regard also incites us to read it as one component of a larger meditation sequence, comprised, in our opinion, of sonnets XXI-XLVI. While the order of these particular sonnets does not strictly follow the sequence of vocabulary or topics presented in Hebrews 11-12, numerous correspondances can be established²⁹⁷. Thus, we may rely on other sonnets within the sequence to emphasize desire for, and faith in: justice (*cf.* Heb. 11:7 and 12:11 with sonnets XXVIII and XXXII), resurrection (*cf.* Heb. 11:35 with sonnets XXII and XXXV), frequenting Angels (*cf.* Heb. 12:22 with Sonnet XXXVII), frequenting just and perfect spirits (*cf.* Heb. 12:22-23 with sonnets XXIII, XXXII, XXXVII-XXXVIII, and XLVI), frequenting God Himself (*cf.* Heb. 12:23 with Sonnet XXV), frequenting Jesus (*cf.* Heb. 12:24 with sonnet XXXIX), and even frequenting Jesus’ blood (*cf.* Heb. 12:24 with sonnets XXII, XXVI, and XLII).

Coignard generally frames celestial goods or pleasures in terms of reward for one’s willful, deliberate suffering and sacrifice (as opposed to the general suffering that is

²⁹⁷ For example, sonnets XXI-XXIII and Sonnet XXVI echo the exhortation, in Hebrews 12:2-3, to look at Jesus and to diligently consider his sacrifice and suffering. The call to have courage and endure insults and other injustices or persecutions evoked in sonnets XXIV, XXVIII, XXIX, and XXXII echo Hebrews 11:36, 12:4-11. Sonnet XXVI echoes the state of God’s people wandering as foreigners in difficult places on this earth highlighted in Hebrews 11:13 and 12:38.

inherent in our condition). In Sonnet CVII, for example, the poet could have emphasized the *freedom* that is presently experienced by her addressees, but she does not:

Vous portez à bon droit la couleur azurée,
Monstrant que dans le ciel reposent vos desirs,
Separant vostre coeur de tous mondains plaisirs
Pour avoir du haut Dieu une joye asseurée.

Tout ce qui est beau et de longue durée,
Est diapré de bleu comme les beaux saphirs,
La mer en est aussi quand les mouvans zephirs
Lui donnent la couleur de la voute aetherée.

Sainte société qui par mille labeurs,
Jeusnes, austeritez, regrets, sanglots et pleurs,
Mandiez nuit et jour l'amour de vostre maistre:

Aux douleurs de sa croix vous vous glorifiez,
En luy sacrifiant vos corps mortifiez,
Pour les faire avec luy en la gloire renaistre.
(267-268)

Inserting “à bon droit” (1) into the first line, the poet affirms the confraternity of Pénitents bleus for wearing the color blue since it points to the spiritual realities that “dans le ciel reposent vos desirs” (2) and they have *separated* – rather than *freed* – their hearts “de tous mondains plaisirs” (3). The apparent motivation for such behavior on their part is named in the fourth line. Rather than stating that they do this to please God or for God’s sake, the poet explains that they do this “Pour avoir du haut Dieu une joye asseurée” (4). The closing tercets once again highlight various sacrifices²⁹⁸ borne by the group, but they remind the addressees that such sacrifices are carried out “Pour les [*i.e.*, “vos corps” (13)] faire avec luy [*i.e.*, Jesus] en la gloire renaistre” (S. CVII, 14, 268).

These examples show that the poet is not advocating that we disinterestedly or stoically obey, serve, and pursue God simply because such acts are good, nor even

²⁹⁸ “[...] mille labeurs, / Jeusnes, austeritez, regrets, sanglots et pleurs, / [...] sacrifiant vos corps mortifiez” (S. CVII, lns. 9-10 and 13, Coignard 268).

because they are in the interest of God's own sake. Rather, Coignard seems to endorse embracing pain, focusing on and pursuing Heaven, and loving and serving God, at least in part because she believes in the potential reward of eternal life. The latter will entail repose and joy (two goods for which pleasure is the prominent underlying element). On the other hand, there are instances (some more explicit than others) suggesting that Coignard, as a "Chrestienne" (S. II, 11) affirming her "foy catholique" (S. XXVIII, 4)²⁹⁹, seeks to avoid ambiguity and insists that God is the one and only sovereign good. Some of these cases also convey her perception that, as one expression of God's abundant goodness and love, God imbues goodness and value into all other things, starting of course with His creation of the natural world. We see this, for example, in Sonnet XCI³⁰⁰:

Mes yeux sont esblouys de veoir la difference
Des champs, preys, bois et fleurs, herbes et arbrisseaux,
Rivieres et rochers, fontaines et ruisseaux,
Edifices pierreux, des hommes l'assurance.

Et le jour se rouant par si grand temperance,
Mene l'obscur nuict ornée de flambeaux;
Tout ce qu'on voit créé sont de rares tableaux,
Qui nous peuvent donner une douce esperance.

Voyant **ce grand ouvrier** si soigneux des mortels,
Donnant si largement ses presens temporels,
Mesmes aux transgresseurs de ses loix equitables.^[301]

Tout ce grand univers pour nous il a basti,
A nos necessitez l'ayant assubjecty,
Nous gardant puis apres des places immuables.
(249)

²⁹⁹ On Coignard's and Marquets' respective anti-Protestant stances, see our pp. 3, n. 9; 112; 251, n. 386; and 287.

³⁰⁰ This concept is also alluded to in sonnets LXVIII and XCIII, as well as the first 8 stanzas of *De la gloire et felicité de la vie eternelle* (see below, Chapter V). Compare Marquets, *Sonets spirituels*, S. CCLXXXV, p. 254 (our felicity is, by extension, an expression of God's love, since He made it possible).

³⁰¹ On this theme, see also: pp. 339 vv. 25-28 and p. 587 vv. 6-7 (God even allows miserable sinners to enjoy the pleasure of God-given goods in Nature).

Consequently, readers may come to understand that the goods (including the pleasure(s) of beatitude, eternal life, repose, and joy) that Coignard celebrates, envisions, and hopes for are evoked less as part of an explicit moral imperative but, rather, as part of an arsenal of rhetorical devices intended to sweeten one's immediate experience of suffering, to draw one to desire union with God, to teach one about who God is, and to prepare one to focus on, thank, and give glory to that very God.

Coignard's imperative, as we have seen, is to love God, rather than merely knowing or obeying Him. This imperative implies, of course, that I know that "mon Redempteur" was "Crucifié pour moy" (S. CXXIV, 7)³⁰², but love is perceived and presented as a step *beyond* knowledge in a sonnet we already quoted. It is experienced in both the mind and the senses, and made manifest in her desire to praise Him:

Je ne veux rien sçavoir, pour sçavante paroistre,
Tres-heureux est celuy qui ne cognoist que soy,
Nous voulons tout sçavoir jusqu'aux secrets du Roy,
Les moeurs de nos voisins, le reglement du cloistre.

Ces curiositez font en nos ames croistre
Des mescontentements plains d'ennuyeux esmoy,
Rien que mon Redempteur Crucifié pour moy,
Je ne veux escouter, rien je ne veux cognoistre.

Venez doncques, Seigneur, posseder tous mes sens,
Attirez mes esprits, hà! desja je me sens
Plaine d'un chaut desir de vous louer sans cesse.

Je n'ay rien de ma part que ce foible vouloir,
Armez moy s'il vous plaist d'un asseuré pouvoir,
Et pour sauver mon ame animez ma foiblesse.^[303]

(S. CXXIV, 288-290)

³⁰² Cf. Job 19:25 and 27-28, as well as 1 Tim. 2.

³⁰³ For line 14, cf. 2 Cor 11:30, 12:5 and 12:9.

In other words, the imperative is to move beyond the intellectual and ritual aspects of her religion and, instead, to sincerely and emotionally adore Him. It is no surprise that pleasure can be an effective tool for inciting and increasing such affection.

Such an increase is not problematic, contrary to what happens in the case of human desires and rewards (the more we want, the less happy we are):

Or le tiers ennemy qui nous est si revesche,
Et qui fait en nos cueurs une mortelle bresche,
Se nomme Amorrean, plein d'avare desir,
Chassant bien loin de nous toute joye et plaisir,
Pour paistre ses souhaits d'avare convoitise,
Et fleschir les genoux à la richesse acquise
Par des moyens pervers, injustes et meschants,
De qui nous recevrons de divers chastiments:
Car nous courons apres d'un cueur insatiable
A tout ce qui n'est rien que songe perissable;
Et n'a jamais repos l'avare ambition
D'agiter nos esprits de toute emotion.
C'est ce vieux ennemy qui tousjours nous tourmente,
Et plus a ce qu'il veut et moins il se contente.

(*Sommaire de sept sermons faitz par Monsieur Eimond*³⁰⁴, 91-104, 610-611)

Increasing one's desire for Heaven's "jouyssance" faces no such limit in principle:

O triomphante cité,
O heureuse demeurence,
Que mon coeur soit incité
A chercher ta jouyssance.

(*De la gloire et felicité de la vie eternelle*, 191-196, 349)

Yet it does in practice, due to another form of our weakness. But Sonnet XC has no trouble recovering, thanks to "charité" (13), from the fact that our love – even for God – may, naturally, ebb and flow in this lifetime:

Seigneur, si quelque fois mon amour diminue,
Et de ton feu divin mon coeur se refroidit,
L'on ne peut pas tousjours aussi comme l'on dit,
Estre en un mesme estat et force continue.

³⁰⁴ The complete title is: *Sommaire de sept sermons faitz par Monsieur Eimond, contre les sept pechez mortels, pour les sept estatz de la ville de Tolose, devant les sept corps des apostres à Sainct Sernin.*

Il n'est rien d'asseuré qui soit dessoubz la nue,
 Mesme l'astre nuictal descroit et s'arrondit,
 Ainsi quand peu à peu mon desir s'attiedit,
 Je sens un vray regret de ma faute cognue.

Or tant que la grand mer nourrira des poissons,
 Et l'esté chaleureux meurira les moissons,
 Et les bois porteront leurs espesses ramées,

Je te louray, Seigneur, et la posterité
 Lira des vers de moy, qui chauds de charité,
 Rendront de ton amour nos ames enflammées.

(S. XC, 248)

Yet Coignard's language is careful to maintain a discrepancy between the expressions "mon amour" (1), "mon desir" (7), "des vers de moy" (13) on the one hand, and the expression "ton amour" (14) on the other. It is as if, within this subtle shift in phrasing, Coignard is admitting that *her own* desire or love for God will never suffice; it is only the *Lord's love* that He must be willing to place within the human being's heart that will increase upon reading these lines of poetry.

That the Lord's love comes from and represents the highest good seems self-evident – but is not, in fact, an unproblematic proposition, as Valla has taught us³⁰⁵. There may be reason why Coignard, ever ready to celebrate "charité," remains quite careful when it comes to naming her "bien souverain"; to using this very phrase. The following two sections will closely examine Sonnet XXV, which happens to be the sole poem of hers in which she specifically refers to God as the "sovereign good." First, we shall look at the content of the poem and consider the place and roles of pleasure as they relate to this unique reference. Second, we shall analyze the form of the poem, comparing it to other sonnets (both religious and secular) written by some of Coignard's (relative)

³⁰⁵ See above, Chapter I, pp. 87-88, a comment to that effect by Lodi Nauta.

contemporaries who make use of a similar formal device. This comparative analysis helps to “frame” the specific performance of this particular sonnet, but also to shed light on the ways in which Coignard’s expression of love and what is “good” about it is similar to, or distinctive from, the expressions articulated by writers of her time.

Sonnet XXV and the sovereign good: a case study (1)

Coignard’s collection of poems contains only one exact French equivalent to the Latin expression “summum bonum.” This expression is situated in the final line of the heavily anaphoric³⁰⁶ Sonnet XXV, addressed by the poet to her God³⁰⁷:

O de tous mes labeurs, le repos desirable,
O de tous mes desirs, le désiré bon-heur,
O de tout mon espoir, et le comble et l’honneur,
O de tous mes plaisirs, la joye perdurable.

O de tout mon pouvoir, la force secourable,
O de tous mes biensfaits, le liberal donneur,
O de tous mes desseins, le sage gouverneur,
O de tous mes dangers, le Sauveur favorable.

O le tout de mon tout, ô ma fin et mon but,
O celui qui conduis mon ame à son salut,
O pere liberal à qui je dois mon estre.

O humain Redempteur qui as souffert pour nous,
O tres-haut Fils de Dieu qui t’es fait nostre espous,
O seul bien souverain, à toy seul je veux estre.

(S. XXV, 170-171)

³⁰⁶ As noted by Gregg, Coignard demonstrates a predilection for anaphora – a device used for emotional emphasis, and a favorite of the Psalmist (supposedly King David, the very model of the penitential heart); see e.g. sonnets XL, LXX, and LXXIII. She is also fond of vocative interjections and apostrophes, which amplify the “fervor and immediacy of her poetic supplications” (Gregg 14). On the function of repetition and the use of this particular rhetorical device by baroque and mystic writers, see also Clément’s *Une poétique de crise*, pp. 255-261.

³⁰⁷ Although the “bien souverain” is most clearly associated here with the “Fils de Dieu” (13), the “pere liberal” (11) would normally address the first person of the Trinity. Winn’s edition places a period at the end of line 11, even though the original 1594 and 1595 publications show a colon there instead of a period. Coignard’s conflation of God the Father and God the Son is more obviously expressed in the opening quatrain of Sonnet LXII: “Tu es [...] / Mon pere, mon espoux, ma foy, mon esperance” (1 and 4).

We should recognize from the outset that Coignard, in addition to what she writes in as many words here, does seem to *allude* to the sovereign good elsewhere in her work. For example, in Sonnet XXXVII, the poet prays to her namesake, the archangel Gabriel, asking that he guide his “Gabrielle [...] / Au seul bien, seul amour, dont son cœur est espris” (6 and 8, 183). While Coignard does not fully expound upon exactly what that “seul bien” is in this sonnet, she does refer to it as “luy” (9) and we learn that it/He can be accessed after her departure from “la vie mortelle” (7) – obviously in Heaven, where there is “la gloire eternelle” (3) and “le saint troupeau des biens-heureux esprits” (4). In light of sonnets XXV, LXII, and XCVII, where, respectively, the “seul bien souverain” (S. XXV, 14) is undoubtedly God (8 and 11-13), Coignard’s “portion” (S. LXII, 1) and her “tout” (7) are both clearly God (the Father (4) and son (4 and 5)), and the “but de nostre confiance” (S. XCVII, 8) is explicitly the “Seigneur” (1), it seems obvious that God is also the “seul bien” mentioned in ln. 8 of Sonnet XXXVII.

Furthermore, Sonnet XXIV would suggest that the poet owes her existence to God because she is His “creature” (12), and Sonnet CXVII suggests that God is her (and the) highest good because He is the sole creator of all things and dispenser of all good, thus imbuing all things with good:

Dieu a tout fait par temps, par nombre et par mesure,
Luy mesme est le niveau, la regle et le compas,
Il dispose tout bien, [...],
(“Consummatum est,” S. CXVII, 1-3, 280)

Later, in the *Imitation de la victoire de Judich*, the poet beautifully describes God as

[...] un seul Dieu qui a faict toutes choses,
Et les tient en sa main providemment encloses,
Donnant lumiere au jour, voilant l’obscur nuict,
Faisant naistre les biens que la terre produit.
Pere de tous vivans, conservateur du monde,

Eternel infiny, qui voit, cognoit et sonde
 Tout ce qui est passé, present et à venir,
 (355-361, 388)

In *La Mort et Passion de nostre Seigneur sur le Mont de Calvaire*, Coignard enjoins her soul and heart to look upon Jesus on the Cross, acknowledging Him as the one who gave being to all creation:

Mon ame et toy, mon coeur, hausse ta foible veue,
 Et voy du fils de Dieu la puissance cogneue.
Celuy qui a donné l'estre et le mouvement,
Et tout ce que³⁰⁸ se voit dedans ce firmament,
 Qui decora le ciel de sa grand couverture,
 Les arbres de feuillages et les fleurs de peinture,
 (89-94, 525-526)

She also recognizes God as the cause of her flourishing and health in sonnets IV, V, XII, XIX, XXXI, and XLIX.

Conversely, according to Sonnet LVI, God can also reduce her to nothingness.

Echoing the humble words of Abraham, David, and Job³⁰⁹, she acknowledges:

Tu as basti mon corps de chair, d'os et tendons,
 De peau, veines et sang, ratte, foye et poulmons,
 Souviens toy, Seigneur, que je suis pouldre et cendre,

Comme un festu poussé par la rigueur du vent,
Tu me peux basloyer et reduire à neant,
 (9-13, 206)

³⁰⁸ This relative pronoun is changed to "qui" in the 1595 edition.

³⁰⁹ Abraham's prayer (as translated by Benoist, 1568 edition of *La Sainte Bible*): "Adonc Abraham respondit, disant, Puis que une fois j'ay commencé, je parleray à mon Seigneur, combien que je soye poudre et cendre:" ([Le premier livre de Moyse, dict] Genese XVIII.27; vol. 1, 11 r°). David's song: "Car il a cognu dequoy nous sommes formez[.] Il a eu souvenance que nous sommes pouldre" (Le livre des Pseaumes de David CII.14; vol. 2, 38 v°). Job's prayer: "Pourtant je me repren moy-mesme: et fai [*sic*] penitence en la poudre, et en cendre" (Le livre de Job XLII.6; vol. 1, 420 r°). Note: although Winn identifies this verse as verse 5 instead of 6 (Coignard p. 206, n. 4), it is verse 6 in the 1568 edition that we used. Winn also notes (p. 206, n. 5) similar imagery used in Coignard's line 12 as that which we find in the first half of Job 21:18 ("Ilz seront comme les pailles devant le vent" (Le livre de Job XXI.18; vol. 1, 410 v°)), in Psalm 1:5 ("Les meschants ne sont point ainsi, ilz ne sont pas ainsi: mais comme la pouldre, laquelle le vent poulse de dessus la Terre" (Le livre des Pseaumes de David I.5; vol. 2, 2 v°)), and in the second half of Psalm 82:13 ("Comme la paille devant la face du vent" (*idem*, LXXXII.13, 31 v°)); the edition that Winn uses contains the word "l'esteule" instead of "la paille" for this verse, which is interesting because Coignard writes of "[...] une seiche estouble" in line 5 of the same sonnet).

Since Sonnet XXV is the only poem in which Coignard explicitly identifies God as the “bien souverain,” however, it makes sense to take a closer look at what (and what else) is communicated in this significant poem.

– *The place of pleasure*

One thing that is particularly striking about Sonnet XXV as a whole is the fact that “repos” (1), “bon-heur” (2), “plaisirs” (4), and “joye” (4) are all terms concentrated in the first quatrain. The pleasure of repose is also implied in the second quatrain, as the author writes of “la force secourable” (5) (presumably coming to her aid in the face of spiritual threats but even, more basically, inasmuch as she is capable of doing anything) and of “le Sauveur favorable” (8), who saves her from all her perils, starting with her own sins. Hence, pleasure, in its various forms, is clearly the first and most spontaneous expression of what the poet is celebrating, seeking, and associating with her God – the “seul bien souverain” (14), and it often tends to be expressed in terms implying repose after some kind of movement, tension, or hardship. Yet the sonnet’s fourth line adds pleasure itself to the list, first in the plural on the human side (aligned with “labeurs,” “desirs,” etc.), then in the supreme form it achieves in and with God: “joye” – or beatitude, a form of “perdurable” pleasure that is no longer experienced by comparison with something negative. The apotheosis of spiritual pleasure is no longer pleasure as commonly understood (let us recall that Epicurus defines pleasure as the absence of pain). Yet the poem does not end here: in fact it has barely begun, and will go on to characterize the “seul bien souverain” with another series of approximations.

This sequence is somewhat duplicated in Sonnet LXII where much of Sonnet XXV is condensed in enumerative form into the first two quatrains and certainty concerning eternal salvation seems ever-present. In this case there is no privilege of “joye” over “plaisir,” but the enumeration of quasi-synonymic goods leads to a stark distinction between degrees of enjoyment. The poet merits nothing but persists in hoping to attain – expresses herself as though attaining – that which she desires nevertheless. She does not deserve the ultimate pleasures, but she does desire their crumbs, permitting basic, simple satisfaction and sustenance as she waits and hopes for more:

Tu es ma portion, mon loier, ma fiance,
 Mon appuy, mon repos, mon amour, mon desir,
 Ma consolation, ma joye, mon plaisir,
 Mon pere, mon espoux, ma foy, mon esperance,

Mon liberal Sauveur, ma force, ma constance,
 D’où je ne veux jamais mon ame dessaisir.
 Puis que tu es mon tout, escoute le souspir,
 Qui sans oser parler te faict tres-humble instance.^[310]

Je ne merite^[311] pas d’avoir ce doux accueil,
 Comme tes familiers regardes de bon œil,
 Ny les saintes douceurs des ames favorittes,

Ny les contentemens des divins mets du ciel,
 Trop indigne je suis de goustier de ce miel,^[312]

³¹⁰ It may seem surprising, if not ironic, that the poet continues to speak after having humbly requested that God listen to the “souspir” she lets out “sans oser parler” (lns. 7-8). This is a *topos* of love rhetoric (whether of the sacred or profane sort), a form of preterition assuming the inexpressible. In this case the literal space between lines 8 and 9 provides a temporal space for a wordless sigh to take place, just before a humble, faith-filled persistence is evinced throughout the remainder of the sonnet. Cf. lines 11-14 of Ronsard’s Chanson XXI in the *Nouvelle continuation des amours* (published in 1556): “Quand je veux raconter mes douleurs / Et de quel feu en te servant je meurs / Et quel venin desseche ma moüelle, / Ma voix tremblote, et ma langue chancelle, / Mon cueur tressault, et mon sang au dedans / Est tout troublé de gros souspirs ardents. / Sur mes genoulz se sied une gelée, / Jusqu’aux talons une sueur salée / De tout mon corps comme un fleuve se suit, / Et sur mes yeux nage une obscure nuit: / Tanseulement mes larmes abondantes / Sont les tesmoings de mes flames ardentes, / De mon amour, et de ma foy aussi, / **Qui sans parler te demandent mercy**” (Ronsard, ed. Weber 233-234).

³¹¹ Cf. Marquets’ “Sonet 16”: “Mais quoy? j’entends par ta benignité, / Car je sçay bien que je n’ay merité / Une si sainte et digne recompense” (“Pour aspirer au royaume celeste.” *Divines poësies*, 12-14, p. 63).

³¹² Cf. Sonnet CCXII in Marquets’ *Sonets spirituels*, fourth and final sonnet “Pour le dimanche de l’Octave de Pasques”: “Après avoir passé les festes solennelles / Du triumphe de Christ, pour nous ressuscité, / Pour n’eslongner de nous les graces supernelles. / **Ayant gousté le miel des joyes eternelles**, / N’allons plus

Je veux tant seulement des miettes petites.
(S. LXII, 213-214)

Winn (213, n. 1) refers us to four biblical passages in which the English expression “portion” (translated as “part” in French and “pars” in Latin) is used in reference to God: “la part” (Lam. 3:24 and Ps. 16:5), “ma part” (Ps. 73:26), and “ma portion” (Ps. 119:57). However, after examining the vocabulary and overall message(s) of these passages and, additionally, of Psalm 142:5 – in which “ma portion” is used as well – we would like to posit that Coignard is most likely borrowing from Psalm 16:1-11 and Psalm 73:23-28 (15:1-11 and 72:23-28, respectively, in Benoist’s translation) rather than from the others referred to by Winn.

In the prefatory notes to his translation of Psalm 15, Benoist writes:

1 En ferme confiance il demande le secours de Dieu. 5 auquel il remet **tout son bien**, appuy et protection, 6 luy rendant graces de tant de biens receuz de luy, 8. Proteste estre par de toute idolatrie, monstrant la confusion de ceux qui la suyvent, 10. En fin prophetise de la resurrection de Jesus Christ, 11. De la-quelle nous vient toute felicité, suyvant ce qui est escrit au 2. et 13. chapitre [*sic*] des Actes.

(*La Sainte Bible*, vol. 2, 6 r°)

The translated biblical passage then follows:

1 Michtam de David. [2] Seigneur, garde moy, car j’ay eu esperance en toy: j’ay dict au Seigneur, **tu es mon Dieu**, car tu n’as point affaire de mes biens. 3 Il a faict toutes mes volontez merueilleuses, és saintz qui sont en la terre d’iceluy. 4 Leurs infirmités ont esté multipliees, et puis apres ilz se sont hastez. Je n’assembleray point leurs congregations de sang: et n’auray point memoire de leurs noms par mes levres. 5 **Le Seigneur est la part de mon heritage** et de mon hanap: tu es celuy qui me restitueras mon heritage. 6 Les cordeaux me sont escheuts en lieux excellens: car certainement mon heritage m’est tresnoble. 7 Je beniray le Seigneur lequel m’a donné entendement, avec ce mes reins m’ont chastie jusques à la nuict. 8 Je preveoie [*sic*] tousjours le Seigneur en ma presence: car il est à ma dextre, afin que **je ne soye troublé**. 9 Partant [*sic*] **mon cœur s’est esjouy**, et **ma langue a eu liesse**, et en **oultre ma chair reposera en esperance**. 10 Car tu ne delaisseras point mon ame en enfer: et ne permettras que ton saint voye corruption. 11 Tu m’as faict cognoistre **les voyes de vie**: tu m’empliras de liesse avec ta face, delices (sont) en ta dextre perpetuellement.

rechercher le fiel d’iniquité, / Ains vivons en tout temps en telle integrité / Qu’en fin nous parvenions aux **joyes eternelles**” (1-8, pp. 212-213). If the repetition of “joyes eternelles” (present in the original edition) is not pure mistake on the part of the author or the printer, it risks the appearance of extreme clumsiness to emphasize that we cannot entertain the notion of having another goal once we have “tasted” this one.

(Pseaume XVI.1-11; vol. 2, 6 r°)

In the Latin version accompanying this French translation, we are provided the following for verse 5: “*Dominus pars haereditatis meae, et calicis mei, tu es qui restitues haereditatem meam mihi*” (*ibid.*). Also, in the margin of fol. 6 r°, we read the following gloss for the phrase “la part de mon heritage et de mon hanap” (v. 5): “Il entend par ceste forme de parler, que **Dieu est son tout et seul bien**” (*ibid.*).

Additionally, we may appreciate how Benoist’s translation of Psalm 72:27 highlights the notion of being joined to God, as opposed to being in God’s presence or seeing His face:

23 Tu as tenu ma main dextre: et m’as mené à ta volonté, et m’as receu avec gloire. 24 Car quelle chose ay je au Ciel? et hors de toy qu’ay je voulu sur la Terre? 25 Ma chair et mon cœur est defaillly: le Dieu de mon cœur, et Dieu est ma part eternellement, 26 Car voicy, ceux qui s’esloignent de toy, periront: tu as destruit tous ceux qui se donnent à autre qu’a toy. 27 Mais **il m’est bon d’estre conjoint à Dieu**, et mettre au Seigneur Dieu mon esperance. 28 A fin que j’annonce toutes tes predications és portes de la fille de Sion.

(Pseaume LXXII.23-28; vol. 2, 27 v°)

Coignard’s line 6 (“D’où je ne veux jamais mon ame dessaisir,” S. LXII, 213) seems to echo verse 27 of Psalm 72 more closely, even though lines 9-11 of the same sonnet bring us back to the closing words of Psalm 15:11: “tu m’empliras de liesse avec ta face, delices (sont) en ta dextre perpetuellement.” Despite the fact that the poet is not yet sensing nor even aspiring to enjoy the kind regard that Jesus bestows upon his “familiers” (10) nor the “sainctes douceurs” (11) and “contentemens des divins mets du ciel” (12) that come from Him, her evocation of Jesus’ kind gaze leaves readers with some faint impression of His face and, by extension, of His presence. Her evocation of

the “douceurs” and “contentemens” also seem to resonate well with the notion of the “delices” that are perpetually in God’s right hand, according to Psalm 15:11³¹³.

As we saw in Sonnet XXV, one will notice that the terms repos (2), joye (3), and plaisir (3) are again concentrated – but this time without a clear hierarchy – in the first quatrain of Sonnet LXII. They then become implied, remotely or not, in line 5, where we encounter the words “sauveur” and “force.” The notion of marriage is evoked by the term “espoux” in line 4, rather than in the tercets. Next, the poet moves beyond these concepts by writing of heavenly pleasures experienced by the saints, which she will then humbly contrast with her own situation. To recapitulate the parallels between the two poems, we offer the following:

Son. XXV:

repos (1)
desirs (2)
espoir (3)
plaisirs (4)
joye (4)
force (5)
liberal (6) (11)
Sauveur (8)
mon tout (9)
mon ame (10)
O pere (11)
nostre espoux (13)
à toy seul je veux (14)

Son. LXII:

repos (2)
desir (2)
esperance (4)
plaisir (3)
joye (3)
force (5)
liberal (5)
sauveur (5)
mon tout (7)
mon ame (6)
mon pere (4)
mon espoux (4)
je ne veux (6), je veux tant seulement (14)

We appreciate the complexity of the existence the poet is attempting to navigate – one that requires the active agency involved in desiring the highest pleasures while also

³¹³ Sonnet LXII may also have been inspired by Granada’s advice in “De la preparation requise avant l’oraison” (*Le vray chemin*, I, ch. 5), where an analogy illustrates the appropriate posture and frame of mind for those preparing to come to the Lord in prayer: “Voy quel est **un chien devant la table de son maistre**, ayant yeux et corps attentifs, esperant **quelque petit morceau de la table**: car ainsi te dois tu presenter devant la riche table de nostre Dieu, te confessant **indigne** de ses misericordes, et luy en **requerant quelque parcelle** d’icelles pour ton support. Et avec ce desir peux tu dire ce qui est au Psalme [*i.e.*, Ps. 123:1 (122:1 for Benoist)]: j’ay levé mes yeux vers toy qui habites és cieux: lequel Psalme, bien que soit court, si est-il propre à esveiller, et enflamber ceste susdite affection, te preparant à la prière” (178 r°).

requiring humility, faith, and dependency; acceptance of mere “miettes.” That is, in Sonnet XXV, she forcefully expresses, in the fullest, most redundant form imaginable, her desire to belong to God, but then, in Sonnet LXII, she confesses that she does not deserve such a status or existence; and yet, she allows herself to humbly continue desiring a small taste of it at present.

In the second part of this “case study,” we will discuss Coignard’s anaphoric repetition of the exclamation “O” throughout Sonnet XXV. Suffice it to say, for now, that the effect generated by her zealous use of the “O” in that short poem underscores a stark difference in the tone and performance of sonnets XXV and LXII. In both sonnets, the same subject affirms who God is; in both sonnets, a desire is conveyed and its fulfilment depends on God; and in both sonnets, the subject assumes a humble posture. Yet, the tone of each sonnet could hardly be more different. Sonnet LXII projects a rather “matter-of-fact” tone and, as we have seen, proceeds to *reduce* (and divide) expectations, whereas Sonnet XXV unleashes a cornucopia of emotions: surprise, wonder, delight, relief, gratitude, ecstasy, need, and desire, as though they all amounted to the same thing, in ardent anticipation of the same “bien.” Simply put, Sonnet XXV devotes all its energy to stating that God is “mon tout” (and how), whereas Sonnet LXII asks (next?) what can possibly be asked or hoped for (not much for now, it turns out) *since* God is “mon tout.”

Moreover, despite the opening words “Tu es” in line 1 of Sonnet LXII (echoed again in line 7), the focus of the sonnet seems, surprisingly, to rest more heavily on the “moi” and, consequently, on “who God is to the *moi*” rather than on “who *God* is to the *moi*.” This nuanced impression is established by the heavily-repeated possessive adjectives and of the first-person pronoun. Clearly, Coignard is painting for us a picture

of someone who does not merit the “doux accueil” (ln. 9) that Jesus extends to his close ones; yet this portrayal is achieved not only by frankly stating that she does not merit it (in line 9), but also as she exposes (wittingly or not) one of the reasons for which she does not merit it: egotism (being overly focused on oneself), which, ironically can occur even when one is attempting to focus on and praise another, especially when that “other” resides beyond “my” grasp.

Conversely, the subjective “breakdown” of Sonnet LXII on the matter (and touchstone) of pleasure – where there are “contentements,” I am permitted to ask for “crumbs” at best – becomes more striking when it is compared to the unanimous statements of which Sonnet XXV is made. In the latter, Coignard constructs a particular structure in lines 1-8; starting with the emotive use of “O” (to which we will return), followed by some form of the expression “of all of my...” and a noun which, in turn, is almost systematically followed by a definite article and a noun, frequently modified by an adjective. The content informs us that God is the fulfillment and fulfiller of the poet’s various experiences but the repetitive form of lines 1-8 seems to portray someone who has reached a peak of ecstasy, who is now breathing hard and repeatedly while also feeling satiated. Moreover, the use of the first-person possessive adjectives is not as frequent in Sonnet XXV as it is in Sonnet LXII; and it is outweighed, in the former, by more developed descriptions of who God is. It seems to us that the use of “Tu es” in the beginning of Sonnet LXII removes any guessing work from the reader, whereas in Sonnet XXV there is a sense of mystery that entices us to guess who the undeclared entity is that is being described in lines 1-8. Readers then experience and enjoy the relief of validation in three waves: first, as we encounter the religiously-charged nouns “Sauveur” (8), “pere”

(11), “Redempteur” (12), and “Fils de Dieu” (13); second, as we encounter the subtle pronoun “t[e]” in the phrase “qui t’es fait nostre espous” (13); third, as we arrive upon the disjunctive pronoun “toy” (14). In other words, in lines 1-7, we cannot help but guess that the poet is speaking about God, in lines 8-12, that guess is becoming more plausible but we are still not sure who the addressee is. Readers who guessed that the God being described in lines 1-12 is also the addressee of the entire poem will be delighted and relieved to discover that they guessed correctly.

The message of the opening quatrains in Sonnet XXV could be interpreted in at least two different ways with respect to the notion of pleasure. One interpretation is that the direct and repeated evocation of pleasure in lines 1-4 establishes a sentimental and ideological foundation, ascending from “plaisirs” to “joye,” from repose or relief to (perdurable) ecstasy; setting a tone that will reverberate throughout the remainder of the poem. Even though pleasure is never again explicitly mentioned after line 4, the reader’s emotions and intellect have been prepared, causing them to be more welcoming to, if not delighted by, the ideas that will follow. Readers may even be inspired to exercise their intellect and discern for themselves (thus adding the pleasure of invention/discovery) the pleasure(s) that one can associate with or attribute to the following notions: the help that God is (5-8), one’s “salut” (10) (which clearly means salvation but also carries with it the connotation of health), familial ties (11), redemption (12), love in marriage (13), and a sense of belonging (14). In this reading, pleasure in its ascending form also continues to dwell within the reader’s memory, thus infusing the new images that will be introduced in lines 9-14.

As readers move on to the concluding tercets, this overall unity of the poem is reinforced by the poet's use of anaphora at the opening of each line, and by the repeated use of certain sounds throughout, notably at the end of most of the hemistiches: /œʁ/ (1 and 12), /ziʁ/ (2 and 4), /waʁ/ (3 and 5), /ɛ ≈ e/ (6 and 8), /ɛ̃/ (7 and 14). And, even though the ending phonemes of the words situated at the end of the first hemistiches in lines 9, 10, 11, and 13 are not repeated at the end of other hemistiches, their sounds are repeated elsewhere throughout the poem. For example, the phoneme /u/ that concludes the word "tout" (9) is repeated in the words "tous" and "tout" (1-9), "pouvoir" and "secourable" (5), "gouverneur" (7), "souffert," "pour," and "nous" (12), "espous" (13), and "souverain" (14). The phoneme /i/ that concludes the word "conduis" (10) is repeated in the words "desirable" (1), "desiré" (2), "plaisirs" (4), "liberal" (6), "celuy" and "qui" (10), "liberal" and "qui" (11), "qui" (12), "Fils" and "qui" (13), and "bien" (14). The phoneme combination /al/ that concludes the word "liberal" in line 11 is only used for that same word in line 6 and in "salut" (10).

Such overall unity *may* permit readers to associate pleasure with the notions encountered throughout the remainder of the poem. Interpreted thus, readers will understand the female writer as presenting pleasure – properly redefined as "joye" (or *beatitudo*) (*i.e.*, away from the plurality of human pleasures) – as a significant, though not necessarily exclusive, aspect of what the sovereign good means to her. That is, it can be interpreted as characterizing, but only in part, the nature of the highest good; the object that causes her pleasure (1-8) is also the object to which she owes her being or existence (11) and the object to which she wishes to be(long) (14).

However – and this is crucial – the sonnet is not organized in order to *culminate* in a representation of pleasure as its “*summum bonum*,” which, as we see in Sonnet LXII, is likely to cause it to break down and acknowledge that this “honey” is not yet flowing for the speaker. On the contrary, Sonnet XXV ends with the most theological and philosophical designations of who and what God (in the second person, the Son) is, and is to *us* (“*nous*”), which then allows the “*je*,” speaking as her individual self again, to solemnly dedicate her own will and being to the “*seul bien souverain*,” named as such, without further characterization. Pleasure is still there, but merely implied among all the other goods that the supreme good contains: it is no longer used as a descriptor. With this second interpretation, a reading of the sonnet that overemphasizes the role of pleasure in the end would, in fact, betray the sonnet’s own aspiration.

The sonnet comes full circle in a sense, but accesses a higher plane at the same time, like an ascending spiral³¹⁴. All the goods enumerated on the right side of its lines (defining what God is to me) are subjected to this ascending movement, which is further reinforced by Coignard’s use of personal pronouns. Indeed, there is a marked shift from the initial first-person singular pronoun “*je*” (11) and adjectives “*mon*,” “*ma*,” “*mes*” (1-11) to the first-person plural pronoun “*nous*” (12) and adjective “*nostre*” (13), thus expanding one’s awareness of the sovereign good not only as it pertains to the individual but also to the collective and universal; however, upon having acknowledged the expanded domain of the sovereign good (which is by definition not limited to “*me*”), the

³¹⁴ Sonnet LXXVII utilizes a similar circular flow in which the reader is led to consider human felicity first, then God and His will, and then God’s goods, which we are to adore with love. Thus, she opens with the phrase: “*Toute felicité que l’homme peut cognoistre, / Et desire jouir au monde passager*” (1-2), and then moves into an exhortation to: “[...] saintement sa volonté ranger, / Unissant son vouloir à celuy de son maistre” (2-4), to follow God, and to adore “*plains d’amour, ses bontez nompareilles*” (14).

poet returns to focus one last time on the personal and individual – but in an act of pure self-dedication – in the poem’s last line.

In this sense, we may perceive the notion of pleasure (as we understand it) as being surpassed by something greater, more complete, and more essential to the nature of the sovereign good³¹⁵. The word “joye” *would* capture it, already does; except that the human mind cannot (yet) capture what such “joye” consists of: and so, the very act of naming it exposes the speaker to reducing it to the “plaisirs” she is familiar with, and then pursuing the (now nominal) goal in order to obtain them (which becomes her true goal). So our reading of the poem has to move *beyond* the notion of pleasure (as commonly understood), allowing the rhetoric of “fin” and “but” (9) to take over³¹⁶ until the final tercet comes to introduce the imagery of the mystical union in marriage with Christ, who has already made Himself “nostre espous” (13). Since no mention of pleasure subsists at this point, having receded into the implicit, readers may infer that pleasure is intentionally being prevented from taking over. One may therefore conclude that Coignard consciously resists, here at least, giving pleasure an outsize part and role, even as she salutes it and acknowledges its importance and legitimacy as both point of departure and horizon in her spiritual journey toward belonging to God.

³¹⁵ Sonnet XXV conveys this message in a different manner from Sonnet CII. The focus, for Coignard, is typically not so much on something greater, more complete, or more essential to God’s nature. She offers more of a reflection on her own nature/status, all the while comparing it with the greater goods (beyond merely belonging to Christ/God) that the saints are enjoying. Again, pleasure – but a certain type of pleasure here – is prevented from taking over. Contentment, as desired by persistence, faith, and humility, accompany that notion of basic pleasure. The “miettes” can be interpreted as an effect of Christ on my indignity, not so much His essence in and of itself.

³¹⁶ The phrase “O le tout de mon tout, ô ma fin et mon but” (9) has been placed at the traditional site of the *volta*, which conventionally initiates a pronounced shift in the tone of the sonnet, often providing a sort of climax or release/relief near the center of the poem’s short structure. In Sonnet XXV, the phrase “ô ma fin et mon but” stands out even more as it contains the only intralinear “ô” of the entire sonnet.

From this perspective, the lesson of the sonnet may be, in part, that pleasure can be a *means* or an *accessory* to the end, or even an *effect* (namely, “joye”) caused by (experienced at/in) the end; but the end ought not be confused with it, nor with its expression – and all the more so as the marriage imagery, and not pleasure, carries the sonnet to its conclusion. To be clear, such fine distinctions *would not matter as much* if I were already there, experiencing the union’s bliss in full. As we will see, beatitude itself must receive a strict definition if it is to avoid confusion with other happy states. Some daylight remains, therefore, between enjoyment of the ultimate good and that good in and of itself. This last distinction would be perfectly clear to me (and carry neither ambiguity nor disappointment) if I were in that state of (true) beatitude. However, as long as I am not, the mere envisioning of pleasure in or with God, even as “joye,” is both appropriate (necessary, even) *and* dangerous, exposing me to reducing the “bien souverain” to an instrument of (my) pleasure: hence the confession of indignity that closes Sonnet LXII, humbly settling for crumbs. Thus, in Sonnet XXV, the nature of the sovereign good (*i.e.*, God) is described first in terms of its *effect* (the notion of which spurs us and our affections toward pursuing union with God) and then in terms of its *essence*.

Indeed, the last line of the first quatrain, ascending from the first three, and the last line (its first half, rather) of the entire poem, ascending from all that precedes, evoke a similar metaphysical “level” – except that the former focuses on effect and the latter, aiming higher still, on essence. The sonnet keeps traveling upwards, through a series of appropriate characterizations; it culminates in the ultimate one, which does not need to be characterized (except by saying that it is “souverain”), and encompasses them all.

– The problem of “profit” in Luis de Granada’s *Vray chemin*

As we have already stated, there is no doubt that Coignard’s devotional poetry was deeply influenced by Luis de Granada’s *Vray chemin*³¹⁷. With respect to Sonnet XXV, we are thinking, in particular, of the following passages, where the relevant language appears in bold:

Dieu est nostre Createur, **gouverneur**, **Redempteur**, sanctificateur, glorificateur, et en somme **nostre commencement et fin dernière**.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, chapitre 1: “Du prouffit de la contemplation, et combien elle est necessaire,” 3 r°)

Autre maniere d’oraisons, et meditations desquelles usent ceux qui sont les plus exercez. Tilt. 18. D’avantage fault noter que celles meditations desquelles avons parlé au commencement pour tous les jours de la sepmaine, sont pour ceux qui ne font que s’adextrer à tel exercice pour s’en aider comme d’une guide qui les conduise: mais estans exercez ne faut que aillent tousjours par une mesme voye, ains là où le S. Esprit les acheminera, lequel attire ses disciples de ceste escole pour aller à une meilleure: comme sont ceux qui viennent à la contemplation des perfections divines, afin de croistre par ceste consideration en l’amour de Dieu, comme de celui qui est infiniment bon, et **liberal**, et admirable en toutes ses œuvres. D’autres s’adonnent à contempler les saints escritz (qui est une mer d’infinies merveilles) ainsi que ont fait les saints docteurs, et plusieurs de ces bons peres qui ont vescu jadis és solitudes. Il y en a qui s’arrestent sur la meditation de ce qui leur est advenu, et de ce qu’ils ont experimenté de la grace, justice, et jugements du tout puissant en ses benefices, et providence à nous **gouverner** et **conserver**, et nous **deffendre** d’infinis **dangers** esquels nous pouvons tomber de jour à aultre. D’autres son plus allegez des fardeaux de ce monde, ostez de la trop grande speculation, ont de Dieu l’affection ouverte, afin que l’entendement estant en **repos**, la volonté s’arreste, et esjouisse **en un seul Dieu, qui est son bien souverain**: qui est l’estat parfait de la contemplation auquel il nous fault aspirer, comme au point où il a l’accomplissement de ce qu’il **desire**, disant avec **l’espouse** és Cantiques³¹⁸: j’ay trouvé celui que mon cœur ayme: je le tiens, et n’ay garde de le laisser.

(*Le vray chemin*, II, chapitre 5, “tiltre 18,” 330 r°- v°)

[...] crois moy que par un peu d’oraison Dieu recompensera tout ce tien travail, et angoisse, ny ayant **repos** ny **heur** humain qui te puisse tant donner de consolation.

(II, chapitre 5, “Conclusion de ceste seconde partie,” 331 v°)

³¹⁷ Luis de Granada, a Dominican monk from Spain, had studied the works of St. Augustine as well as those of St. Thomas Aquinas. We also know that he was influenced by Erasmus’ *De Modus Orandi Deum* (Cave 5). As already noted, Winn’s citations from *Le vray chemin*, which she makes available in the footnotes of Part II of the *Œuvres chrétiennes*, testify to the extent to which 8 out of 13 of Gabrielle de Coignard’s longer poems are inspired by Luis de Granada’s own words (see their list above, p. 113-114).

³¹⁸ Song of Songs 3:4.

[...] Oultre ce si tu desires montrer à l'altesse de la contemplation, et jouyr des doux, et amyables embrassements de **l'espoux**, exerce toy en priere: car c'est le chemin par lequel l'ame vient à la meditation, et goust des choses celestes: et ainsi tu vois l'efficace, et pouvoir de l'oraison.

(III, "Traité premier de la vertu et excellence de l'oraison:
Tiltre premier," 342 v°)

Reading Sonnet XXV through the lens of Granada's work would seem to make our interpretation not only correct from a poetic perspective, but from a theological one as well. The reference to the Song of Songs in the second excerpt is particularly telling in this respect: to be with God is indeed to experience a kind of ecstasy the metaphor of which, in human experience, is necessarily amorous or sexual. Yet therein, of course, the danger lies; and as we will see, poetry increases it, by virtue of its expressiveness and concentration. Granada, as a teacher relying on prose, has plenty of time and room both to associate the human sense of the good with its divine version *and* to separate one from the other: pleasure is both the ultimate horizon and something to be used and then surpassed. While Granada does not go so far as to say that pleasure is a necessary evil, he does exploit certain pleasures as a type of psychological "icing on the cake" of one's spiritual existence. For example, he admits that the human heart will not work hard (*e.g.*, to love and practice *oraison*) without the promise of reward and (pleasurable) profits³¹⁹. Before returning to the compressed space of Sonnet XXV, it is worth spending some time exploring the complexity of the Venerable Luis' dialectics about this matter.

Granada opens the first chapter of the entire handbook with the following words:

D'autant qu'il ne se peut faire qu'en l'exercice de la contemplation, il n'y aye du travail et difficulté tant pour le temps que cela demande que nous y soyons occupez, que pour le repos et retraite solitaire du cœur en soimesme, que la chose requiert, il semble aussi necessaire, qu'avant que faire autre chose, nous declarions en cest endroit quelles sont les utilitez, **et**

³¹⁹ In *Combat de plusieurs ennemis qui nous assaillent*, Coignard ashamedly admits her delight when she no longer has to undertake the laborious task of *oraison*: "L'oraison me travaille et ne puis m'arrester / Aux heures que je dis sans point m'y delecter" (49-50, 361).

combien grands les proufits qui suivent et accompagnent cest exercice, afin que le cœur humain, lequel **sans promesse de grand salaire** n'entreprend chose où il luy faille grandement pèner et travailler, puisse estre incité à l'aymer et à le mettre en usage, et pratique.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, chapitre 1: "Du proufit de la contemplation, et combien elle est necessaire," 1 r^o- v^o)

At the end of the second part, Granada also makes use of pleasure's psychological powers as he assures his readers of a promised reward for their work and anguish:

Et s'il te semble qu'on veut trop de choses de toy en cest endroit, crois moy que par un peu d'oraison **Dieu recompensera tout ce tien travail, et angoisse**, ny ayant repos ny heur humain qui te puisse tant donner de consolation.

(*Le vray chemin*, II, "Conclusion de ceste seconde partie," 331 v^o)

The meaning of the verb "recompenser" might be ambiguous (or received as such): the original sense is "to compensate for" (an ordeal, a damage), and we saw in our Introduction (pp. 12-13, n. 24) that Calvin understood the notion of "loyer" in this sense only. By the 16th century, however, the modern sense – "to reward" (a merit) – had begun to implant itself. Still, while Granada uses the term "salaire" (which Calvin rejected) elsewhere, the original meaning likely still prevails in the second quotation. Our future bliss will make up for (assuming "un peu d'oraison") our present labor and anguish.

On the other hand, there are passages where Fray Luis frankly exhorts the devout practitioner to move beyond their infantile need for a promised pleasure before s/he continues to labor in her/his devotional exercises. For example, after pointing out that "les parolles de Dieu ont ne sçay quelle harmonie en ce stile, lesquelles attirent avec elles plus de douceur et souëfveté pour noz ames" (178 v^o), and, after celebrating holy and devout hymns (such as those written by saints Bonaventure, Bernard, and Jerome) as being "une manne tres douce et tressouëfve, qui commence adoucir le palais de nostre

ame, et le disposer à gouter les choses divines” (*ibid.*), Granada delivers the following admonition about one’s proper approach to oraison:

Là convient adviser l’intention, avec laquelle l’homme doit aller à l’oraison: **d’autant qu’il ne doit y aller principalement pour son plaisir, et consolation** (ainsi que font plusieurs amoureux par trop de soymesmes) ains pour en cela **se conformer à la volonté de Dieu**, et luy demander sa grace, et se disposer pour la gaigner. Et avec tout cecy, faut que l’homme soit si posé entre les mains de Dieu, **qu’il soit aussi prest à souffrir les angoisses, que à recevoir les consolations, s’humiliant sous la main de Dieu, afin qu’il dispose de tous ses affaires, ainsi que bon luy semblera, et que l’homme pense, que de soy il en merite rien: d’autre part doit il croire, que bien que cela soit ainsi, si est-ce que Dieu par sa bonté infinie fera ce qui sera le plus convenable pour son salut.** Pour-ce l’homme doit se contenter esgalement et du peu, et du beaucoup, et de tel traitement qu’il plaira à nostre Seigneur, s’estimant indigne de tout ce qui luy est octroyé^[320], et prest à tout ce qui luy sera commandé: **non pour respect de ce qu’il espere recevoir, ains de ce que desja il a receu, et pource que Dieu merite avoir le tout de nostre service.** Et contre cecy voyons nous que font plusieurs, lesquels semblent les petits enfans hargneux: devant lesquels si on ne dance en les flattant, ils ne veulent rien faire de ce qu’on leur commande.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, chapitre 5: “De la preparation requise avant l’oraison,” 178 v°-179 r°)

Granada warns us to not carry out such an activity principally for our own pleasure and consolation, which would mean that we love ourselves too much. He encourages us to conform our will to that of God³²¹, ask for grace, place ourselves in God’s hands, and be ready for good or bad – including more suffering. Yet, while we must “think” that we merit nothing (as we can see, this is very much a “counter-reformed” catholicism), we must also “believe” that, because God is infinitely good, He will do whatever is befitting of our “salut.” Crowning these exhortations is the clear charge to serve God, not only out of gratitude for what He has *already* done for us (even though we did not merit it), but also – and most importantly – because God simply merits it; merits all.

³²⁰ Lines 9-14 of Sonnet LXII illustrate Coignard’s awareness and application of this concept: “**Je ne merite pas** d’avoir ce doux accueil, / Comme tes familiers regardes de bon œil, / Ny les saintes douceurs des ames favorittes, / Ny les contentemens des divins mets du ciel, / Trop indigne je suis de gouter de ce miel, / Je veux tant seulement des miettes petites” (S. LXII, Coignard 214).

³²¹ Cf. Coignard’s Sonnet LXXVII for her treatment of this point.

For the sake of a brief comparison, let us see how Coignard embraces this binary process in the tercets of Sonnet CIII³²², which we have already discussed in part:

J'ay cent fois esprouvé mille herbes salutaires,
Et les drogues aussi qu'apporte le Levant,
Pour veoir si je pourrois ainsi qu'auparavant
Recouvrer ma santé et guerir mes miseres.

L'on m'a tiré le sang et seiché les arteres,
Me faisant avaler d'un breuvage puant,
Mais avec tout cela je suis pis que devant,
Endurant tous les jours des douleurs tres-ameres.

**Je veux ores quitter tous ces medicaments,
Portant patiemment mes peines et tourments,
Sans plus me soucier de mourir ou de vivre,**

**Mais de ta sainte main, ô Dieu plein de bonté,
J'embrasseray mon mal ou ma douce santé,
Car ton divin vouloir est ce que je veux suivre.**
(262-263)

It appears that the limitations imposed by the short form give rise to some ambiguity, at least if Coignard's sonnet is not read *in light of* Granada's prose. That is, the poem does not distinguish as clearly as *Le vray chemin* does between the pursuit of God's will for its own sake and the assurance that God, in His infinite goodness, will grant salvation. Indeed, even though Coignard wishes to follow God's divine will, recognizing that such an endeavor does not guarantee physical relief from her "peines et tourments" (10), nor does it guarantee her "douce santé" (13), nor even life itself (11), one detail in this sonnet could leave readers with the impression that Coignard's willingness to follow God's will *remains* dependent on the fact that she has faith that said will ultimately promises something good to her. The notion of a God "plein de bonté" (12), rhyming with "ma douce santé" rather than with "mon mal," is not merely a pleasant after-thought for the

³²² This is the sonnet that Caëtano thinks patterned after Loyola; see above, p. 114-115.

believer who has to whip up her *own* will (“je veux” (14)) in order to abandon it to the will of God. Rather, a sense of hope or trust in God’s sweet “bonté” continues to imply the subject’s interest in following His will on account of her belief that such a path will, eventually, lead to her own partaking of God’s goodness.

In the “Prologue” that precedes the third part of Granada’s four-part work, the author refuses to omit the many difficulties involved in oraison (e.g., fasting and other abstinences), even though some individuals ask him to do so on account of their fear that these challenges will repel readers and prevent them from attempting proper oraison:

[...] Or pour ce faire faut il que le corps et l’estomach soient dechargez d’humeurs et du fardeau des viandes, lequel obscurcit l’entendement, appesantist le corps, et cause un desir plustost de rire ou de dormir que de prier, ou gemir noz fautes. Ainsi il faut oster toute ceste charge avec jeusnes et abstinences, et sur tout l’homme devot doit estre sobre au souper et le faire si leger qu’il n’empesche ceste exercice de l’oraison nocturne. **Mais dira quelqu’un que ayant proposé de parler des louanges de l’oraison, je m’arreste neantmoins à nombrer les difficultez qui s’y offrent, servant plustost à degouter les liseurs qu’à s’affectionner à cest office [...]**

(*Le vray chemin*, III, “Prologue de l’Auteur,” 334 v°)

Granada’s reason for not yielding to their demand is that disclosing these difficulties demonstrates to the reader how praiseworthy the virtue of oraison really is and, he adds, if one overcomes those difficulties, there is an even greater pleasure that is sure to procede from the very feat:

à quoy je respons que le discours de ces difficultez est tres necessaire, afin que chacun voye combien ceste vertu est louable, ayant surmonté de tels et si fascheux empeschemens, ce qui ne se peut faire si elle n’est de grande importance: joint que **le prouffit surmontant la difficulté, il n’y aura aucun qui ne se plaise à mespriser la fascherie pour jouyr de l’aise qui en peut proceder [...]**

(*Ibid.*, 334 v°-335 r°)

However, he concludes this discourse with yet another reminder that his very own announcement of the ultimate benefit – a certain repose (or “aise”) to come, in other

words his framing of God's good as a reward – is made necessary by the human heart's fundamental weakness and self-absorption:

et n'estoit ceste esperance de **repos à venir**, on scait que le cœur humain est **tant amy de soymesme** et si grand **ennemy du travail** que jamais il ne s'arreste sur les difficultez s'il n'y avoit un **proufit pour les surpasser**.

(*Ibid.*, 335 r°)

In making such an accusation, Granada is implicitly attempting to move the reader past the need to be motivated, ultimately, by any notion of profit. In other words, pleasure (a promised heavenly pleasure) is used as a rhetorical tool to spur the will forth in the right direction, but it *must not* become one's (exclusive) end-goal. Yet this distinction is hard to maintain, and the very need for a rhetorical tool signals this inescapable problem³²³.

Granada utilizes a similar tactic in the fourth part of his work, in a discourse on the spiritual virtue of mercy ("miséricorde," including alms-giving). He makes clear that he is attempting to persuade the reader to pursue and exercise this virtue, even though such persuasion should not even be necessary since, he argues, it should come to us as instantly or naturally as our care and concern for our own life:

[...] J'ay pris cecy pour le commencement de ce traité auquel il faut que je discoure de la vertu de misericorde estant seur, que si les hommes vouloient se mettre à considerer ce que l'escriture divine et les saints personnages nous chantent et preschent de ceste vertu, qu'il ne seroit ja besoin d'en parler particulièrement. Car tout ainsi qu'il n'est necessaire de recomander aux hommes le soing et soucy de leur propre vie, chacun en estant assez

³²³ Granada also points to another tool that may be more fitting in certain circumstances when the promise of pleasure is not effective: shaming oneself in comparison to other devout models: "Et d'autant que l'oraison de plusieurs est agreable à nostre Seigneur, il sera bon que és prieres du matin, et du soir aussi, tu penses combien il y a de **serviteurs et servantes de Dieu**, tant dedans que dehors les monasteres, qui sont à celle mesme heure veillans, et perseverans en oraison devant la divine Majesté, espendans larmes en abondance, et peut estre du sang, pour l'amour de Dieu: **avec lesquels humblement tu te dois conjoindre: afin que la presence, et agreable souvenance d'iceux, te soit un esguillon de devotion, et un exemple de perseverance en ton oraison, et priere. Et te trouvant lent, et paresseux en tel exercice, et que seras saisi de pensees pour le mettre à fin, tu peux te hontoyer, et accuser par l'exemple de tant de gens de bien:** lesquels si ententivemens, et soigneusement perseverent sans cesse en cest exercice, offrans, et presentans et corps et ames à Dieu en sacrifice" (Granada 179 v°). Moreover, an additional tool is inciting and/or augmenting one's fear of Hell (147 v°). After describing God as the highest good, Granada offers a contrasting image – that which he calls the ultimate evil –, which is to be deprived of God.

soigneux sans qu'on leur die: **aussi ne le seroit il pour leur persuader à suyvre ceste vertu: puis qu'en elle gist reallement une grande partie de nostre salut et de nostre vie.**

(*Le vray chemin*, IV, "Troisiesme traité, contenant les fruicts et efficace de l'aumosne et de la misericorde. Tiltre premier," 402 v°-403 r°)

Further, Granada believes that, if we attentively considered what the Bible and the "saints docteurs" (*ibid.*) tell us about the virtue of mercy, not only would we "user de misericorde" (*ibid.*) but we would also incite others to do so ever more actively in the service of the poor. Yet the reason Granada gives for this is that individuals would want to perusade others to practice mercy "afin que ne le faisans, ils ne soient fraudez des grands biens" (*ibid.*):

Et pource n'ay-je deliberé que de deduire en sommaire ce que l'escriture divine, et les saints docteurs nous proposent de ceste vertu: d'autant que si ententivement nous considerons cecy il ne nous suffira pas seulement pour nous faire user de misericorde simplement, ains pour induire les hommes d'aller cercher, voire tirer les pauvres de dessous terre pour sur eux et en eux pratiquer et exercer les œuvres de misericorde, **afin que ne le faisans, ils ne soient fraudez des grands biens**, lesquels on obtient par le moyen de ceste vertu tant excellente.

(*Ibid.*, 403 r°)

In other words, the same virtue makes us want to help the poor *and* want to rouse others to want to help the poor as well; otherwise, we risk never receiving "grands biens" in the end. Granada then discloses his reason for using a rhetorical approach that points out the "grands biens" to be gained by others (and by ourselves implicitly) in order to persuade us, his readers, to exercise this virtue; which is also the reason why he mentions this particular virtue in the first place. The reason is that, even though humans are perpetual "amis de leur profit," it is in fact *easier* for them to overcome the one difficulty involved in the virtue of mercy – which is to lose some of their wealth, give up some "profit" in the literal sense – than to overcome the higher challenges entailed by "oraison":

Or tiens-je pour beaucoup plus aisé et facile à persuader aux hommes (tant puissent-ils estre amis de leur prouffit) ce que dit est de ceste vertu, que de les induire à faire ce que cy dessus avons traité de l'oraison (quoy que l'une consiste en paroles, et que l'autre concerne les œuvres) d'autant qu'en l'oraison y a plusieurs grandes difficultez à surmonter (ainsi que

dit est) là où en l'ausmosne n'y en a qu'une à surmonter, qui est de perdre, ou plus tost bien employer pour l'amour de Dieu un peu de nostre richesse.

(*Ibid.*)

Note how Granada strategically transforms the displeasing notion denoted by the verb “perdre” into the more attractive notion of “bien employer pour l'amour de Dieu.” Furthermore, instead of saying that one will lose (*i.e.*, use well) *all* of one's wealth, Granada is careful to specify that only a little (“un peu”) of it is demanded. Furthermore, in exchange for this modest investment, we get to enjoy mercy's beauty, honor, and dearness, which speak even to those who do not concern themselves with God and seek their own honor and glory in the eyes of men (403 r°- v°):

Au reste ceste vertu est si belle, honorable, chérie et prisee parmy les hommes qu'il n'y a chose qui tant recommande, ny face honorer et aymer l'homme que l'user de misericorde, tous prenans plaisir et louans d'une commune voix ceux qui sont pitoyables. Ce qui a esté cause que plusieurs **sans nul esgard ny respect de Dieu**, ains pour gagner bruit et reputation entre les hommes se sont monstrez fort liberaux en cest endroit.

(*Ibid.*)

It remains true, however, that giving up (even some of) one's wealth is not *that* easy:

Tellement qu'en cecy il n'y a rien qui se nous puisse opposer, et nous contredire que l'amour des richesses et les propos de cest amour, comme de ceux qui se disent avoir des enfans, serviteurs et famille à entretenir et autres affaires, ausquels il leur convient pourvoir: **qu'ils ne veulent perdre ce qu'avec si grand travail ils ont acquis et l'oster de la bouche de ceux de leur maison, pour en nourrir les estrangers**: qui est le langage que tenoit Nabal au mont Carmel, rejettant les gens envoyez vers luy de la part de David, pour le prier de faire part de ses vivres et douceurs à leur maistre: car il dit **qu'il ne vouloit donner son pain, son eau, ny la chair de ses troupeaux à ceux que point il ne cognoissoit**: et me semble que ceste est une des principales raisons retirant plusieurs de ceste vertu.

(*Ibid.*, 403 v°)

The argument that counters this excuse, and should compel us to give sacrificially even to strangers, is that God's authority alone ought to be sufficient reason for a Christian to give generously to anyone in need (*ibid.*). Granada further reminds us of Saint Basil's words, which exhort the Christian to give to others for the love of God, rising above “mon prouffit” by definition:

Mais entre les Chrestiens pour oster toute occasion à ces inconveniens il devoit suffire la seule autorité de Dieu estant raison de postposer toute chose pour faire ce qu'il nous commande suyvant que le conseille tresbien saint Basile en une Homelie, disant ainsi: si tu as deux pains, et qu'un pauvre vienne à ta porte, prens en l'un, et luy donne **pour l'amour de Dieu**: et luy ayant donné, leve les mains au ciel et dis ces doulces et pitoyables parolles: Seigneur je donne ce pain avec peril de ma vie **pour ton amour et en l'honneur de ton saint nom, mais je fais plus de cas de ton commandement que de mon proufit**: et du peu que j'ay j'en fais part à celuy qui en a mestier et diserte. **Ceste seule excellence de fidelité deust suffire pour vaincre et oster ceste petite difficulté.**

(*Ibid.*, 403 v°-404 r°)

Additional arguments are provided even though they are not necessary: the ones given above ought to have sufficed. Nevertheless, Granada further discusses the excellence and beauty of the virtue of mercy – which makes it desirable in and of itself. If virtue in general was sought for its own sake by the best among the “Gentils,” *a fortiori* the same should be true, among Christians, of the specific virtue of mercy:

[...] Je pourroy encor opposer à ceste excuse d'aumosner **la beauté et excellence de ceste vertu**, estant chose certaine que l'une des vertus plus plaisantes et agreables à Dieu, et qui plus souvent nous est proposee et recommandee en l'escriture est ceste cy. Car bien que (parlant à toute rigueur) la charité soit la plus parfaite [*sic*] d'entre les vertus, si est-ce que cela n'oste rien à la dignité de ceste cy, ains plus-tost y sert d'avancement et plus grand honneur: d'autant que nous ne separons point la misericorde de la charité, plus-tost voulons les conjoindre ensemble tout ainsi qu'un ruisseau avec la fontaine d'où il court et prend source: aussi ceste cy est la difference qu'un Docteur met entre ces deux vertus: que la charité est une source de bonté qui n'a point de mere, ains procede de sa propre riviere: là où la misericorde est un ruisseau venant d'ailleur, ayant source de sa fontaine et qui toutes-fois espond ses eaux par toute la terre. D'avantage la charité, entant qu'elle est charité, ne fait que seulement communiquer ses biens, et largesses aux autres, là où la misericorde avec ceste communication de ses biens aux autres, elle se fait participante des maux et des angoisses de son prochain: tellement qu'il ne luy suffit pas de donner ses biens, qui est le propre office de la charité, si encor meü de douleur et compassion, elle ne se donnoit soymesme: qui est le propre de misericorde. Ceste consideration et la passee deussent suffire pour vaincre la difficulté alleguee, laquelle on se plaist estre en la misericorde à qui en veut user: **car s'il y a eu des Gentils suyvens la vertu, pour le seul respect de la vertu, c'estoit pour la beauté et excellence qu'ils voyoient en elle: tellement qu'ils n'esperoient autre salaire ny guerdon pour bien faire, que le bien faire mesme: et combien plus tost cecy devoit suffire au Chrestien?**

(*Ibid.*, 404 r°-v°)

The paradox only deepens, however: foreseeing the reader's need for an even greater prospect of a gain to outweigh the pains and/or losses accrued in practicing mercy

for its own sake, Granada embraces, more than ever, a rhetorical approach that emphasizes the spiritual and temporal *profits* that are gained when one practices this virtue and, accordingly, endures some material loss:

[...] Mais je ne veux pour le present m'ayder de ce remede, ains conduire mon affaire par **un autre chemin plus plaisant et favorable au langage et façons de parler de la chair et à la convoitise du mesme proufit**, prouvant avec raisons evidentes que sans nulle proportion les proufits qu'on a de faire aumosne sont beaucoup plus grands que tout ce que l'homme sçauroit gagner ny espargner en la desniant au pauvre qui luy demande. Et afin qu'on voye cecy plus clerement, mettons en une balance d'un costé ceste perte temporelle qui se fait d'une part, et d'autre tous **les proufits et fruicts tant spirituels que temporels** qui en sortent et sont gaignez en ceste perte, afin de voir laquelle de ces deux choses doit proceder et s'il est raison qu'on laisse l'une pour prendre l'autre.

Et ayant faite ceste comparaison, je m'asseure que si tu es bon et equitable juge, que non seulement tu penseras avoir fait un grand gaing et proufit d'user de misericorde au pris de tes biens, ainsi encor t'espouventeras comme il est possible que ceux qui sçavent et entendent cecy ne vendent leurs biens, voire et eux mesme, pour faire aumosnes, ainsi que plusieurs saints ont fait le temps passé.

(*Ibid.*, 404 v°-405 r°)

So, while the attractiveness of the virtue of mercy proves that we are not always governed by “profit” in the literal or material sense, it does not follow that neither are we in the metaphorical and spiritual sense. On the contrary, the lure of profit (as something to be enjoyed, or “fruit” in the etymological sense: *fructus*, from the Latin verb *frui*, to enjoy), and the rhetoric that displays it, are needed more than ever: we use the notion of a metaphorical *gain* to apprehend that of a spiritual *good* that remains out of our grasp even though we should want it for its own sake. The first fruit or profit that Granada places in this metaphorical balance is that mercy causes the created human being to more closely resemble her or his creator, because mercy is part of God's essence. This resemblance, Granada asserts, is one's greatest perfection as a creature:

Après cecy, ayans mis en la balance ceste perte qu'avons dit, mettons en la contraire, **la premiere excellence de ceste vertu, qui est, qu'elle rend les hommes: comme semblables à Dieu**, et semblables en la chose plus glorieuse qui soit en luy, à sçavoir en la misericorde: Car il est certain que **la plus grande perfection qui puisse estre en une creature, est d'estre semblable à son createur, et tant plus il y aura de ceste ressemblance, et plus**

ceste creature sera à estimer parfaiete. Encor est-il chose asseuree que l'une des choses qui est plus convenable à Dieu, et qui luy est attribuee plus proprement, est la misericorde, ainsi que le monstre l'Eglise en celle oraison que elle chante ordinairement, lors que elle dit: Seigneur Dieu, auquel tousjours est propre d'avoir misericorde de nous, et de nous pardonner: Or dit elle que c'est le propre de Dieu, pource que tout ainsi que à la creature, entant qu'à la creature il appartient proprement d'estre pauvre miserable, et necessiteuse (et ainsi il luy convient recevoir, et non point donner) au contraire Dieu estant infiniment riche, et puissant, à luy seul pour son excellence appartient de donner, et non de recevoir: et par ainsi la misericorde et le pardonner luy sont propres. Et non seulement cecy est propre en Dieu, ains (à parler, et entendre à nostre maniere, et comme nous le pouvons comprendre) entre les perfections qu'il a respect, et esgard des creatures, selon que dit saint Thomas[:] c'est la chose la plus glorieuse qui soit en luy, et de laquelle il se glorifie, et prise le plus, et pour l'amour de laquelle il desire le mieux estre cogneu et loué. Et par ainsi en celle magnifique vision, en laquelle Moyse veit Dieu en la montagne, luy passer par devant (qui fait que **on croit qu'il veit la mesme essence, et beauté de Dieu**, en laquelle il aperceut infinies, et admirables perfections) entre les parolles de louange qu'il donna à Dieu, ceste cy fut celle qu'il cria, et proclama plus hault en disant: Ah! Seigneur Dieu misericordieux clement, et qui souffres, et de grande misericorde, qui uses de compassion vers les hommes jusqu'à la milliesme generation, qui ostes, et effaces les iniquitez, les forfaits, et les pechez des hommes. Cestes cy furent les parolles, et tesmoignage que le saint Prophete porta de nostre Seigneur apres celle grande et glorieuse vision, ne chantant que les louanges et magnificences de sa misericorde. Neantmoins il n'y a parolle qui puisse exprimer la grandeur de ceste misericorde, car c'est pour cela que l'Ecriture dit que toute la terre est pleine de la gloire de Dieu, à cause que par tout elle est remplie de sa grande misericorde, suyvant le tesmoignage de l'Ecclesiastique, disant: La misericorde de l'homme s'estend vers son frere, et prochain, mais celle de Dieu, est envers toute chair. **Si donc Dieu se prise, et glorifie tant en ceste vertu, et si c'est si grande gloire que l'homme se rende par icelle digne d'estre avec Dieu, combien doit on estimer excellente la vertu laquelle rend l'homme semblable à Dieu**, en chose en laquelle Dieu prend si grand contentement, et de laquelle il s'agree de porter le tiltre? Avec la promesse de ce **salaire** aussi nous convie nostre Seigneur à l'exercice de ceste vertu, en son Evangile disant: Soyez misericordieux, ainsi que vostre pere celeste use de misericorde, et est pitoyable: sur lesquelles parolles dit saint Gregoire Theologien: Rends graces à Dieu (ô homme) de ce qu'il ne t'a point mis en estat qu'il faille que tu sois recueilly par les mains des autres, mais que tu peux user aux autres de cest office: et par ainsi procure, et mets peine d'estre riche non seulement d'or et d'argent, ains plustost de vertu, afin que tout ainsi que tu precedes et surmontes les autres en tes richesses, et possessions tu les puisses surpasser en vertu, et preud'homme. Par ainsi mets peine à estre, comme Dieu, misericordieux, puis que il est chose evidente, qu'il ne peut rien eschoir de plus divin en l'homme que de **bien faire aux autres hommes**, et d'user envers eux de misericorde. Et ceste cy est **la premiere excellence** que nous mettons en ceste balance, qui est de faire l'homme semblable à Dieu, laquelle n'estimoit pas peu celuy qui disoit: C'est grande gloire, et honneur, que de suyvre le seigneur nostre Dieu, et de se conformer avec luy.

(*Ibid.*, 405 r°-406 r°)

The effort to rise ever higher in the apprehension of the “good” that mercy entails, by defining it as divine resemblance, as *acting like God in person*, cannot help but promise us, in this way, yet another... “salaire.”

There is no such thing as the promise of a good that communicates, as though in advance, this good as such, without also involving it in some kind of calculation of a pleasurable reward to come, based on whatever estimates we currently have. It follows that *if* this is true of mercy, a virtue in which we have every reason to bask, it is infinitely truer of the far more difficult “*oraison*” aimed at “contemplation.” We need a sense of “profit” to begin to understand that this exercise goes far beyond profit. In the end, we will be (if saved) ecstatic with body and soul, like the spouse in the Songs of Songs; but for now, it is impossible for the preacher *not* to dangle that reward – bliss as reward – in all its present ambiguity, provided that he do so explicitly and explain why he does it: thus fighting the very rhetoric he has to use, turning it into another example of the “leap” that God’s grace alone³²⁴ will help us accomplish. As we have already seen, a spiritual sonnet cannot hope to overcome this conundrum (if at all, as Sonnet XXV attempts to do) by using the fine, meandering distinctions of prose: its first effect is to sharpen it.

Whether the pleasure evoked at the beginning of Sonnet XXV be interpreted as partially characterizing the *essence* of the sovereign good, or merely as a *means* to and/or *effect* of the sovereign good, the poet’s will is strongly expressed in terms that prioritize *belonging* to the sovereign good – the object, source, and cause not only of her pleasure but also of her good deeds (6), existence (11), and redemption (12), rather than in terms that would end up emphasizing the possession or enjoyment of the experience of pleasure

³²⁴ See Sonnet CXI, which appropriates the image of the “vol d’Icare” to renounce the poet’s impulse to use her “intellect” and go beyond what she sees of the beautiful world created by God: “Il ne t’appartient pas de veoir chose si rare, / Ne monte point plus haut qu’on ne te veut hausser” (13-14, 273).

in and of itself³²⁵. Therefore, unlike the hedonistic philosophers who believe that the possession of the greatest sum of pleasure produces one's state of beatitude (*i.e.*, *eudaimonia*), Coignard's notion of beatitude reflects that of the Church fathers who separate the notion of the sovereign good from that of beatitude and claim that union with the sovereign good (rather than possession of the sovereign good) gives rise to the human's beatitude, which, although it is highly desirable, ought not eclipse the inherently supreme value and interest of the sovereign good itself.

The main clause in Sonnet XXV, when it finally comes (in line 14), while expressing in the first-person the poet's exclusive desire and dedication (already expressed, albeit implicitly, by the poem's very effort to name, praise, and worship its object), also marks (inevitably) the distance that actually *remains* to be traveled by the "je" – between wanting and being or (assuming she already "is," to an extent, where she wants to be) persisting in that state. There is a risk that the "circle" be broken, the ascension halted – or, rather, that the notion of their not only possible but *present*, immediate accomplishment, signalled by Jesus already having made Himself our spouse (13), gets re-translated back into pure desire, instead of an actual affirmation, with the words "je veux estre" (14). The same litany that expresses closure and plenitude also suggests longing: the lack of closure or plenitude for now.

In any case, unlike a strict hedonist, Coignard does not believe the human agent alone is able to bring about one's own beatitude. Rather, work is required by *both* the human and God (by means of His intervening grace). As we noted previously, according

³²⁵ This distinction may bring to mind a similar one in St. Augustine's *City of God*, X.xviii.1, which we discuss above (p. 57-58). There, we note the difference between Augustine's words (borrowing from the Psalms): "it is good for me **to be united** with God," and the following claim that he does not make: "it is good for me **to enjoy** being united with God."

to the works and rewards paradigm of traditional Catholic doctrine, we are required to do some of the work in our effort to attain salvation and union with God, but there is an even greater need for a supernatural grace to complete that work. In Chapter V, we shall further explore how prayer (“oraison”) constitutes a major step, beyond mere volition but involving both work and grace, that brings the individual closer to God³²⁶.

Sonnet XXV and the “ô” form: a case study (2)

Coignard’s emphasis on *belonging* to the object of her desire becomes particularly striking when Sonnet XXV, composed in alexandrine meter by this devout Catholic woman, is analyzed alongside a few other poems, which we have brought together based on their use of the same formal device: apostrophe and anaphora, with the exclamation “O” at the beginning of two or more lines.

A few preliminary remarks on the use of form and meter are in order here³²⁷. At the time Coignard writes, the twelve-syllable meter – the alexandrine – had long become the standard “long meter,” while some of the other examples we shall soon cite hail from

³²⁶ As Granada puts it: “puis que toute la perfection de la vie Chrestienne **procede de la grace**, et que **l’oraison est un moien et disposition** si propre et convenable pour obtenir icelle, on ne sçauroit nier que **tant plus un homme s’adonnera à la priere, plus aussi aura il de grace**: et ainsi croissant l’usage et exercice de l’oraison, plus aussi s’augmenteront les richesses de la grace, et par consequent toute vertu, et perfection.” As for “oraison” itself, “[elle] **n’est autre chose** (estant faicte comme il appartient) **sinon un approche de l’homme à Dieu, et une union de l’esprit de l’homme avec son createur**. Et est clair que en telle union, et liaison consiste grande partie de nostre perfection” (*Le vray chemin*, III, “Traité premier de la vertu et excellence de l’oraison. Tiltre premier,” 344 v°-345 r°).

³²⁷ Granada, for one, would not dismiss such formal details. He argues that no aspect of the devotional process, no matter how small, is unworthy of consideration, and uses an analogy with the minutiae of rhetoric and poetics to bolster this argument: “car tout ainsi que les Rhetoriciens desseignans de former un parfait orateur, ne se contentent de luy enseigner les points principaux esquels consistent les nerfs et forces du bien dire, ains ceux mesme qui sont de peu d’effect, **comme la composition et suite des voyelles et consones avec autres menues considerations (d’autant que tout cecy ayde à parfaire l’oraison et harangue), ainsi voulons nous former un orateur celeste, priant et orant devant le throsne de Dieu**, il est raison aussi que nous le marquions et segnalions de tout ce qui est requis en cecy, soit de petite ou grande consequence, comme ainsi soit que en tels affaires, il n’y a chose qui ne soit fort importante pour l’affaire” (*Le vray chemin*, Partie II, chap. 2, §11 “De l’unziesme chose servant à la devotion, qui sont le temps et lieu, et autres considerations y estans propres. Tiltre 11,” 243 v°-244 r°).

an earlier period in the 16th century, when decasyllables ruled in French poetry³²⁸. Ronsard, and Du Bellay, being early proponents and prominent champions of the longer meter, played a major role in its growing popularity; both used it in sonnets in the 1550s. By the time Coignard's own sonnets were composed, this practice had become the norm. Yet there are cases in which she abandons the longer meter in favor of the decasyllable. Of the 129 spiritual sonnets, 101 are in the alexandrine meter; of the 21 longer poems, 16 are in alexandrine meter (Coignard 114). 28 sonnets are composed in decasyllables (II, IV, VII, X, XII, XVI, XXI, XXIV, XXX, XXXIV, XXXVI, XL, XLII, XLIV, XLVI, LII, LIII, LIX, LX, LXIX, LXXIV, LXXVI, LXXXI, LXXXIII, LXXXV, XCVII, XCVIII). Winn notes that the shorter meter is reserved for "sujets plus légers" (*ibid.*). However, Caëtano argues that an exception to Winn's generalization occurs in Coignard's Sonnet XXIV³²⁹. As for the longer poems, the five that are not in the alexandrine meter are: in heptasyllabic meter, the *Stabat Mater*, *Pour la Nuict de Noël*, *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle*; in octosyllabic meter, *Pour l'Assumption de Nostre Dame*; in pentasyllabic meter, the second *Noël*.

Referring to Ronsard's Sonnet XXVIII in the 1555 *Continuation des Amours*, H. and C. Weber note the following:

Ce sonnet et les dix suivants sont en décasyllabes et non en alexandrins, comme la majorité des sonnets de la *Continuation*. Selon J. Desonay, **ce changement de mètre correspond généralement à un mouvement plus passionné de dépit, d'irritation ou à des prières, à**

³²⁸ For an analysis of the growing use of *alexandrin* across various poetic genres during the century, see: Halévy, Olivier. "La vie d'une forme: l'alexandrin renaissant (1452-1573)." *L'information littéraire* 56.2 (2004): pp. 38-43. <<https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-information-litteraire-2004-2-page-38.htm>>.

³²⁹ Referring to Sonnet XXIV, Caëtano observes: "La douleur est si forte que le je n'a 'plus parole ny langage', ce qui est figuré par l'emploi du décasyllabe. [...] L'eau de la tempête et du naufrage – qui représente l'angoisse – est remplacée par celle des larmes, une eau purificatrice, qui attire la pitié divine" (Caëtano, "'Quel sentiment as tu, ô mon ame [...]'?" §6). Caëtano then points out that, even if the expression is slightly different, the theme of Sonnet XXIV is the same as that of Sonnet CXIX, which is written in *alexandrins*.

des objurgations. On peut remarquer par ailleurs que **plusieurs des sonnets en décasyllabes ne sauraient s'adresser qu'à Cassandre**³³⁰. (Ronsard, *Amours* 623, n. 1 for S. XXVIII)

On the other hand, Kaiser points out that Ronsard tended (in theory at least) to assign the use of “alexandrin” for heroic subjects and of decasyllable to love poems – although the reverse, in practice, proved no less true, since the poet also switched to the longer meter to match the lighter, looser style of his *Continuations*, and famously chose the shorter one for the *Franciade*, his failed epic³³¹. Either way, Ronsard repeatedly warned that the “alexandrin,” in comparison to the decasyllable, sounded very long and prose-like, and required both a firm structure and striking words to overcome this impression. Kaiser also notes that Coignard did not write any poems about the Passion nor on a verse from the Psalms in decasyllables. She wonders if this was a coincidence or if the poet was adhering to Ronsard’s suggested distinction, thereby reserving the longer meter for the “highest” (more noble or dramatic) subjects (Kaiser 61).

Setting aside the evolution of norms, it remains true that the structure alone of the alexandrine meter, dividing hemistiches into equal units of six syllables each, can generate a sense of balance, compared to the asymmetrical, four- and six-syllable division of the decasyllabic meter, which particularly lends itself to expressions of tension. Both can be put to use in a poetry which, while “devotional,” remains fundamentally lyrical, relying on what Mary Shaw calls “the musical or musical-sounding expression of

³³⁰ Cassandre Salviati, celebrated in Ronsard’s first collection of *Amours*.

³³¹ Kaiser 58, n. 11. Cf. what Ronsard himself had to say on the subject in his *Abrégé de l'art poétique* (in *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*. Ed. F. Goyet. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990, pp. 480-481) and at the beginning of his posthumous *Preface sur la Franciade* (in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. P. Laumonier, vol. XVI, Paris: STFM, 1983, pp. 331-332).

subjective emotions, experience, and ideas”³³² to serve, as Terence Cave puts it, the specific task of “self-examination and prayer” (Cave xi).

The religious poetry of the late 16th century appropriated many figures and forms (starting, most prominently, with the sonnet) from earlier secular works. But the latter had long done the same thing in reverse: a case in point is the litanic structure built on the exclamation “o,” as found in Coignard’s Sonnet XXV. This structure had long been appropriated *from* the language of prayer and metaphorized by Petrarchan poetry³³³, with which Coignard was undoubtedly familiar. If she does not sense God’s presence in the strict sense (as a genuine mystic would) but desires it ardently (and knows she must do so), she will need to borrow from others who have testified to such an experience, whether with respect to God or to a human object. In this sense, the language of desire and longing appropriated from Ronsard and Petrarch permits her to make sacred love more accessible for those – herself included – who do not yet sense God’s grace and presence as evidently as they should. Be this as it may, Sonnet XXV returns the litany to its literal religious roots, as had been already done, for example, in the earlier poetry of Anne de Marquets – or even, for that matter, in Luis de Granada’s prose.

³³² Shaw, Mary Lewis. *The Cambridge Introduction to French Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 209.

³³³ Conversely, a devotional poet like Coignard can borrow from Petrarchan poetry – using the sonnet form notably – to express spiritual doubt and worry (*cf.* Is. 54:11 as well). See Gilles-Chikhaoui, p. 612 and Caëtano, ‘*Je suis Chrestienne*,’ p. 15, as well as D. Lesko Baker’s article “Gabrielle de Coignard’s *Sonnets spirituels*: Writing Passion within and against the Petrarchan Tradition” (cited above, p. 123, n. 233 and p. 127, n. 236). Among Petrarchan figures recycled for a devotional purpose are antithesis and oxymoron: see *e.g.* sonnets XV (“gracieuse breche,” ln. 8, Coignard 158) and LIV (“Amere et douce mort,” ln. 1, p. 203). As Gregg explains, this type of figure “captures the ambiguity of many of the emotions and sensations she endured” – not with respect to earthly things and worldly love, however, but “as a sinner in her relationship with Christ. She trembles in penitential terror of divine wrath at the same time that she delights in the sensual and ecstatic mysticism she experiences in her quest for union with her Savior” (Gregg 14).

We do not find this particular device in Marquets' *Sonets spirituels* (published in 1605, after Coignard's death), but it does appear in the earlier work she published in 1569 alongside her French translation of Marcantonio Flaminio's *De rebus divinis Carmina*³³⁴. As Winn remarks, another anaphoric sonnet of Coignard's (S. VI, "Ni les desirs d'une jeunesse tendre, / Ny les appas des humaines grandeurs, / Ny l'hameçon des superbes honneurs, / Ny les plaisirs qu'au monde l'on peut prendre [...]" (1-4, 144)) may have been inspired by a piece from this collection³³⁵. It is also there that we find a sonnet (n° 38) containing three lines that open with an exclamatory "O":

O l'admirable et divine puissance!

Qui a de rien composé toute chose:

O l'éternelle et sainte sapience!

Qui tout regit, entretient et dispose:

O la bonté en laquelle est enclose

Misericorde, amour, pitié, clemence,

Qui des enfers nous a la porte close,

Et des beaux cieus nous donne jouissance.

Qui ne loûroit telle perfection,

Mais, par sus tout, l'ardente affection

Dont ce bon Dieu nous a voulu poursuivre?

Car qui a faict pendre et mourir en croix

Ce grand Seigneur, ce Prince et Roy des Rois,

Sinon amour, pour nous faire revivre?

("Pour louer la puissance, sapience, et bonté de Dieu.
Sonet 38," *Divines poësies*, Marquets 77-78)

³³⁴ *Les Divines poësies de Marc Antoine Flaminus [...] Avec plusieurs Sonnets et Cantiques, ou Chansons Spirituelles pour louer Dieu* (for details, see above, p. 15, n. 31).

³³⁵ Winn (Coignard p. 145, n. 1) quotes the first six lines of Marquet's "Sonet 6" (note the similar number), entitled "Que rien ne nous peut separer de l'amour de Dieu." The anaphora actually extends to ten lines: "Ni les plaisirs de ceste vie humaine, / Ni les honneurs, ny les possessions, / Ni les desirs, ny les affections, / Ni le credit, ny l'esperance vaine: / Ni liberté, ny servitude ou peine, / Ni les douleurs, ny les afflictions, / Ni les tourments et persecutions, / Ni le mespris, ny la gloire mondaine, / Bref, ny le temps, ny la paix, ny la guerre, / Ni l'eau, ny l'air, ny le feu, ny la terre, / N'auront pouvoir soit que je vive ou meure" (Marquets, *Divines poësies*, lns. 1-11, p. 56). Coignard's Sonnet VI may also have been inspired by Rom. 8:38-39: "Car je suis asseuré que ne mort, ne vie, ni Anges, ne principautés, ne puissances, ne choses presentes, ne choses à venir, ne force, Ne hauteuse, ne profondeur, n'aucune autre creature ne nous pourra separer de la charite de Dieu, qui est en Jesuschrist nostre Seigneur" / "*Certus sum enim quia neque mors, neque vita, neque angeli, neque principatus, neque virtutes, neque instantia, neque futura, neque fortitudo, Neque altitudo neque profundum, neque creatura alia poterit nos separare à charitate dei, quae est in Christo Jesu domino nostro*" (Epistre de saint Paul Apostre aux Romains VIII.38-39; Benoist, vol. 3, 83 v°); but it seems likely that this is a case where Marquets directly influenced Coignard.

For its part, Granada's prose provides the following passage:

O chef d'or que je te voy affligé à mon occasion! O sacré corps conçu du saint Esprit, que tu es blecé, et mal-traité pour l'amour de moy. O doux et amoureux costé, que signifie ceste playe, et grande ouverture, et tant de sang qui va ruisselant d'icelle? Ah, que je te voy cruellement feru pour moy d'une lance! O rigoureuse croix, ne sois si dure et fascheuse, amollis et adoucis un peu ta durté, abaisse moy ces rameaux si haults, et ce fruit précieux, afin que j'en puisse gouter! O cruels cloux, laissez ces pieds et mains innocens, venez ferir et blecer mon cœur: car c'est moy, et non pas luy, qui ay commis l'offence! O bon Jesus, qu'as-tu que voir avec la mort, avec les cloux, ny avec la croix [...] O veritable Jacob, [...] O ineffable bonté! ah, non deuë misericorde! ô amour plus grand que jamais on eut sceu penser! ô charité incomprehensible! [...] O merueilleuse largesse! [...] ô Seigneur tres-debonnaire et tres-doux.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, "Traité septiesme," "Du benefice de la Redemption. Tiltre 3," 171 r^o-v^o)

Here the "ô" device serves to bring one object after another – in this case every element or aspect of the Passion, from body to instruments to meaning – into focus, subjecting them to what is at once contemplation, adoration, and celebration.

By contrast, the first quatrain of Sonnet VI in the Calvinist poet Jacques Grévin's *Second Livre de la Gelodacrye* (1561) is influenced by the bitter rhetoric of Du Bellay's *Regrets* but elevates tone and argument to denounce this world altogether:

O mélange du monde ! ô mondaine inconstance !
 O monde, mais immonde ! ô grand tout, mais un rien !
 O le monde nouveau ! ô le monde ancien !
 O tous deux parangons de certaine impuissance !
 Que tiens-tu dedans toy qui tienne une constance,
 Sinon ceste element, qui ha moins de moyen
 De garder entre tous l'accoustumé maintien,
 Et qui semble de soy faire moins resistance?
 Troye le grand tombeau de la Grece feconde,
 Et Romme la treneur du demeurant du monde,
 D'eux-mesmes ont esté en la fin le tombeau.
 Le Xante est demouré, le Tybre coule encore:
 Voyla pourquoy, BORDAT, maintenant je déplore
 Ce monde, ne voyant qu'assurance dans l'eau.
 (S. XVI, Grévin 300)³³⁶

³³⁶ Grévin, Jacques. *Second Livre de la Gelodacrye* in *Le theatre de Jaques Grevin de Cler-mont en Beauvaisis, A tresillustre et treshaulte Princesse Madame Claude de France, Duchesse de Lorraine. Ensemble, la seconde partie de L'Olimpe et de la Gelodacrye. A Paris, Pour Vincent Sertenas, demeurant en la rue neuve nostre Dame, à l'enseigne saint Jehan l'Evangeliste, et en sa boutique au Palais, en la*

It is possible that, by the end of the century, the device, if at all used, had turned mostly or fully religious; but this would need to be ascertained with precision in a separate study.

On the secular side, after he turned to “alexandrins” in his love poetry, Ronsard, for one reason or another, did not employ this type of “O” litany. This is true both in the *Continuations des Amours* and in the *Sonnets pour Hélène* (e.g., Book II, Sonnet LII, addressed to Hélène’s breasts, which clearly avoids using “ô”). Nor is the device found in the earlier “dizains” of Maurice Scève’s *Délie*. As for Desportes – on the other side of Ronsard, so to speak –, he seems to refrain from using the device more often than he indulges in it (see below; but in his first *Amours* in particular, it is not found at all). Yet love sonnets using this form of litany in earnest, while not very frequent, are not rare either. It should be noted that such a device does not lend itself to being used too often (it would quickly sound formulaic, ridiculous even; which, as we will see, is the point made by Du Bellay’s satire in S. XCI of *Les Regrets*, “Ô beaux cheveux d’argent mignonnement retors!”). A collection has one or two shots at it, three at best. Nevertheless, this very point makes it all the more meaningful that Coignard decides to employ the device in the one sonnet that explicitly identifies God as the sovereign good.

– *Secular versions: a catalog of beauties and torments*

As Winn points out, Coignard’s Sonnet XXV readily brings to mind Louise Labé’s Sonnet II in particular (to which we will return in a moment):

gallerie par ou on va à la Chancellerie. Et Pour Guillaume Barbé rue saint Jehan de Beauvais, devant le Bellerophon. M.D.LXII. Avec Privilege. Paris: Vincent Sertenas rue neuve nostre Dame et Guillaume Barbé rue saint Jehan de Beauvais, 1562. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k87013242>>. See also Michèle Clément’s edition (Grévin, Jacques. *La Gélodacrye et les Vingt-quatre sonnets romains*. Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2001, p. 93).

O beaus yeus bruns, ô regars détournez,
 O chaus soupirs, ô larmes expandues,
 O noires nuits vainement atendues,
 O jours luisans vainement retournez:

O tristes pleins, ô desirs obstinez,
 O tems perdu, ô peines despendues,
 O mile morts en mile rets tendues,
 O pires maus contre moy destinez.

O ris, ô front, cheveux, bras, mains et doigts:
 O lut pleintif, viole, archet et vois:
 Tant de flambeaus pour ardre une femmelle!

De toy me plein, que tant de feus portant,
 En tant d'endroits d'iceus mon cœur tatant,
 N'en est sur toy volé quelque estincelle.
 (S. II, Labé 122)³³⁷

Yet, as we know, the devices of apostrophe and anaphora go back to Petrarch (at least); so we see them, for example, in sonnets 161 (first translated into French by Clément Marot) and 253 (first translated by Vasquin Philieul) of the *Canzoniere*:

O passi sparsi, o pensier vaghi et pronti,
 o tenace memoria, o fero ardore,
 o possente desire, o debil core,
 oi occhi miei (occhi non già, ma fonti);

o fronde, honor de le famose fronti,
 o sola insegna al gemino valore;
 o faticosa vita, o dolce errore,
 che mi fate ir cercando piagge et monti;

o bel viso ove Amor in seme pose
 gli sproni e 'l fren ond' el mi punge et volve
 come a lui piace, et calcitrar non vale;

o anime gentili et amorose,
 s'alcuna à 'l mondo, et voi nude ombre et polve:
 deh, ristate a veder quale è 'l mio male!
 (S. 161, Petrarch 252)³³⁸

³³⁷ Labé, Louise. *Œuvres complètes: Sonnets – Élégies – Débat de folie et d'amour*. Ed. François Rigolot. Paris: Flammarion, 1986. On the possibility that this sonnet was actually written by Olivier de Magny (Labé's purported lover), who wrote a very similar one, see below, pp. 210-211, n. 343.

³³⁸ Marot's translation (which was inserted by Philieul as Sonnet XLIX within his own translation of the *Canzoniere*, first in his 1548 publication of "Livres premiers" under the title *Laure d'Avignon*, then in his

O dolci sguardi, o parolette accorte,
 or fia mai il dì ch' i' vi riveggia et oda?
 O chiome bionde, di che 'l cor m'annoda
 Amor et così preso il mena a morte!

O bel viso, a me dato in dura sorte
 di ch' io sempre pur pianga, e mai non goda!
 O chiuso inganno et amorosa froda,
 darmi un piacer che sol pena m'apporte!

Et se talor da' belli occhi soavi,
 ove mia vita e 'l mio pensiero alberga,
 forse mi ven qualche dolcezza onesta,

subito, a ciò ch' ogni mio ben disperga
 et m'allontane, or fà cavalli or navi
 Fortuna, ch' al mio mal sempre è sì presta.

(S. 253, Petrarch 356)³³⁹

We also encounter them in love poems by Ronsard (*Amours*, S. LV and CLXXIII³⁴⁰), Du Bellay (*Olive*, S. LV³⁴¹ and *Regrets*, S. XCI³⁴²), Olivier de Magny (*Souspirs*, S. LV³⁴³),

1555 edition of *Toutes les euvres vulgaires de François Petrarque*) runs as follows: “O Pas espars, o pensées soubdaines, / O fiere ardeur, o memoire tenante, / O cueur debile, o volonté puissante, / O vous mes yeux non plus yeux: mais fontaines: / O branche honneur des vaincqueurs capitaines, / O seule enseigne aux Poëtes duisante, / O doulce erreur, qui soubz vie cuysante / Me fais aller cherchant et monts et plaines. / O beau visaige, ou amour mist la bride, / Et l'esperon, dont il me poingt et guyde / Comme luy plaist, et deffense y est vaine. / O gentilz cœurs, et ames amoureuses, / S'il en fut onc, et vous Ombres pouldreuses, / Arrestez vous pour veoir quelle est ma peine” (*Toutes les euvres vulgaires de François Petrarque*. Trans. Vasquin Philieul [and Clément Marot]. Avignon: Barthelemy Bonhomme, 1555, p. 53. <<http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb31094601b>>).

³³⁹ Philieul's translation of this sonnet (numbered S. CXLVI in his version) comes from *Toutes les euvres vulgaires [...]*: “O doulz regardz, o parler sage et fort, / Quand sera il que vous revoye et oye? / O blondz cheveux de beaulté la montjoye, / Par qui amour me lie et meine à mort. / O yeux donnez à moy pour aigre sort, / Pour me pener sans onc en avoir joye. / O vain abus, qui un penser m'envoye, / Ou il n'y ha que travail sans confort. / Quand quelque fois j'ay de ces deux beaux yeulx, / Qui sont ma vie et repos gracieux, / Un faulx plaisir avec doulceur honneste: / Soubdain fortune avec voiles besongne, / Ou vient en poste, et de mon bien meslongne, / Tant à mes maulx nuit et jour elle est preste” (*Toutes les euvres*, 136-137).

³⁴⁰ Ronsard, Pierre de. *Les Amours*. Eds. Henri and Catherine Weber. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1993.

³⁴¹ Du Bellay, *L'Olive*, p. 109.

³⁴² Du Bellay, Joachim. *Les Regrets*. In *Œuvres poétiques*. Ed. Henri Chamard, revised by Henri Weber. Vol. II. Paris: STFM, 1970. p. 122.

³⁴³ Magny, Olivier de. *Les Souspirs*. Ed. David Wilkin. Geneva: Droz, 1978. Referencing Dorothy O'Connor (*Louise Labé. Sa vie et son œuvre*. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972, pp. 73 sqq.), Wilkin notes: “C'est en partie la similitude de ce sonnet avec le deuxième de Louise Labé qui permet aux seiziémistes de supposer que les deux poètes s'aimaient [...]. En composant leurs vers, ils imitaient sans doute le sonnet de Pétrarque, ‘O passi sparsi! o pensiero vaghi et pronti!’ Le premier vers du sonnet évoque aussi le v. 36 d'une ode de Magny sur la Belle Cordière (éd. Witney, p. 55)” (Magny 66). However, in *Louise Labé, une créature de papier* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2006), Mireille Huchon argues that that Labé is merely a

Jan Antoine de Baïf (*Amours de Francine*, sonnets VI, XLIV, and CII³⁴⁴), and Desportes (*Amours d'Hippolyte*, sonnets XXXVI, XLII, XLVIII³⁴⁵, and *Diverses amours*, “À Mademoiselle de La Chastaigneraye”³⁴⁶).

Let us, for the sake of comparison, go over some of the traits shared by these secular poems. In Petrarch's Sonnet 161, tension is created by expressions of movement (“mi fate ir cercando,” 8, and “mi punge et volve,” 10) interwoven with expressions of stasis (“tenace memoria,” 2, “calcitrar non vale,” 11, and “ristate a vederm,” 14). Tension is also engendered by expressions evoking power intermingled with those evoking weakness. In this instance, Love possesses a force that uses the beautiful face of the poet's object of affection as reins and spurs in order to control and direct the poet in accordance with Love's desire (“o bel viso ove Amor in seme pose / gli sproni e 'l freno / el mi punge et volve,” 9-10). The poet/subject/lover, with a lasting/strong memory (“tenace memoria,” 2), a weakened heart (“debil core,” 3), and a powerful desire (“possente desire,” 3), perceives no benefit in resisting those reins and spurs (“calcitrar non vale,” 11). These tensions are reinforced by the strategic dispersion of singular and plural nouns. In the plural are steps (“passi”), thoughts (“pensier”), eyes (“occhi”),

female poetic persona fabricated by a group of male poets – Magny among others – and that Magny wrote both of these sonnets (cf. pp. 187-207), which share their first eight lines. See also the section aptly entitled “Histoires d'O” of M. Huchon's article “Dé-Tournes-Ment” (*Seizième siècle*, n°10, 2014, pp. 105-126), which also discusses the popularity of the “Ô” form: “Loin d'être un dialogue poétique entre Louise Labé et Magny, les sonnets II et III de Louise Labé seraient des réécritures par Magny de pièces dont l'original sera publié par ailleurs ultérieurement, Magny ne cessant de se réécrire” (p. 124).

³⁴⁴ Baïf, Jean-Antoine de. *Second livre de l'Amour de Francine* in *Les Amours de Francine*. Ed. Ernesta Caldarini. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1966.

³⁴⁵ Desportes, Philippe, *Les Amours d'Hippolyte: Edition critique suivie du Commentaire de Malherbe*. Ed. Victor E. Graham. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1960. On the possible influence of Desportes on Coignard, see Caëtano, ‘*Je suis Chrestienne*,’ pp. 10-11 (conclusion: “Il est donc possible que Gabrielle de Coignard ait lu les œuvres de ce poète, mais ce n'est pour l'instant qu'une hypothèse”); as well as Armand Müller (*La Poésie religieuse catholique de Marot à Malherbe*. Paris: Imprimerie R. Foulon, 1950, pp. 203-205, 239-244, and 256 n. 3).

³⁴⁶ Desportes, Philippe. “A Mademoiselle de La Chastaigneraye, Heliette de Vivonne” in *Diverses amours et autres Œuvres meslées*. Ed. V. E. Graham. Geneva: Droz / Paris: Minard, 1963, p. 165.

fountains (“fonti”), errors (“errore”), foliage (“fronde”), foreheads (“fronti”), plains and mountains (“piagge et monti”), spurs and reins (“sproni e ’l fren”), spirits (“anime gentili et amorose”); in the singular are memory (“memoria”), ardor (“ardore”), desire (“desire”), heart (“core”), unique sign (“sola insegna”), life (“vita”), face (“viso”), Love (“Amor”), pain (“male”); associating both are ghosts and dust (“nude ombre et polve”).

To help us better visualize this composition, we offer the following chart, in which “p” represents a plural entity and “s” a singular one:

p + p	(ln. 1)
s + s	(ln. 2)
s + s	(ln. 3)
p + p	(ln. 4)
p + s	(ln. 5)
s + p	(ln. 6)
s + s	(ln. 7)
p + p	(ln. 8)
s	(ln. 9)
p + p	(ln. 10)
—	(ln. 11)
p	(ln. 12)
s + p + s	(ln. 13)
s	(ln. 14)

Note how the only lines in which both singular and plural nouns are included are lines 5, 6, and 13. In line 6, the poet focuses our attention on plurality within singularity by celebrating the object of affection’s brow, crowned by (laurel) branches, as a single sign but of double worth: “sola insegna al gemino valore” (6).

Petrarch’s Sonnet 161 also offers an initial accumulation of elements that are related to the speaker – focused on his own steps, thoughts, memory, ardor, desire, heart, and eyes (eyes which do not gaze so much as they express with tears). In line 5, the gaze briefly turns to the “fronde, honor de le famose fronti.” The poet then uses his words to

quickly return our gaze to him – to his life and error, which he blames for making him search among the plains and mountains – before our gaze is then again turned to the object of affection; though this time, it is returned to view the entire face (not just the brow) of that object. The speaker blames Love for using that face to cause him to do whatever Love wishes. As a result, he feels like a horse, both bridled and spurred, with little to no agency of its own. At this point, the lover is so deflated and desperate that, even though he is not sure if they exist in the world, he invokes “anime gentili et amorose” (12) along with naked shadows and dust. His humble request is merely that they stop and look at “quale è ‘l mio male” (14). Beyond the honor and beauty of the beloved’s face, the reader is informed of nothing specific about her admirable qualities. What is more, the main focus rests on the unfortunate effects that her honor and beauty have on the speaker himself. Thus forced to focus on the speaker and his pains, readers are not distracted by detailed, tempting imaginings of the object of affection. Rather, we step into the role that the speaker asks the spirits, shadows, and dust to play – we pause and look at the ills he has endured (not the beauties he has enjoyed) and, if we are kind and loving, we may even come to empathize with him.

Unlike what we find in Petrarch’s S. 161, Du Bellay’s satirical Sonnet XCI (preceded and followed by two sonnets that explicitly lampoon courtesans) focuses almost entirely on the female object’s body parts³⁴⁷ – including one part that he cannot “honnestement nommer” (ln.11):

Ô beaux cheveux d’argent mignonnement retors!
 Ô front crespé, et serein! et vous face doree!
 Ô beaux yeux de crystal! ô grand’ bouche honoree,
 Qui d’un large repli retrousses tes deux bords!

³⁴⁷ Hair, brow, face, eyes, mouth, teeth, throat, breasts, fingernails, hand, thigh, leg, and (unnamed) sex.

Ô belles dents d'ebene! ô precieux thresors,
 Qui faites d'un seul ris toute ame enamouree!
 Ô gorge damasquine en cent plis figuree!
 Et vous, beaux grands tetins, dignes d'un si beau corps!

Ô beaux ongles dorez! ô main courte, et grassette!
 Ô cuisse délicate! et vous jambe grossette,
 Et ce que je ne puis honnestement nommer!

Ô beau corps transparent! ô beaux membres de glace!
 Ô divines beautez! pardonnez moy de grace,
 Si pour estre mortel, je ne vous ose aimer.

(*Les Regrets*, S. XCI, Du Bellay 122)

The poet, however, does satirically elevate those anatomic terms by accompanying them with metaphorical and hyperbolic expressions such as “doree” (2), “crystal” (3), “honoree” (3), “ebene” (5), “thresors” (5), “dorez” (9), “transparent” (12), and “divines” (13) – all borrowed (and distorted) from Petrarchan and Petrarchist imagery to serve an “anti-Petrarchan” purpose³⁴⁸. Let us appreciate the more balanced approach demonstrated by Du Bellay’s sarcastic voice in its use of singular and plural nouns:

p
 p (+ s)
 (s) + p

p + p

s + s
 s + s
 s + s
 s (+ s)

p + s
 p + s
 p + s

s + p

³⁴⁸ See Du Bellay’s palinody “Contre les Petrarquistes” (in *Divers Jeux rustiques* in *Œuvres poétiques*, vol. V, ed. Henri Chamard, updated by Yvonne Bellenger, Paris: STFM, 1983, pp. 69-77), which mocks both the clichéd imagery and the endless idolizing and complaining favored by the genre (which Du Bellay himself, of course, had embraced in *L’Olive*): “Ceulx qui font tant de plaintes, / N’ont pas le quart d’une vraye amitié” (lns. 4-5, p. 69).

s + p
s + p

Ronsard and the others we have mentioned above also seem to achieve that relative balance. While not a satire (but an example of the rhetoric that Du Bellay satirizes), Ronsard's Sonnet LV remains heavily focused on numerous carnal features of the object of affection:

O doux parler, dont l'appast doulcereux
Nourrit encor la faim de ma memoire,
O front, d'Amour le Trophée et la gloire
O riz sucrez, o baisers savoureux.
O cheveulx d'or, o coustaulx plantureux
De liz, d'oeilletz, de Porphyre, et d'ivoyre,
O feuz jumeaulx dont le ciel me fit boyre
A si longs traitz le venin amoureux.
O vermeillons, o perlettes encloses,
O diamantz, o liz pourprez de roses,
O chant qui peulx les plus durs esmovoyr,
Et dont l'accent dans les ames demeure.
Et dea^[349] beaultez, reviendra jamais l'heure
Qu'entre mes bras je vous puisse r'avoyr?
(*Amours*, S. LV, Ronsard 36)³⁵⁰

Which, using the same parameters as above, gives us the following:

s + s
s + s
s + s
p + p

p + p
p + p + s + s
p + s
p + s

p + p
p + p
s + p

³⁴⁹ According to Weber's glossary, the interjection "dea" means "vraiment" (*Les Amours*, éd. cit., p. 812).

³⁵⁰ The editors refer us to "G. Mozzarello (Giolito, 1545, I, p. 80), *O desir di quest'occhi*, 11-14: *O cantar onde'l ciel, non pur huom goda; / O lume del mio cor soave, et piano, / O mille altre bellezze alte, et divine, / Deh sarà mai, ch'io vi riveggia, et oda?*" (Ronsard, *Amours* 529, n. 5 for Sonnet LV).

s + p
 p + s
 p + s / p

It is interesting to note that Ronsard's later versions of this poem (originally published in 1552-53) involves significant changes. The first version uses metaphorical imagery instead of explicitly naming the various parts of the body that he celebrates and for which he longs. In the 1578, then 1584 editions, lns. 9-14 are progressively replaced. A couple parts are actually named to accompany and clarify the original metaphors; on the other hand, the expression of desire becomes less immediate, due to the addition of a mythological reference (to Helen's beauty), while the urgent questioning of the original is replaced by a declarative statement. The result:

O dents, plustost blanches perles encloses,
 Lèvres, rubis entre-rangez (87 entrerougis) de roses
 O voix qui peux adoucir un Lion,
 Dont le doux chant l'oreille me vient poindre.
 O corps parfait de tes beautez la moindre
 Merite seule un siege d'Ilion.
(Ibid.)

Then, in the 1587 (posthumous) edition, the last four lines are replaced as follows:

O voix qui peux ainsi qu'un enchanteur
 Coup dessus coup toute mon ame estreindre
 Pour son portrait Nature te fist peindre,
 L'outil la Grace, Amour en fut l'auteur.
(Ibid.)

The mythology recedes, but the "portrait" is now aestheticized as such, while the "chant" heard from the object of affection takes on an increasingly sinister tone, from "emouvoir" to "poindre" and finally "estraindre" like a magician's spell.

Ronsard's Sonnet CLXXIII accumulates a balanced set of abstract and concrete, literal and metaphorical elements, partially organized by the Petrarchan figure of antithesis: "traits" (1), "miel" (4), "fiel" (4), "chault" (5), "froyd" (6):

O traitz fichez dans le but de mon ame,
 O folle emprise, ô pensers repensez,
 O vainement mes jeunes ans passez,
 O miel, ô fiel, dont me repaist Madame,
 O chault, ô froyd, qui m'englace et m'enflamme,
 O promptz desirs d'esperance cassez,
 O douce erreur, ô paz en vain trassez,
 O montz, ô rocz, que ma douleur entame,
 O terre, ô mer, chāos, destins et cieulx,
 O nuit, ô jour, ô Manes stygieux,
 O fiere ardeur, ô passion trop forte:
 O vous Démons, et vous divins Espritz,
 Si quelque amour quelque foys vous a pris,
 Voyez pour dieu quelle peine je porte.
 (*Les Amours*, S. CLXXIII, Ronsard 110)

Here, the subject is more focused on himself and his experience and on invoking various potential witnesses to his endless pain rather than on the object of affection herself. All that we know of her ("Madame" (4)) is that she (metaphorically) feeds him both "miel" (4) and "fiel" (4). The fundamental ambivalence of this erotic rhetoric can be expressed within the same sonnet (the same line, even), or from one sonnet to another.

In Baïf's Sonnet VI celebrating "Francine," what is conveyed is praise of the lady's virtues:

O celeste beauté! gaye douceur benine,
 Qui dessauvageroit la beste plus sauvage!
 O sens, plus arresté que ne porte son age,
 Qui ne peut rien penser que de chose divine!
 Sens, qui, comme le feu purge l'or et l'afine,
 Par un parler divin sortant de l'ame sage
 Afine mon esprit: m'élevant le courage,
 A ne penser de rien qui d'elle ne soit dine!
 O doux acueil! ô port dine d'une deesse!
 O grande honnesteté, Vertu, grace naïve!
 O valeur! ô maintien! ô toute gentillesse!
 Divinité, qu'encore assez je ne desire,

(Bien que de tout mon cœur) sans vous faut que je vive,
Si vivre, d'un chetif qui vous perd, se peut dire.
(*Les Amours de Francine*, II, S. VI, Baïf 148)³⁵¹

Sonnet XLIV, in contrast, bears tones of acute pain and disappointment:

O pas en vain perduz! ô esperances vaines!
O trop puissant desir! ô par trop foible cœur!
O trop flateuse amour! ô trop âpre langueur!
O mes yeux, non plus yeux, mais de pleurs deux fontaines!
O soulas peu certains, tristesses trop certaines!
O pour si claire foy trop aveugle rigueur!
O graces, ô beautez, dont la belle vigueur
En vigueur entretient tousjours fraiches mes peines!
O souhets, ô soupirs, ô pensers, ô regrets!
O prez, campagnes, eaux, ô roches, ô forets!
O deesses, ô dieux de la terre et de l'onde!
O ciel, ô terre, ô mer! O dieu qui luis le jour,
Deesse qui la nuit, Voyez vous autre amour
Qui face qu'en Amant tant de tristesse abonde?
(*Les Amours de Francine*, II, S. XLIV, Baïf 193)³⁵²

Toward the end of the century – and of this heavily coded tradition, which, on the secular side, keeps upping the ante –, Desportes' Sonnet XLII about "Hippolyte" shows how this same accumulative rhetoric has grown negative and hostile:

O doux venin mortel, ô guide tromperesse!
O l'oubly gracieux des plus grieves douleurs!
O laz subtil d'Amour, couvert de belles fleurs!
O nouvelle Sereine! ô douce enchanteresse!
O paix instable et fausse! ô puissante Deesse,
Qui fais durer l'Amour, et qui crois ses chaleurs!
Esperance, où es-tu? las au fort des malheurs
Maintenant sans pitié ton secours me delaisse!

Ce fus toy qui me fis follement hazarder
En la guerre d'Amour, et tu fuis sans m'aider,

³⁵¹ For Caldarini, the source is Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, ch. lxxxiii, "In qual dura alpe, in qual solingo e strano," vv. 20-26: "Dolci accoglienze sante, / onestà mai non vista e leggiadria, senno sopra l'uman, concetto altero, / che'l mio stanco pensiero / guidar solete al ciel per piana via, / or mi conven di voi pur viver privo, / se chi perde un tal ben si può dir vivo" (Baïf, *Second livre de l'Amour de Francine* in *Les Amours de Francine* 148).

³⁵² Caldarini notes that, in addition to the theme and movement created by the apostrophes, many of the images in Baïf's first quatrain are borrowed from Petrarch's Sonnet 161 (*O passi sparsi*). She also points to the similarity between line 5 in Baïf's sonnet and line 5 in Du Bellay's S. LV in *L'Olive* ("O foible esprit, chargé de tant de peines") while Baïf's lines 9-10 may be compared to various lines in the poetic works of Gesualdo, Giolito, and Ronsard.

Me laissant aux dangers compagne peu fidelle.
 Helas retourne à moy, console mon trespas,
 Mais je t'appelle en vain. On ne console pas
 Avec peu d'esperance une douleur mortelle.

(*Les Amours d'Hippolyte*, S. XLII, Desportes 87)³⁵³

The speaker is beyond bitter and now traffics in insults. Although, as many examples show (the three below among others), this trend grew out of such pieces' heavy focus on the speaker himself and his torments rather than on the beloved considered as such:

O foible esprit, chargé de tant de peines,
 Que ne veulx-tu soubz la terre descendre?
 O cœur ardent, que n'es-tu mis en cendre?
 O tristes yeulx, que n'estes vous fontaines?

O bien douteux! ô peines trop certaines!
 O doulx sçavoir, trop amer à comprendre!
 O Dieu qui fais que tant j'ose entreprendre,
 Pourquoi rends-tu mes entreprises vaines?

O jeune archer, archer qui n'as point d'yeulx,
 Pourquoi si droict as-tu pris ta visée?
 O vif flambeau, qui embrases les Dieux,

Pourquoy as-tu ma froideur attisée?
 O face d'ange! ô cœur de pierre dure!
 Regarde au moins le torment que j'endure.
 (*L'Olive*, S. LV [XLVIII], Du Bellay 109)

O beaux yeux bruns, ô regards destournez,
 O chaults souspirs, ô larmes espandues,
 O noires nuicts vainement attendues,
 O jours luyans vainement retournez:
 O tristes pleints, ô desirs obstinez,
 O tens perdu, ô peines despendues,
 O mille morts en mille retz tendues,
 O pires maulx contre moy destinez:
 O pas espars, ô trop ardente flame,
 O douce erreur, ô pensers de mon ame,
 Qui çà, qui là, me tournez nuict et jour,
 O vous mes yeux, non plus yeux mais fontaines,
 O dieux, ô cieux, et personnes humaines,
 Soyez pour dieu tesmoins de mon amour.

³⁵³ Graham notes that the source of this sonnet is "Rota, *Dolce mortel venen, scorta fallace* (Giolito, p. 511)" (*Les Amours d'Hippolyte*, Desportes 87, n. 1).

(*Souspirs*, S. LV, Magny 65-66)³⁵⁴

O mon Cœur plein d'ennuis que, trop prompt, j'arraché,
 Pour immoler à une, hélas qui n'en fait conte!
 O mes vers douloureux les courriers de ma honte,
 Dont le cruel Amour ne fut jamais touché!
 O mon teint pallissant, devant l'âge seiché
 Par la froide rigueur de celle qui me donte!
 O desirs trop ardans d'une jeunesse pronte!
 O mes yeux dont sans cesse un fleuve est espanché!
 O pensers trop pensez, qui rebellez mon ame!
 O debile raison, ô laqs, ô traits, ô flame!
 Qu'Amour tient en ses yeux trop beaux pour mon malheur !
 O douteux esperer! ô douleur trop certaine!
 O soupirs embrasez, tesmoins de ma chaleur!
 Viendra jamais le jour qui doit finir ma peine?
 (*Les Amours d'Hippolyte*, S. XXXVI, Desportes 81)³⁵⁵

The point of the litanic structure is to deliver, *pêle-mêle*, the hyperbolic catalog of the tortures inflicted on the lover by the beloved or by love itself. The poet sings of what he feels, and what he feels is pain, from every angle. The earliest sonnet of the three – Du Bellay's, from *L'Olive* – does at least conclude by looking at the object of affection (or, rather, by asking her to look at him); but all that we come to learn about her is that she has the face of an angel, the better to contrast it with the hard stone that is her heart.

Further, what this torture often asks is not to end but, rather, to find a third party who will serve as witness: that is what is requested from many of the “ô” form's targets. In Petrarch's Sonnet 161, we find the plea that the “anime gentili et amorose” and “nude ombre et polve” (S. 161, 12 and 13) “deh ristate a veder quale è 'l mio male” (14). Unlike

³⁵⁴ This, we recall, is the sonnet that is supposed to form a duet with Labé's Sonnet II. The two poems share the same quatrains, but Labé's tercets are rightly considered vastly superior, which is interesting if we assume that Magny wrote both versions. See M. Huchon, *Louise Labé* and the article “Dé-Tournes-Ment.”

³⁵⁵ “La structure de ce sonnet, avec son développement par apostrophes, est imitée de Pétrarque, *O passi sparsi, o pensier vaghi e pronti* (Mestica cxxviii, p. 239), mais Desportes l'avait sans doute rencontré chez beaucoup d'autres poètes comme, par exemple, les Italiens Gesualdo, *O viva fiamma, miei sospiri* (*Rime diverse*, 1545, p. 33) et Mozarello (*Rime diverse*, 1545, p. 80). Cf. Ronsard, *Amours* I, xlvi et cxlv (Laumonier, STFM IV, p. 49 et p. 139). La source est Ragnina, *O core mio doglioso, e discontento* (*Rime scelte* II, p. 608)” (Graham, *Les Amours d'Hippolyte*, Desportes 81, n. 1).

the desire (and hope) Coignard conveys in Sonnet XXV – the desire and hope to be(long) to the object of her affection –, the desire expressed here is merely that something witness his irrational misfortune. A very similar desire and hope are conveyed in Ronsard's Sonnet CLXXIII, Magny's Sonnet LV (in which we find the petition that his many addressees be "tesmoins de mon amour" (S. LV, 14)), and Du Bellay's Sonnet LV, which directly asks the cruel object of affection, rather than other beings, to witness the torment he endures (which we may read in a slightly more or even less hopeful light). The same occurs in Desportes' Sonnet XLVIII, which closely imitates Ronsard's famous "Ciel, air, et vents..." sonnet to Cassandre³⁵⁶, only to darken it significantly:

O champs, cruels voleurs du bien qui me tourmente!
 O prez, qui sous ses pas vous peignez de couleurs!
 O bois qui fus tesson de mes grieves douleurs,
 L'heureux soir que j'ouvry ma poitrine brulante!
 O vent qui fais mouvoir ceste divine plante,
 Te joüant, amoureux, parmy ses blanches fleurs!
 O canaux tant de fois desbordez de mes pleurs!
 Et vous lieux écartez où souvent je lamante:
 Puis qu'un respect craintif m'a de vous séparé,
 Puis que je ne voy plus l'oeil du mien adoré,
 Puis que seul vous avez ce que seul je desire,
 S'il ne m'est pas permis par la rigueur des cieus,
 Champs, prez, bois, vent, canaux, et vous sauvages lieux,
 Faites luy voir pour moy l'aigreur de mon martyre.
 (*Les Amours d'Hippolyte*, S. XLVIII, Desportes 93)³⁵⁷

In Petrarch's Sonnet 253, Ronsard's Sonnet LV, and Baïf's Sonnet CII, however, the desire of desire is not merely to have witnesses: it is communicated directly to the beloved in the form of unanswered questions. The reader discovers the speaker's wish as he makes the (hopeless) inquiry:

³⁵⁶ This sonnet (*Amours*, LVII), on which see our Chapter V below, addresses 20 different parts of a natural landscape to ask them to convey to Cassandre the "Adieu" that the lover was too upset to utter. It does *not* use the exclamation "ô," since it commandeers these objects instead of celebrating or desiring them.

³⁵⁷ Graham also sheds light on the source of this sonnet: "La source est Bevilaqua, *Herbe felici et prato avventuroso* (*Rime di diversi*, 1547, 53 v^o) à travers Ronsard, *Ciel, air et vents, plains et mons découverts* (Laumonier, STFM IV, p. 59)" (*Les Amours d'Hippolyte*, Desportes 93, n. 1).

O dolci sguardi, o parolette accorte,
 or fia mai il dì ch' i' vi riveggia et oda?
 (*Canzoniere*, S. 253, 1-2, Petrarch 356)

Similar is Ronsard's rhetorical question, in the first version of the sonnet seen above:

Et dea beaultez, reviendra jamais l'heure
 Qu'entre mes bras je vous puisse r'avoyr?
 (S. LV, 13-14, Ronsard 36)

Placing his question at the end of the poem rather than at the beginning (as Petrarch had done in Sonnet 253), Ronsard conveys his desire to once again “have in his embrace” the beautiful object of his affection: but the meaning that is actually conveyed is that it will never happen. Petrarch's persona desires to once again see and hear the object of affection; Ronsard's, to have once again the object of affection between his arms – only to curse, in subsequent iterations of that wish, the very impossibility of its satisfaction.

A keen imitator of Ronsard, Baïf also places his question at the end of another sonnet to Francine:

O beaux yeux azurins, ô regards de douceur!
 O cheveux, mes liens, dont l'estoffe j'ignore
 Mais dont je sen l'étreinte! O beau front que j'adore!
 O teint qui éteindroit des roses la fraîcheur!
 O ris doux et serain, qui me fondoit le cœur:
 Doux ris qui sont beau teint modestement colore!
 O chant, qui me ravist quand je le rememore,
 Chant, qui du plus cruel pourroit estre vainqueur!
 O parler deceleur des graces de son ame,
 Qui trop court tant de fois m'a fait sembler le jour!
 O bouche toute pleine et de sucre et de bame!
 O baisers, qui m'ont fait porter bien peu d'envie
 A ce qui paist les dieux au celeste sejour!
 Vous retiendray-je point une fois en ma vie?
 (*Les Amours de Francine*, II, S. CII, Baïf 259)

Here the enumeration of the beloved's charms is explicitly positive and sensual; satisfaction there *was*, however limited. The bitterness is entirely confined in the notion – alluded to in ln. 7, clarified in ln. 14 – that whatever enjoyment was obtained is now past.

In Du Bellay's Sonnet LV (quoted above), the number of questions posed (five) is exceptionally high; and the questions outnumber the exclamations. In the first eight lines, each interrogation ends with a sort of downward fall, the vain desire, since nothing works, to end it all and die. In lines 10 and 12, the last two questions, addressed respectively to Cupid ("Pourquoy si droict as-tu pris ta visée?") and to the "vif flambeau" of love ("Pourquoy as-tu ma froideur attisée?"), revisit the moment of *innamoramento* to underline its tragic irony: the blindfolded "jeune archer" (9) did successfully shoot his arrow directly at the lover's heart; the flame of love did warm up his "froideur" (12) only to expose him to that of the beloved, in which no embers can possibly be stoked. In other words, the initially cold heart's *status quo* was infinitely preferable; the metamorphosis operated by love only produced a "tourment" (14), and the poet is reduced to wishing that the object of his affection would "au moins" (14) look at it.

In Desportes' Sonnet XXXVI (also quoted above), the final question ("Viendra jamais le jour qui doit finir ma peine?" (14)) has grown both more bitter and more rhetorical. While they understand that the desired day may (will) never come, readers are left to wonder if the speaker is not simply awaiting death, not caring at this point what ends his pain, so long as the pain is ended. Somewhat different is the case of Desportes' sonnet "À Mademoiselle de La Chastaigneraye," which is similar to Coignard's Sonnet XXV in one respect: the speaker actively wishes the object of affection, as per a "loy" (12)³⁵⁸ that proceeds from it, to be the only thing on which he focus.

O beaux cheveux chatains d'une qui ce nom porte,
Ondez, crespes et longs, où les Jeux inconstans

³⁵⁸ See Coignard's Sonnet XXXV (discussed earlier): "Ha! qu'il nous payera pour un peu de constance, / Que nous luy garderons en la perseverance / De **sa divine loy**, nous conduisans au port, / Et havre de salut, de sa gloire infinie" (9-12, Coignard 181).

Et les petits Amours, comme oiseaux voletans,
 S'emprisonnent l'un l'autre en mainte et mainte sorte,
 O bel oeil, qui d'Amour rend la majesté forte,
 Clair, brun, fier et piteux, seul soleil de ce tans,
 Le bois sec reverdit au retour du printans,
 Et le tien fait fleurir mon esperance morte!
 Il faudroit estre roche, acier ou diamant,
 Pour ne devenir flamme et mourir doucement
 Aupres d'une beauté de beautez si pourveuë.
O celestes rayons, qui me donnez la loy,
Je voudrois estre Argus alors que je vous voy
Et, ne vous voyant point, estre privé de veuë.
 ("A Mademoiselle de La Chastaigneraye")³⁵⁹

In addition to enumerating the various attributes (obviously quite different in value) of their respective objects, Desportes' and Coignard's sonnets are similar in that they both affirm the poets' desire to be entirely devoted to the objects in question. Yet the modes or dynamics of this exclusivity could not be more different: Desportes' "Je voudrois estre" (13) is the exact opposite of Coignard's "je veux estre" (14). Coignard's desire (an act of will) is to belong to her chosen object. The desire (or fantasy) of Desportes' lover is to be "Argus" (13) – the all-seeing giant of Greek mythology whose body is covered with eyes – when he sees his beloved, or to be blinded when he does not. Not only is the final wish openly gratuitous and divided instead of all-encompassing, but its actual focus is on the... focus, on the gaze of the speaker himself, which he imagines now demultiplied, now suppressed, depending on the object's presence: the "celestes rayons" (12) that emanate from her own eyes may give "loy" to his behavior, but what matters to him is what he gets to see, as the only (albeit intermittent) form of enjoyment he retains some access to.

Reviewing all those examples, we understand at once what is – and must be – radically different when Coignard's devout persona seeks to be the passive recipient of

³⁵⁹ Desportes, Philippe. "A Mademoiselle de La Chastaigneraye, Heliette de Vivonne" in *Diverses amours et autres Œuvres meslées*. Ed. V. E. Graham. Geneva: Droz / Paris: Minard, 1963, p. 165.

God's embrace. Her words are not tasked to develop a lustful or resentful fantasy: they have to express a genuine – fully willed – commitment and, at the same time, form a genuine prayer, because no commitment is likely to suffice. Being human, the commitment will falter, and the prayer itself may have trouble being genuine; that is, as faithful, hopeful and loving as it must be. But the speaker would deprive her prayer of meaning (of *any* meaning or value) if she assumed, as the “*pétrarquistes*” do, that it will never be fulfilled – or never be fulfilled again, which amounts to the same doom.

– *Toward the sovereign good*

Let us now return to Coignard's Sonnet XXV. When juxtaposed alongside the poems we have just read, it stands out in at least four different ways.

First, it is the only poem for which the poet opts to maintain the interjection “O” at the beginning of all fourteen lines, rather than at the beginning of a mere portion of them. Some readers may find that one effect of Coignard's decision is that the device becomes monotonous or even exemplifies her poetic ignorance because, typically, the authors of erotic litanies would make sure to introduce some variation so as to avoid complete monotony³⁶⁰. It is also true that another effect of Coignard's decision is that the shift in tone traditionally initiated by the *volta*, at the opening of the sestet, is rendered less dramatic. However, we suggest that something particularly meaningful takes place as

³⁶⁰ Du Bellay famously uses anaphora to full monotonous effect in sonnets V and LXXIX of the *Regrets*. In Sonnet V, the expression “Ceux qui” is the opening staple of lines 1-13, only to be broken by “Moy, qui” in the final line. In Sonnet LXXIX, the words “Je n'escris” open all 14 lines of the poem. This minimalism has a deliberate negative purpose – *i.e.*, satire and/or elegiac self-pity – and nothing to do with love of any kind. Interestingly, in Sonnet XCI – a mocking celebration of very carnal beauties – Du Bellay does not utilise the device to full monotonous effect. Instead, the interjection “Ô” debuts lines 1-3, 5, 7, 9-10, and 12-13, but not lines 4, 6, 8, 11, or 14. Yet the repetition that does occur still successfully serves to parody the device and is intended for satirical effect.

a result of Coignard's risky choice. As we have seen when reading the other poems in our selection, the exclamation "O" can accompany and take on a variety of tones. In fact, its very point is to allow wild swings from celebration to deploration to imprecation. What is common across the board for these poets is that the exclamation expresses (be it sincerely or ironically) a certain intensity of emotion that produces a (theoretically) spontaneous, irrepressible verbal reaction, subjecting all that concerns love or the beloved to the self-regarding distress of the lover himself (or herself, in Labé's case).

By contrast, Coignard's use of the device points to the many intense emotions (celebration, gratitude, humility, desire, surprise, bewilderment, awe; love indeed) that she experiences in reaction to one thing, one being that actually transcends them – the sovereign good; and, like the sovereign good, the repeated exclamation is not supposed to accumulate aimlessly for the sake of expression. It must hold together and go somewhere, in a dynamic but coherent complexity, *within* the essence of one seemingly simple (although unthinkable) entity. That is, it visually and aurally holds together within itself the variety of roles played by God in our souls, the various effects and aspects of His essence as perceived by the "je," and even the variety of individuals (*moi* and *nous* ; the latter is greater than the former) impacted by God's actions. Thus, the effect of anaphora serves a spiritual purpose; for Coignard, this device must be embraced fully, and it must be positive, if not ecstatic – while also *risking* monotony in the pursuit of something infinitely greater than itself. Yet Coignard is not insensitive to the minimum of variety that secular aesthetics would demand for a sonnet like this, to compensate for its monotony: she breaks the "O de" pattern in lines 1-8 with "O le" in line 9 and inserts an

additional “ô” in the middle of the same line – something that a number of others poets have done³⁶¹.

A second way in which Coignard’s Sonnet XXV stands out is that it makes use of a particularly stark version³⁶² of *rime pauvre* alongside *rime riche* and *rime léonine*; whereas the majority of the poems by the other French authors we have mentioned combine a less-stark version³⁶³ of *rime pauvre* with rhymes that are *léonine*, *riche*, *trop riche*, and/or *équivoque*. *Rime pauvre* is implemented by Coignard in lns. 9 and 10 (“but” / “salut”) as well as 12, and 13 (“nous” / “espous”), with the consonant that follows the stressed vowel appearing “*pour l’œil*.” Interestingly, these also comprise the only three lines in which verbs are used to describe what God does or has done: “conduis” (10), “as souffert” (12), “t’es fait” (13). Given the fact that she does not fail to demonstrate poetic skill and due poetic and devotional diligence elsewhere (by using *rime riche* and *rime léonine*), it appears that the clarity, simplicity, and poignancy of the message conveyed in lines 9-13 are enhanced deliberately. They add emphasis, similar to the way an orator’s pounding fist might emphasize certain words as they are uttered.

With regard to the conventions of rhyme in 16th-century French poetry, an additional risk is incurred by the repetition of the word “estre” in rhyme position in lines 11 and 14. Poets after Marot tend to avoid rhymes like this, and Malherbe will soon ban

³⁶¹ Inserting an additional “ô” in the middle of ln. 9 is a choice that is also made by Ronsard (*Amours*, S. LV), Du Bellay (*Regrets*, S. XCI), Magny (*Souspirs*, S. LV), Baïf (*Amours de Francine* S. VI and S. XLIV), and Desportes (*Amours d’Hippolyte*, S. XLII). Some of the other poets we have mentioned do insert a mid-line “ô” but not in ln. 9, at the traditional site of the *volta*.

³⁶² By this we mean that the rhyme is made up of only one last stressed vowel, with no *consonne d’appui* and no phoneme(s) following the stressed vowel. The only other poem we have cited that does this is Sonnet VI by Grévin: “tombeau” (11) and “l’eau” (14). This type of rhyme had mostly been ruled out by the middle of the 16th century.

³⁶³ By this we mean that the rhyme is made up of a last stressed vowel that is preceded by a *consonne d’appui* and/or is followed by one or more additional phonemes.

them altogether. A similar repetition is present in lines 8-10 in the third of Marquets' spiritual songs about "la Nativité de nostre Seigneur." The canticle is as follows:

O Sapience eternelle,
 Procedant divinement
 De la bouche paternelle,
 Sans fin ny commencement:
 Ta main regist et compasse
 Les cieux et la terre basse,
 Contenant le tout en soy:
 Toute chose qui peut **estre**
 Prend sa vigueur et son **estre**
 Et sa naissance de toy^[364].
 Combien ta bonté immense
 Devons nous magnifier?
 Et ta douceur et clemence
 Sans cesse glorifier?
 Veu que ta majesté haute
 Pour reparer nostre humanité,
 En la vierge sainte et pure,
 Conjoignant nostre nature
 Avec ta divinité.
 Vien nous enseigner la voye
 De toute perfection,
 Afin qu'en tout heur et joye
 Nous ayons fruition
 De la Perle et Marguerite,
 Que ton saint escrit recite
 Digne d'un prix immortel,
 Et sur tout fay que d'icelle
 Puisse jouir en fin celle
 Qui a receu un nom tel.

("Encores à ce propos [*i.e.*, Sur la Nativité de nostre Seigneur]."
Divines poësies, Marquets 46-47)³⁶⁵

Such a repetition would have been tolerated by Thomas Sébillet (*Art poétique François*, 1548)³⁶⁶, as long as the words belong to different grammatical classes – which

³⁶⁴ Meaning the 'Sapience eternelle' addressed in line 1.

³⁶⁵ As we just saw, Winn points to Coignard's Sonnet VI as a potential indicator that Coignard may have read and been inspired by "Sonet 6" in Marquets' earlier work (*Divines poësies*). We wonder if Coignard's use of the "estre" repetition in Sonnet XXV may also have been inspired by Marquets.

³⁶⁶ Sébillet, Thomas. *L'Art poétique français*. Eds. Félix Gaiffe and Francis Goyet. Paris: STFM, 1988.

is the case in Coignard's poem: the word "estre" first in noun, then in verb form³⁶⁷. However, Du Bellay insists in the *Deffence et illustration* (1549) that meaning must be significantly enriched in such instances³⁶⁸. Is that the case with Coignard's implementation? It certainly is, in our view, from Coignard's devotional and spiritual perspective³⁶⁹; for this possible or apparent "facilité" or "maladresse" clearly has a purpose³⁷⁰. In this case it opens a spiritual, metaphysical rift between being and being, between "être" as noun (meaning existence and/or essence: the fact that God made me be

³⁶⁷ The same cannot be said for the repetition of "est refroidy" at the end of lines 9 and 10 in Coignard's Sonnet LXXXVII: if it is deliberate rather than an oversight, it is a manifest transgression.

³⁶⁸ Du Bellay (*Deffence*, II, vii) dismisses both "equivoques" (rhyming homonyms) and "simples ryme avecques leurs composez" (like "baisser" and "abaissier") "s'ilz ne changent ou augmentent grandement la signification de leurs simples" (Malherbe will ban both in all cases). In his edition of the *Deffence* (pp. 150-151, n. 95), J.-Ch. Monferran argues that Du Bellay, while appearing to reject all "equivoques," still draws the technical line where Sébillet did: rhyming homonyms must have different meanings or belong to different grammatical categories; Coignard's "estre," therefore, would remain acceptable as a case of the latter. Yet, as Monferran also points out, semantic difference matters far more to Du Bellay than its grammatical counterpart; which is why no rhyme of "estre" against "estre" is found in his work (or Ronsard's) as far as we can tell, because the verb and the noun are too close in "substance." So Coignard (born a mere 5 years before Malherbe) may indeed be or appear clumsy – in order to mobilize the full weight of metaphysical and spiritual difference between "estre" and "estre."

³⁶⁹ See our remarks, at the beginning of Chapter II, on her debt in this respect to the *Jeux floraux* and their emphasis on religious content. Yet, as we also know, this religious priority did not prevent (on the contrary) such poems from being formally challenging and paying scrupulous attention to technique: in this respect, Gabrielle does break away from the tradition.

³⁷⁰ Winn makes a similar argument about irregularities with respect to the caesura (in sonnets XLVIII, LIII, LXXV, CXV: "Si [Coignard] n'observe pas toujours la coupe médiane, c'est qu'elle ne convient pas au 'style parlé' de beaucoup de ses poèmes, qui sont, on l'a vu, des prières, des dialogues avec Dieu, des lamentations, des confidences"); and with respect to her *enjambements* (see sonnets XIX, LXXVII (lns. 11-12), CXVIII, CXXIX), which "nuisent à l'architecture bien nette du sonnet," yet "traduisent l'élan passionné de la poétesse 'Chrestienne'" and are "expressifs, amenés avec souplesse" (Coignard 114-115). So does Gregg, after Kaiser, about the "weakness of the final line of [Coignard's] sonnets (le trait final)": "For sixteenth-century rhetoricians," Gregg adds, "the last line of a sonnet is what gives it its poignancy and power"; so it could be the case that "Coignard's weak conclusions do reveal a certain lack of skill" (Gregg 13). Raymond Lebègue has criticized the lack of "trait final" in Coignard's sonnets (see Coignard 105-106). However, Winn points out that Coignard "n'a pas composé ses vers avec l'ambition de poètes qui désirent plaire. Elle n'en envisageait pas [...] la publication immédiate. [...] [Elle] n'ignore pas l'attention scrupuleuse qu'un bon poète doit apporter à son œuvre: [...] Mais [elle] a opté pour un langage, un style sobre, dépourvu d'ambitions littéraires" (Coignard 105). Gregg summarizes Kaiser's opinion that "Coignard's failure to refine the final line of her sonnets might be explained by her greater concern for the message contained in her verse (*Poétesse dévote*, 66)" (Gregg 13). So these would all be examples of sacrifices that Coignard makes deliberately, for the sake of her poetry's intimate spiritual character. We should also note that nine sonnets fail to follow the poetic prescription imposed by the *Pléiade* to alternate masculine and feminine rhymes (Coignard 115).

/ the substance of what God made me to be) and “être” as verb (the simplest, most naked expression of the yearn to become and belong in full, to do what she was meant to do, and to be what (*i.e.*, where) she was meant to be but is not (yet) and may never get to). Moreover, the word “estre” plays a significant psychic role as Coignard moves beyond the intellectual and on to the affective. That is, she acknowledges that she owes – “dois” (11) – her “being” (“mon estre”) to God, but then moves on to activate her own will. Instead of stating that she *must* “be(long)” to God, she declares that she *wants* (“veux,” (14)) to “be(long) to” (“estre [à],” 14) Him.

We would also argue, however, that the meaning is enriched from an aesthetic standpoint as well. Structurally, the repeated word at the place of the rhyme rounds out the parallelism of both lines 11 and 14, which are two lines that act as “book-ends” to the two lines describing what Christ has done:

O le tout de mon tout, ô ma fin et mon but,
O celui qui conduis mon ame à son salut,
O pere liberal à qui je dois mon **estre**.

O humain Redempteur qui as souffert pour nous,
O tres-haut Fils de Dieu qui t’es fait nostre espous,
O seul bien souverain, à toy seul je veux **estre**.
(S. XXV, 9-14, Coignard 170-171)

Aurally, the “e caduc” at the end of “estre” requires that the speaker linger a bit longer on the word. In turn, this lingering may cause the words to sink in further and may give the reader/listener time to contemplate and discriminate between the two uses of the same utterance. Visually, the first vowel of the word being an “e” may cause the reader to subconsciously associate the word “estre” with the noun “espous” because the latter is the only other end-of-line word that begins with the same vowel. Moreover, the only other time the verb *être* is used in the poem is as a helping verb in line 13. The expression “Tu

es” is omitted from lines 1-8 where, in normal speech, one would likely insert those two words. Consequently, the reader of this sonnet must mentally supply those words to make sense of each line. Additionally, Coignard declares who God is to her in the entire poem (accumulating seventeen different names or roles); but the only role *she* desires to perform is that of being/belonging to Him. The simplicity of this desire to “be(long)” to one’s lover becomes all the more meaningful and lovely when we juxtapose it with the farrago of desires endlessly expressed by the secular poets; desire to hear, see, hold, have the object of affection at their disposal; desire for the entire world to witness the torment of this desire and the frustrations to which it is doomed.

A third way in which Coignard’s sonnet stands out arises when we compare the material that accumulates in it with that which is accumulated (to increasingly damning effect) in the secular love poems from which our author departs; but also and more subtly, as we will see, in Marquet’s poem (“Pour louer la puissance, sapience, et bonté de Dieu”) quoted above. In Coignard’s poem, what is accumulated are the effects, actions, and essence of God, as experienced by the faithful in response to *all* her travails and desires. The point is not to detail her highs and lows, but to show, over and over again, how what God is answers and takes care of them, again and again, by definition and whatever they may be. Repetition may not necessarily represent exactly what the poet feels, but it certainly expresses her resolution to focus on God’s perpetual and perfect response to what she feels. As a result, the reader is made aware of the *comprehensiveness* of God; and some may even be, along with Coignard herself, convicted of the belief that they owe their “all” (finite as it is) to the infinite “all” that is God. Moreover, the quantity of the accumulated material contributes to the movement of

the poem, generating a progression that moves both inwards and upwards. After opening the poem with an expression denoting multiplicity (“de tous mes labeurs” (1)), Coignard moves on to use an expression that denotes singularity: “le repos desirable” (1). This immediate closing effect at the end of the very same line announces an expression emphasizing singularity that is situated at the very end of the entire sonnet, where, as we know, the poet, having lauded the many aspects of her singular addressee, clearly declares her singular desire to belong to Him: “O **seul** bien souverain, à toy **seul** je veux estre” (14).

Likewise, what at first seems – if read from the familiar perspective of secular love and suffering – like a constant dichotomy between the “moy” and the “toy” eventually reveals a different dynamic between the two entities. In a sense, God (already) belongs to her, just as she already belongs to Him. God is the one thing that presently meets and fulfills her many (disparate) parts as she aspires to be one simple thing to Him – she aspires to be His, full stop. Yet, as we have seen, the poem cannot be more than the expression of this aspiration. The fact that it is not yet actually fulfilled authorizes neither dispersion nor despair, however: on the contrary, the reaffirmation (sublimation) of desire as *will* (“je veux estre”) focuses it on the poet’s part; on what she has to do. God’s love is a given (contrary to that of the supposedly hard objects favored by the secular poets³⁷¹); what is not a given is only whether “I” am (and will remain) up to it. The prayer that asks something of God, therefore, consists of reminding me of what God is (to me), so as to rekindle that will: the will, not that God love me, but to love Him and Him only.

³⁷¹ Let us recall, however, that Petrarch mitigated the spectacle of Laura’s “cruelty” by her own reasons to resist his passion and her admonishments (after her death) that he give himself over to a higher love. His imitators are another story: by leaving out Petrarch’s spiritual longing, they tend to *posit*, more and more, the inherent inhumanity of the beloved. At the very end of the process, their delight is to insult her.

In Marquets' "Sonet 38," three characteristics (God's power, wisdom, and goodness, first announced in the title) are considered; within them are subsets in which God's actions are identified; not, in this case, by a "je" negotiating her own complicated relation to God (which, as we will see in our next chapter, happens most typically in this particular series of sonnets), but by a generic voice expressing an established truth on behalf of a "nous" that encompasses all mankind. Let us now quote the poem in full:

O l'admirable et divine puissance!
 Qui a de rien composé toute chose:
 O l'éternelle et sainte sapience!
 Qui tout regit, entretient et dispose:
 O la bonté en laquelle est enclose
 Misericorde, amour, pitié, clemence,
 Qui des enfers nous a la porte close,
 Et des beaux cieux nous donne jouissance.
 Qui ne loueroit telle perfection,
 Mais, par sus tout, l'ardente affection
 Dont ce bon Dieu nous a voulu poursuivre?
 Car qui a faict pendre et mourir en croix
 Ce grand Seigneur, ce Prince et Roy des Rois,
 Sinon amour, pour nous faire revivre?
 ("Pour louer la puissance, sapience, et bonté de Dieu.
 Sonet 38," *Divines poësies*, Marquets 77-78)

As an illustration of God's power at work, the poet mentions one act: from nothing, God composed all things (1). With this statement, a movement of expansion is set into effect. Next, to illustrate God's wisdom, Marquets lists not one but three acts: it is that which "tout regit, entretient et dispose" (4). We may note that the "toute chose" at the end of line 2 is picked up again and becomes "tout" near the beginning of line 4; the expanding effect is further perpetuated by the tricolon that ends with the verb "dispose" (*i.e.*, places/arranges): God's wisdom takes perpetual care of all that God's power has created. In the second quatrain, the poet shifts gears, switching from the perspective of Creation to that of Redemption. Instead of naming God's characteristic at the end of the line, as she

had done in lines 1 and 3, Marquets opens line 5 by naming God's "bonté." However, the impression of an outward or expanding movement stabilizes at the end of line 5, where we encounter the passive voice in the verbal unit "est enclose."

From here, the reader expects to follow a movement that goes deeper within an enclosure, rather than further out. Moreover, since the third-person singular conjugation used for "est enclose" leads us to expect to find a single feminine noun referring to that which is enclosed within God's goodness, it is a happy surprise that we encounter four feminine nouns, even though they signify, more or less, the same divine virtue: "Misericorde, amour, pitié, clémence" (6)³⁷². Nevertheless, they generate an expanding effect *within* the enclosure that is God's goodness – which already encompasses us. Lines 7-8 deepen the train of thought that is introduced by the word "clemence" at the end of line 6, but also introduce an additional movement of expansion through the identification, first, of the "door" that God's *bonté* has closed, then of the "door" that it has opened. We learn that God's goodness has closed Hell and opened Heaven for us. What is more, His goodness gives (note the use of the present tense) us the "jouissance" (6) of the heavens which, we may notice, are presented in the plural ("beaux cieux," ln. 8), as opposed to the singular lexical options of "ciel" or "paradis," for example. This flow of expansion and then compression followed by expansion again imitates the movement of a beating heart. Perhaps Marquets had a similar image in mind as she sought to get the "spiritual blood" pumping through the site of her readers' affections. The effect is all the more striking as it is *not* personal: no lyrical "je" is involved; the heart that beats here is supposed to be that of a community of believers.

³⁷² The noun "amour" can of course be feminine in 16th-century French.

Another key effect that the accumulation of lines 1-8 in Marquets' sonnet has on the reader is that one will have encountered the many character traits of God before one is (implicitly) reminded that such a collection points to God's singular, complete, all-encompassing perfection ("Qui ne loueroit telle perfection" (9)). However, the poet seems to foresee that reflecting on God's perfection may not suffice to inspire all readers to praise that perfect being. This may explain the rhetorical questions of the tercets, which "step back" from the effective praise of God in the quatrains to ask "who would not want to praise" God. Hence the introduction of an additional "fact," which will tap into one's affections even more intensely. Not only is love enclosed in God's goodness, God also wants to pursue us with "ardente affection" (10), which would be impossible (beyond ungrateful) not to praise. But the key is yet to come: the conjunction "Car" that opens line 12 signals to the reader that the definitive proof is on its way.

The organization of the final tercet is further evidence of Marquets' intellectual and poetic genius. By starting with the interrogative phrase "Car qui a faict pendre et mourir en croix" (12), the poet may be expecting her devout Catholic readers to instinctively assume responsibility for causing Christ's death on the Cross because of their own sin. Consequently, readers may come to sense even more shame upon reading line 13 because one's sin has not only hung *someone* on the Cross, but because that someone is the "grand Seigneur," the "Prince et Roy des Rois" (13). However, another pleasant surprise is gifted to the readers as they read the closing line of the entire poem. The answer provided by the poet is that it is ultimately "amour" (14) – God's love and God as love – that hung the Lord, Prince, and King of Kings to die on the Cross.

It is true that the conjunction “Sinon” (14) allows – if not invites – the reader to continue searching and meditating in order to see if there might be other, contributing answers to the one provided by the poet. On the other hand, even if the human reader’s sin did (of course, the point being Redemption) play a major role in causing Christ’s death, the added phrase “pour nous faire revivre” (14) essentially negates the possibility that we and our sin are ultimately the answers to the question posed in its entirety; for neither we nor our sin caused Christ’s death *in order to* make us live again. In this way, readers are, once more, reminded *both* of the immensity of God’s love (in the sacrifice of his only Son) and of the immensity of God’s power, wisdom, and goodness because – beyond even creating and maintaining the world – He was in control of and able to orchestrate such a grand expression of His love and desire for us to live (again) with Him, despite our own sin. Ultimately there is no difference between power, wisdom and love in God. But from our perspective, there is one: the death of Christ expresses “amour” above all, which we (as undeserving humans) should feel the urge to praise above all else.

Returning for a moment to Labé’s Sonnet II, we encounter a very different set of accumulated materials; and the effect that ensues is, in some respects, a reversal of what we have just discovered in Marquets’ sonnet. The accumulation in both poems brings to our attention a certain imbalance and injustice that have taken place *at the expense of the more ardent lover*. The reader of Marquets’ sonnet is playing a role similar to that of Labé’s addressee and object of affection, against whom the speaker in Labé’s poem makes her complaint. The question is, upon reading either poem: will the object of affection reciprocate with gratitude and love or will the many expressions of affection fall on deaf ears and a cold heart?

Of course, not everything is analogous between the two poems. In Marquets' sonnet, she is both the author and part of the collective "nous" that Christ loves so much. In Labé's sonnet, the speaker is a female poetic persona and she is the ardent lover, not the object of affection. Furthermore, in Marquets' poem, God's positive attributes are happily celebrated and admired, while the negative attributes of God's object(s) of affection are not even mentioned (except indirectly, via the punishment they deserve – Hell – and the death they cause, that of Christ on the Cross). In Labé's poem, in the manner we have seen elsewhere, the female lover's own attributes and behavior are laced with tones of desperation, bitterness, regret, and contempt towards her object of affection, whose negative attributes and behavior are also enumerated.

The attributes that are accumulated in the two poems are not only different because one set is harmonious and felicitous and the other full of cruel antitheses and complaints, but also because of the manner in which seemingly hyperbolic language is intended to be understood. In Marquets' sonnet, the words "toute chose" (2), "éternelle" (3), "tout" (4), "perfection" (9), and "Roy des Rois" (13) are not meant to be interpreted as hyperbolic. In this religious context, they are meant to convey divine truth and inspire awe and admiration in light of such truth. Something different occurs, in this respect, in the hyperbolic, cumulative language of Coignard's Sonnet XXV, which leaves readers wondering to what extent the speaker *already* personally experiences God to be the exclusive, superlative repose, happiness, fulfillment of hope, joy, helping force, *etc.* that she claims Him to be, and to what extent *she wants to* experience this, which is not quite the same thing. Her sincerity is not in doubt, nor can there be any doubt that the attributes she gathers speak to something she feels, *to an extent*. But it does not follow

(nor could it) that she has reached a state of definitive “repos”: the “salut” is yet to come and is not guaranteed. The poem’s hyperbole of faith (inspired by the language of King David in his Psalms) goes beyond what the speaker is actually capable of.

Coignard’s Sonnet C acknowledges as much, and confirms that there is a gap between what the devout speaker knows to be true and *total* devotion. In order to live the latter personally, she needs her (physical, intellectual, spiritual) eyes to perform their proper duty; she hopes and prays that such a definitive experience may come about:

Si j’esleve les yeux de mon entendement,
Ou quand les yeux du corps exercent leur office,
Las! mon Dieu, je voudrois que jamais je ne visse
Figure ny object fors que toy seulement.

Que tu sois en tous lieux mon soigneux pensement,
Ma delectation, ma joye, mon delice,
Et que pour ton amour sans cesse je languisse,
Cerchant en toy mon bien et seul contentement.

Que tant que je vivray je n’aye en ma memoire,
N’y en ma bouche rien que ton honneur et gloire,
Meditant nuict et jour tes graces et bontez,

Et de ma volonté ceste libre puissance
Ne tende qu’à la seule et sainte obeissance
De tous autres desirs chassant les vanitez.

(S. C, 259-260)

Compared to Sonnet XXV, Sonnet C makes us aware of the distance between “Je veux” and the defect of “ma volonté” when it pursues objects that it does not want to pursue. Down the latter road, Labé’s Sonnet II is exclusively concerned with these “autres desirs” of which the speaker of Coignard’s Sonnet C would like to be purged. An expression like “O mile morts en mile rets tendues” (8) is clearly hyperbolic *and* void of any profession of faith, regarding a form of love that merely burns physically while being morally unjust, since such a raging fire in me has not lit a single spark in you, the beloved. It goes

without saying that while both Coignard and Marquets focus their attention on the metaphysical and relational qualities and acts of God *vis-à-vis* His creatures, Labé's poem limits itself to a superficial though concrete perception of the object of affection. Indeed, all that we know about "him"³⁷³ is that he has beautiful brown eyes but turns away his gaze; he smiles, possesses a brow, hair, arms, hands, and fingers, plays musical instruments and sings well. The poem's only role is to convey the speaker's sense of definitive alienation from all of this, so as to inspire some kind of empathy; not within the heart of a lover, but within that of a reader made witness.

The accumulation in Marquets' sonnet also has the effect of leaving readers with a specific impression concerning the cosmos; and it is a very different impression from the one engendered in Labé's sonnet. In the former, because God is portrayed as being for "us," and because He rules all things in such a good, wise, and loving manner, we sense that the universe ultimately works in our favor: what we have to do is praise the result. Conversely, Labé's words leave us with the impression that the cosmos – night (3), day (4), the speaker's psyche (5), time (6), human beauty (9), and even musical instruments (10) – is not working in favor of the "je" that speaks here; all of it is arrayed against her. In between – and even though its inspiration places it much closer to Marquets than to Labé –, Coignard's Sonnet XXV does not evoke the cosmos or even, before line 12, a world larger than herself: she recognizes in herself both a series of problems and their unanimous solution; even though she recognizes God as the supreme Good, a degree of uncertainty remains when it comes to the question of whether or not she will eventually "get there" – and belong to Him.

³⁷³ The gender of the object of affection is never made explicit in this poem.

The respective outlooks of our three sonnets *vis-à-vis* their object of desire are also marked very precisely by each poet's use of singular and plural nouns. In Coignard's poem, God is identified as many things but each one is named in its singular form³⁷⁴. In contrast, when referring to things in her own possession, Coignard begins by using nouns that are, with only two exceptions, in their plural form: "mes labeurs" (1), "mes desirs" (2), "mon espoir" (3), "mes plaisirs" (4), "mon pouvoir" (5), "mes bienfaits" (6), "mes desseins" (7), "mes dangers" (8). Then, starting with line 9, she forgoes plural nouns (with the exception of the pronoun "nous" in line 12) and shifts to the (nearly) exclusive use of nouns in their singular form: "mon tout" (9), "ma fin" (9) "mon but" (9), "mon ame" (10), "mon estre" (11), "nostre espous" (13). For Marquets, God is also associated with a variety of things and all of those things are named using their singular form. The plural form refers to things that God either saves us from or opens for us – "enfers" (7), "cieux" (8) –, and above all to "nous" (8, 11, 14): a plurality that is not a sign of dispersion or alienation but of communion; one only reached by Coignard in line 12 of her own sonnet, when she evokes the suffering ("pour nous," not "pour moi") of the "Redempteur."

In Labé's sonnet, the first 8 lines are replete with plural nouns, but this pattern is broken by the singular "moy" in the second hemistich of ln. 8. The weight accrued by the numerous objects flying back and forth between the suffering "moy" (8) – "une femelle" (11) – and the indifferent "toy" (12 and 14) is exaggerated by the word "tant" repeated in lines 11 ("tant de flambeaus"), 12 ("tant de feus"), and 13 ("tant d'endroits

³⁷⁴ *I.e.*, "le repos" (1), "le [...] bon-heur" (2), "le comble" (3), "l'honneur" (3), "la joye" (4), "la force" (5), "le [...] donneur" (6), "le [...] gouverneur" (7), "le Sauveur" (8), "le tout" (9), "ma fin" (9), "mon but" (9), "celuy qui conduis" (10), "pere" (11), "Redempteur" (12), "Fils de Dieu" (13), "nostre espous" (13), "bien souverain" (14).

d'iceus"), and also echoed at the end of the words "portant" (12) and "tatant" (13). The phoneme [t] alone – present in every line except for lines 2 and 9 – also amplifies a weighty sense of accumulation. All of these aspects serve to augment the disparity the female persona senses between the great, contradictory mass of things she feels and the pitiful reality that "N'en est sur toy volé quelque estincelle" (14). Again, the respective positions of Marquets' and Labé's sonnets at two extremes of human experience allow us to situate Coignard's effort: that of an individual voice striving to overcome the alienation inherent in "tous mes desirs" and achieve fusion with the "bien souverain" of a loving God – *without* presuming that she is there already.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, Coignard's sonnet stands out in that it is the only poem in which the poet expresses a personal desire to *be(long)* to the object of her affection, who is also her addressee. The starkest contrast is provided by Labé's declaration: "De toy me plein" (12), a complaint *against* her object of affection, specified at the end of the poem: "N'en est sur toy volé quelque estincelle" (14). As mentioned above, a range of possible interpretations may be drawn from the lyrical subject's desire thus conveyed. One desire could be that of titillating the heart of the beloved in order to cause him to burn with desire for her, but such a desire already knows itself to be pointless. If this cannot be achieved, then perhaps the female poetic persona will settle for no longer burning with painful, unrequited affection; thus, she desires a release from pain. But the poem as it exists inevitably posits that this second desire is pointless as well: the suffering will endure; no relief is in sight of the kind that Petrarch was seeking in the *Canzoniere*, finally addressing himself to the Virgin Mary. What is left is simply

that Labé's speaker seeks to express herself, to complain for the sake of complaining – and to be heard by anyone who will listen, or read her poetry³⁷⁵.

In her beautiful Sonnet XXXVI, Coignard uses the image of a moth to evoke her desire for an embrace with the object of her affection:

Le papillon, qui s'eslance en la flamme,
Sans se vouloir esloigner de ses feux,
Me doit servir d'un patron vertueux,
Pour rechauffer la glace de mon ame.

Cest element luy est plus doux que basme,
Bien qu'il luy soit nuisible et dangereux,
Il ne craint point le tourment chaleureux,
Mais de mourir dans l'amoureuse trame.^[376]

Helas! mon Dieu, subject de mes amours,
Helas! combien devrois-je ardre tousjours,
Me souvenant de la flamme divine,

Dont vous purgez ceux qu'ils vous plaist toucher,
Brusle[z] mon coeur, mes pechez, et ma chair,
Et de vos feux embrase[z] ma poitrine.
(182)

The moth symbol is encountered in the poems of human desire, where it expresses the lethality of its impulse³⁷⁷; but, once again, the perspective and roles are reversed, in

³⁷⁵ In this sense we could say that the pathetic persona of the secular poets is their true subject, while the alleged object of their affection is a mere poetic pretext. As Claude-Gilbert Dubois puts it, "ce n'est pas tellement son amour (qui peut être fictif), c'est l'amour de le dire. Plaisir d'aimer, douleur d'aimer, plaisir de dire et le plaisir et la douleur. L'amour est prétexte à invention littéraire" (*La poésie du XVIe siècle en toutes lettres*. Paris: Bordas, 1989, p. 55).

³⁷⁶ Winn notes that line 8 in the 1594 edition changes to "Mais **veut** mourir dans l'amoureuse trame" (Coignard 182, n. 1) in the 1595 edition.

³⁷⁷ See Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, XIX and CXLI (in the latter case the moth dies in someone's eye); Scève, *Délie*, emblem 31 ("Le papillon et la chandelle," with "En ma joye douleur" as motto), associated with diz. CCLXXVI (where the moth is not mentioned). In Rémy Belleau's "Le Papillon," dedicated to Ronsard, the searing of the wings (of a butterfly in this case) symbolizes the danger of worldly ambition. The image of the moth dying in the flame that attracts it is a staple of emblem books, with various meanings, from the erotic to the political. The danger of love is illustrated by a "papillon" (definitely a moth, as in Scève) burned by the flame of a "chandelle" in Guillaume Guérault's *Second livre de la description des animaux* (Lyon: B. Arnoullet, 1550, p. 20; see <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70827n/f29.image>>). For other examples, see Cordier, Jean-Yves. "Les papillons dans la Délie, et dans les livres d'emblèmes du XVIe siècle." *OverBlog: Le blog de jean-yves cordier*, 1 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.lavieb-aile.com/2015/11/les-papillons-dans-la-delie-et-dans-les-livres-d-emblèmes-du-xvie-siècle.html>>.

Coignard's poem, from those we find in the secular corpus. Where Ronsard's persona dreams of having again his beloved between his arms, Coignard's seeks to be the recipient of God's embrace; where erotic poems hyperbolically deplore the death that awaits the moth lured into a flame, the devotional poet literally wishes to burn *without dying*, in an embrace made not of arms, but of tender flames. Coignard's moth is attracted to a fire that is, paradoxically, "plus doux que basme" (5) even though "nuisible et dangereux" (6); the moth as she sees it is not afraid of burning, but of dying in an "amoureuse trame" (amorous trap). So the moth is right to seek the heat, right to want to burn, and remains a proper model ("patron" (3)), provided we remember that the flames of divine love are *not* lethal, but cleansing (12). The messages could not be more different. But the most important reversal, as indicated above, is one of direction and agency: the erotic moth is driven into the flame by its own desire, whereas its spiritual counterpart desires and hopes to be touched by God's fire, which depends entirely on God's own "bon plaisir": hence the final prayer, which is, once again, actually a prayer.

A similar logic animates the final sonnet of Marquets' collection (1569). Here is "Sonet 40," entitled "De l'excellence du Royaume celeste":

O Dieu! combien ce Roiaume est heureux
 Qu'a preparé ta clemence eternelle
 Là-sus au ciel en gloire supernelle,
 A ceux qui sont de vertu amoureux?
 Là tu produis le doux fruict savoureux
 D'heureuse vie, et de joie immortelle:
 He! que celuy qui d'excellence telle
 Se veult priver, est pauvre et malheureux?
 Helas mon ame! Helas! donc haste toy,
 Vole en ce lieu de beauté indicible,
 Par espoir di-je, et par amour et foy,
 Car autrement il est inaccessible:
Là ton espoux te desire et attend,
Et ja ses bras pour t'embrasser il tend.

(*Divines poësies* 78-79)

While Marquets, speaking more personally now, urges her own soul to “fly” (lns. 9-10) note how careful she is to clarify that only “espoir,” “amour” and “foy” (ln. 11) (the three theological virtues, inspired by and proceeding from God Himself) will allow it to do so. So this imagery is dynamically ambiguous: it asks for a movement that is ultimately not “operated” by will alone, but needs the infusion of God’s grace at every turn.

Using similar imagery, Granada is addressing readers of both genders when he exhorts them to pray so that they might enjoy the celestial embrace of the divine spouse:

Oultre ce si tu desires montrer à l’altesse de la contemplation, et **jouyr des doux, et amyables embrassements de l’espoux**, exerce toy en priere: car c’est le chemin par lequel l’ame vient à la meditation, et goust des choses celestes: et ainsi tu vois l’efficace, et pouvoir de l’oraison.

(*Le vray chemin*, III, “Traité premier de la vertu et excellence de l’oraison: Tiltre premier”; 342 v^o)

The image is that of the Church embraced by Jesus, its spouse³⁷⁸. Yet it encourages not only women but also men to seek this embrace – thus forcing male readers to assume a traditionally female role, in a kind of spiritual metamorphosis. Conversely, female poets like Marquets and Coignard can use the image literally (according to love’s traditional distribution of gender roles) to give it additional power and urgency.

In none of these litanic poems, excepting that of Coignard, do we find an explicit reference to a *sovereign good* as one’s object of desire³⁷⁹. Moreover, it is only in

³⁷⁸ Cf. Song of Songs 1:3; Coignard’s Sonnet XXXIV (lns. 3-4): “Jesus-Christ est mon loyal espoux, / Et [...] je suis sa tres-humble servante”; also her *Noël pour la Nativité de Jesus Christ* (lns. 7-9), describing “le Prince de paix et des siecles futurs, / Sortant comme un espoux embasmé de senteurs / De sa royalle couche” (Coignard 321). Winn refers to the *Magnificat* “chanté aux Vêpres de la Nativité de Jésus”: “*Videbitis Regem regum procedentem a Patre, tamquam sponsum de thalamo suo*” (*ibid.*).

³⁷⁹ In Petrarch’s Sonnet 253 we do find reference to “ogni mio ben” (*Canzoniere*, ln. 12, p. 356), the speaker in Du Bellay’s Sonnet LV addresses a “bien douteux” (5), and in Desportes’ Sonnet XLVIII, the lover opens with “O champs, cruels volleurs du bien qui me tourmente!” (1).

Coignard's Sonnet XXV that the addressee is *both* the object of affection and portrayed as being the poet's personal celebrated source of salvation from danger³⁸⁰. In one secular poem after the other, the object of affection (or, at least, the denied presence of the object of affection) is deplored as being the poet's cause of pain and danger. The object is the cause of pain in Labé's Sonnet II, Petrarch's Sonnet 161, Du Bellay's Sonnet LV, Magny's Sonnet LV, and Desportes' sonnets XXXVI and XLII. This is also the case in Ronsard's Sonnet CLXXIII and Baïf's Sonnet CII, except that love itself is also portrayed as a source and cause of pain. In the case of Baïf's Sonnet VI, it is the absence (and not the cold, cruel heart) of the object of affection that leaves him with the impression that he is not really alive (13-14). The absence of the object is the cause of pain as well in Ronsard's Sonnet LV and Desportes' Sonnet XLVIII. To summarize, all these poems evoke the "plaisir des souffrances d'amour," as Ronsard's *Continuation* (XXIX) puts it. But is the suffering pleasing because it enhances love, or because it merits deeper love? It is the ambiguity (one among many) that matters in this perennial Petrarchan *topos* – pleasure and suffering as antithetical yet inextricably correlated.

The translation of this melodramatic conundrum³⁸¹ into a religious context makes it sincerely existential: every hyperbole, every cliché becomes "real" in this sense³⁸².

³⁸⁰ Marquets' Sonnet XXXVIII is different in that the addressees are not the same as the object of affection. We praise a God for whom *we* are the object of affection (10-11) and love (14). He is, however, described as saving us from danger; for His "bonté"(5) has already closed the door of Hell (7), and presently "des beaux cieux nous donne jouissance" (8), as though it were already happening to many if not all of "us." Compare the use of the future tense in lines 12-14 of Coignard's Sonnet LXIV: "Je **veux** avoir ce nom gravé dedans mon cœur, / Et ma bouche **louera** le nom de mon Sauveur, / Jesus **sera** tousjours escrit en ma memoire: / Ce **sera** mon appuy, ma joye, mon support, / Jesus me **sauvera** du gouffre de la mort, / Jesus me **conduira** au Royaume de gloire" (Coignard 216-217).

³⁸¹ Traced back to Ovid (e.g., *Amours* II, xvi) and Petrarch (*Canzoniere* CCCX and *passim*), among others.

³⁸² Of those who attended to Jesus' body after he was brought down from the Cross, Gabrielle says to her "ame assoupie" (ln. 189, Coignard 550): "Tu peux veoir maintenant que le coeur qui fort aime, / Vit plus en son aimé que non pas en soy mesme" (*Complainte de la Vierge Marie*, lns. 193-194, Coignard 551). As Winn notes: "Réminiscence platonicienne et lieu commun de la poésie amoureuse de la Renaissance. Cf.

Coignard is capable of embracing the most sensual and violent imagery of love poetry to express, instead of the pleasant harm that Love's arrows are supposed to have caused her (as in the secular *innamoramento* narrative), the traumatic good that she wants the love of the one true God to inflict on her, as it has done on Him (on the Cross) in the first place:

**Perce moy l'estomach d'une amoureuse fleche,
Brusle tous mes desirs d'un feu estincellant,**
Esleve mon esprit d'un desir excellent,
Foudroye de ton bras l'obstacle qui l'empesche.

Si le divin brandon de ta flamme me seiche,
Fay sourdre de mes yeux un fleuve ruisselant,
Qu'au plus profond du coeur je porte recelant
Des traits de ton amour la gracieuse breche.

Puis que tu n'es qu'amour, ô douce charité,
Puis que pour trop aymer tu nous a merité
Tant de biens infinis et d'admirables graces,

Je te veux supplier par ce puissant effort
De l'amour infini qui t'a causé la mort,
Qu'en tes rets amoureux mon ame tu enlasses.

(S. XV, Coignard 157-158)³⁸³

Thus the violence of erotic desire itself is "burned" and transfigured by the fire of pure charity, and its most seductive images are sanctified. Even so, Coignard, as ever, is careful to mark the difference between what she already feels and what she wishes to feel, pointing out, even, that she *wants* to ask to feel it. It is in this renewed, heightened, and literalized sense that she does not consider herself truly alive when she senses the absence of God and His love, the only force capable of elevating and sustaining *her* love.

Maurice Scève, *Delie*, VII: 'Celle beaulté qui embellit le Monde / Quand nasquit celle en qui mourant je vis...' [...]; Louise Labé, 'Mon triste esprit hors de moy retiré / S'en va vers toy incontinent se rendre' [sonnet IX] (Coignard 551, n. 42). In fact, the heart's displacement was seen by Platonists such as Ficino as a physiological reality: in this case, its spiritual transposition seeks to refresh what had become a cliché by making it even more "real" and true than a mere physical phenomenon.

³⁸³ Winn quotes Psalm 37/38 ("Seigneur [...], tes flesches sont fichées en moy") as well as the mystic writings of John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila (and her representation by Bernini), and John van Ruusbroec. On the secular side, one thinks of Etienne Jodelle's violent imagery about the damage that Diane's "traits" and "rets" can do (*Les Amours. Contr'Amours, Contre la Riere-Venus*. Ed. Emmanuel Buron. Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2003); see sonnets II, III, V, VI, etc.).

That she blames her own sin – never her beloved – as that which causes their separation³⁸⁴ makes the latter all the more painful. Let us conclude with two simple, yet powerful, expressions of this crucial point. One, in Coignard's Sonnet V, uses a vital image to symbolize and reenact the horror of the Fall, recalling that "I" was (meant to be) one with God in the beginning (see Jn. 14 for the image):

Mais quant tu viens de moy ta faveur retirer,
 Mon ame qui se sent de son tronc separer,
 Chet comme quelque branche ou quelque feuille seiche.
 (12-14, 144)

The other, in Sonnet IV, is the humble prayer that follows, inevitably, once "I" have brought myself to acknowledge the magnitude of my loss:

Revien, Seigneur, ne m'abandonne pas,
 Si je te pers, las je voy mon trespas,
 Car je ne vy qu'aux douceurs de ta grace.
 (12-14, 143)

³⁸⁴ Of course the sinner is tempted, if not to blame God outright, at least to assume His responsibility: cf. Ps. 10:1 and 11-12: "Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? [...] He says in his heart, 'God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it'" (*ESV*).

Addressees and desires

as set by the poems analyzed in chapter III

Coignard S. XXV:

addressee = object of affection (*i.e.*, God)

desire = to be(long) to the object of affection

Very clear language, assuming the passive role that is conventionally attributed to women.

Marquets S. XXXVIII:

addressee = anyone / “nous” (*i.e.*, human beings)

desire = not stated explicitly, more like a reaction – the reaction to praise God (also, implicitly, the wish that her readers contemplate the answers to her two questions)

Labé S. II:

addressee = object of affection (*i.e.*, a man)

desire = to complain that her love is not being reciprocated (also, implicitly, a wish that is be reciprocated, or that she stop feeling that love)

Petrarch S. 161

addressee = spirits, shadows, dust

desire = that the addressees (not the object of affection) stop and see his ills

Petrarch S. 253

addressee = the glances and speech of the object of affection (*i.e.*, a woman)

desire = to see and hear them again (also, implicitly, that fortune not take away his good and/or carry him away)

Ronsard S. LV

addressee = speech, brow, laughter/smiles, kisses, hair, breasts, lips, teeth, song/voice, beauties of the object of affection

desire = to have those beauties (*i.e.*, the object of affection as a whole) in his arms again

Ronsard S. CLXXIII

addressee = bolts/arrows, hold/influence, thoughts, young years, honey, bile, heat, cold, desires, error, steps, mountains, rocks, earth, sea, chaos, destinies, skies, night, day, Spirits of the dead, ardor, passion, Demons, divine Spirits

desire = to have specific witnesses see his pain (*i.e.*, those who have been taken by love at some point in time)

Du Bellay S. LV (*L'Olive*)

addressee = his own mind, heart, eyes, good, pains, and knowledge; God, cupid, and flame; the angelic face and hard heart of the object of affection

desire = that the object of affection at least look at the torment he endures

Du Bellay S. XCI (*Regrets*)

addressee = the hair, brow, face, eyes, mouth, teeth, throat, breasts, nails, hand, thigh, leg, sex, body, members, and divine beauties of the object of affection (*i.e.*, a woman)

desire = that she forgive him if he does not dare love her for being mortal

Magny S. LV

addressee = the eyes of the object of affection (*i.e.*, a woman); his own sighs and tears; nights and days; complaints and desires; time; pains, deaths, *etc.* Everyone and everything.

desire = that his addressees be witness to his love

Baïf S. VI

addressee = the beauty and sweetness of the object of affection (*i.e.*, a woman/divinity); his own sense/reason; the welcome of the object of affection; virtues

desire = the presence of the object of affection (which causes his own living and health)

Baïf S. XLIV

addressee = his own steps, hopes, desire, love, langor, eyes, reliefs, sorrows, rigour; the graces and beauties of the object of affection (*i.e.*, a woman); his wishes, thoughts, regrets; prairies, countrysides, waters, rocks, forests, goddesses, gods, sky, earth, sea;

desire = to know if his addressees see any other love where such sorrow abounds

Baïf S. CII

addressee = the eyes, regards, hair, brow, tint, laughs/smiles, song, speech, mouth, and kisses of the object of affection (*i.e.*, a woman)

desire = to hold on to those things (*i.e.*, the object of affection) again

Desportes S. XXXVI

addressee = his own heart, poetry, tint, desires, eyes, thoughts, and reason; love's strings and flames; his hope, pain, and sighs

desire = the arrival of the day that will finish his pain

Desportes S. XLII

addressee = venom, guide, forgetfulness, laces of love; the object of affection (*i.e.*, Siren and enchantress); peace, hope (who is an unfaithful companion)

desire = that hope will return to him (but he knows this desire is futile)

Desportes S. XLVIII

addressee = fields, prairies, woods, wind, *etc.*; distant places

desire = one single thing: the object of affection; then comes the request that the addressees make her see the bitterness of his martyrdom

Desportes S. À Mademoiselle de la Chastaigneraye

addressee = the object of affection's hair, eye, and celestial rays, which give him the Law

desire = to be Argus while he sees those rays (*i.e.*, Mlle. de la Chastaigneraye's eyes), and to be blind when he does not

CHAPTER IV

ANNE DE MARQUETS, GABRIELLE DE COIGNARD, AND THE “SOVERAIN BIEN”:

A COMPARISON

In the *Sonets, prieres et devises en forme de pasquins pour l'assemblée de Messieurs les Prélats et Docteurs, tenue à Poissy* that she first published in 1562, Anne de Marquets described the growing religious troubles and the “colloque” that tried to pacify them in a series of allegorical sonnets; she also included, as the title indicates, a series of “pasquins” or “pasquils” (short epigrams, paraphrasing a Biblical sentence, addressed to the “Prélats et Docteurs” who argued the Catholic case, to clerics in general, to the Poissy monastery and its residents, to the people of France and all the faithful, and to the heretics who have left the path of true “foy”). Among these epigrams, we find the following, dedicated to her own congregation:

AUX DAMES DUDICT LIEU

Je prie à nostre Dieu de grand' affection,
 Qu'il vous vueille impartir tou[s] ses dons et sa grace:
 Pour jouïr à la fin de sa perfection,
Et du souverain bien qui tous autres surpasse.³⁸⁵

This ultimate “jouïssance” afforded by God’s grace, Marquets also wishes, charitably, to the Protestant critic who (upon reading manuscript versions of these very poems) had accused her in print of abusing the word of God for the sole purpose of praising prelates. Thus ends, with a prayer, the “Epistre aux lecteurs” that closes the collection:

³⁸⁵ Marquets. *Sonets, prieres et devises*, d3 r°; we quote from the 1566 edition (Paris: Veuve Guillaume Morel). The epigram is preceded by a brief quotation in Latin from the second epistle of John.

Et pour faire du mal le bien maistre et vainqueur,
 Je te vay supplier encore, et de bon cuer,^[386]
 Q'il jouisse là sus en ton celeste empire,
De ce souverain bien que pour moy je desire.
 (Marquets 1566, [c4 v°])

It is striking to see the “sovereign good” occupy such a strategic position in a work that is being accused of caring more about the princes of the Church than about God. This key concept is both proposed as a supreme reward to Marquets’ own female community, and presented, in the last words of her book, as the ultimate goal of her own desire. As we

³⁸⁶ Sonnet CXCVII of the *Sonets spirituels* displays a similar attitude, inviting Protestants to return to the Catholic way: “Tant de mal-heur produit la partialité, / Que saint Thomas, absent du chœur apostolique, / N’a veu de Christ vivant la gloire magnifique, / Et mesmes est tombé en incredulité. / Ainsi que par erreur et pertinacité / Se depart de l’Eglise et troupe catholique, / Il est hors de salut, errant et schismatique, / Et pour un tel en vain Christ est ressuscité. / Si donc nous desirons, comme il nous est promis, / Voir nostre Redempteur en la gloire eternelle, / Et n’estre mis en proye aux cruels ennemis, / Ne laissons le troupeau catholique et fidelle, / **Ou si nous en sortons, retournons tout à coup:** / ‘La brebis qui s’esgare est en danger du loup’” (Marquets 204). Yet as the fiasco at Poissy demonstrated, such an invitation does not mean that opposite views will be reconciled: Sonnet CCLXXII challenges Protestant theology concerning transubstantiation by stating that the bread and wine of the Lord’s Table truly consist of Christ’s flesh and blood: “Mais faut-il disputer de la vraye existence / Du corps de Jesus-Christ au divin Sacrement, / Puis que luy-mesme a dict (luy qui jamais ne ment): / C’est mon corps, qui pour vous sera mis à oultrance? / Que s’il a peu creer par sa seule puissance / Toute chose de rien, voire en un seul moment, / Ce qui est ja créé en une autre substance? / Hé, voulons-nous borner la puissance de Dieu? / Luy faut-il, comme à nous, prescrire temps ny lieu? / Est-il pas tout puissant, est-il pas veritable? / Ne disons donc jamais ny comment ny pourquoi, / Comme faisoient les Juifs; ains avec ferme foy, / Approchons humblement de ceste sainte Table” (*idem*, 247). Sonnet CCLXXIV goes further in the polemical style, opposing good Catholics (11) and swine-like heretics (14): “Ha, mon Dieu, mon Seigneur, que n’ay-je la puissance / Pour bien et dignement ce Sacrement louer? / Veu qu’il te plaist par luy les pecheurs advouer / Pour tes enfans, reduits en grace et innocence. / Hé, qui pourroit jamais exprimer l’excellence / Dont tu veux la pauvre ame enrichir et douer, / Quand elle veut Sathan du tout desavouer, / Recevant ton saint corps en humble reverence? / O qu’on doit estimer cestuy-là mal-heureux, / Qui ne veut point gouter de ce pain savoureux / Qui donne force et vie à tous **bons Catholiques**, / Mais aime beaucoup mieux, comme un prodigue enfant, / Desgousté de ce pain celeste et triumpant, / Aller chercher le gland des **pourceaux heretiques!**” (S. CCLXXIII, 248). In his introduction to the *Sonets spirituels*, Ferguson points out that Marquets seeks to provide orthodox Catholic doctrine but is also interested in advancing reform within the Church: to abolish certain obvious abuses, to encourage personal piety, and to work towards unity of a torn Christianity (*idem*, 64-67). In Sonnet LXV for example, we find the following admonition, using anti-Judaic tropes to reprimand “doctes prescheurs” (ln. 9): “Ores peut-on aux Juifs justement reprocher / Qu’ils ont eu pour neant de Christ la cognoissance, / Car bien dire ils ont sceu le lieu de sa naissance / A ceux qui d’Orient le sont venus chercher; / Mais ayant enseigné le pain suave et cher, / Eux-mesmes sont peris de faim et d’indigence, / Et ayans monstre l’eau de vie et sapience, / De grand’ soif et de chaud se sont laissez secher. / **Helas, doctes prescheurs, ce propos vous regarde!** / Sachans la Loy de Dieu, donnez-vous bien de garde / Qu’en bien preschant autrui, ne viviez meschamment: / C’est grand’ honte et malheur à celuy qui enseigne, / Quand son propre salut tellement il desdaigne / Que par mauvaises mœurs sa parolle il desment” (*idem*, 128).

will see, it is not by chance that the notion makes such an appearance in the Dominican nun's first publication: subsequent ones will confirm its prominence, in contrast with Gabrielle de Coignard's reluctance to tout it.

About 17 years older than Gabrielle de Coignard (although she died some 18 months later), and a nun rather than a lay woman, Anne de Marquets pioneered, in the 1560s, the religious appropriation of secular forms – chiefly the sonnet – developed by the “Pléiade” poets (who, returning the compliment, praised her). By the time she died, she had already pushed the possibilities of this invention as far as they could go: as Terence Cave remarks, her posthumous *Sonets spirituels*, all 480 of them, “form a complete devotional sequence” running from the “Premier dimanche de l’Advent” to the “Vingt-cinquesme dimanche d’après la Trinité,” followed by a series of festivals (Marian feast days, from “Conception” to “Veneration”; All Saints)³⁸⁷. The result is “far more advanced, in terms of the application of systematic devotional practice to poetry, than anything written in the 1570s and 1580s”³⁸⁸. Certainly we find nothing quite so systematic – but only fragments of such a sequence – in Coignard's *Œuvres*.

Yet as we have already seen concerning “Sonet 38” (from Marquets's second publication), a comparison is all the more warranted between these two female poets, who stood on the same side of the religious conflict but led very different lives and displayed somewhat different sensibilities. Hence the purpose of this fourth chapter. We

³⁸⁷ “Ces 480 sonnets sont organisés en trois séries: un groupe cyclique de 342 sonnets ordonné selon les saisons de l’année liturgique du premier dimanche de l’Advent au dernier dimanche après la Pentecôte, suivies d’une deuxième série de 82 sonnets qui traitent du cycle des fêtes de la Vierge Marie et d’une troisième séquence de 51 sonnets célébrant les saints de l’Église à l’occasion de la Toussaint. Anne de Marquets conclut ses 480 sonnets par un groupe de sonnets qu’elle intitule ‘Action de Graces’” (Hannah S. Fournier, “La voix textuelle des *Sonets spirituels* d’Anne de Marquets.” *Études littéraires*, 20.2 (1987): p. 79; quoted by Dunn-Lardeau, “Les Béatitudes comme source d’inspiration,” p. 172).

³⁸⁸ Cave, p. 86

will start by spending a little time with Marquets' poetry considered on its own terms – which she occasionally imposes on the very poet she translates in her second collection:

Toute personne aymant Dieu, mette peine
De n'estimer aucune chose humaine,
Car en aymant les biens et les honneurs,
Les dignitez, la gloire et les faveurs,
On ne pourroit (c'est chose toute seure)
Aimer son Dieu d'affection bien pure:
Laisse donc tout et de cœur et d'esprit
Pour posseder seulement Jesus Christ,
Et tu auras par sa sainte presence
Heureusement de tous biens jouïssance:
[...]

Car là où est ce Jesus tant aimable,
Là est tousjours une joye incroyable:
Aussi est-il de ceux qui l'ayment bien

Le seul plaisir et le souverain bien.

(“Que doivent faire ceux qui aiment Dieu,” *Divines poësies*, Marquets 10)

The equivalent in the Latin original (“*Quid servandum sit amatoribus Christi*”) runs as follows:

[...] *dulcia* /
Semper morantur gaudia, /
Ubi moratur candidus /
Iesus, voluptas unica /
Est ille amantium sui.
(*ibid.*)

No *summum bonum* there: pleasure speaks by itself. To “fill” her longer meter and find a proper rhyme (incidentally a minimalist “équivoque”), Marquets falls back on the words that best summarize, in her view, the point in question: one has to reject worldly goods to embrace the only one that matters, source of the only worthy pleasure. As a result, where Flaminio evoked that pleasure (*voluptas*) alone, as felt by the lovers (*amantes*) of Christ, Marquets intellectualizes and further moralizes the argument by naming the official “bien” from which it proceeds.

The promise of “vray plaisir”

As a rule (and unsurprisingly), Marquets frames heavenly pleasure as a reward. Of course – and very much in keeping with the spirit of the Counter-Reformation – she is careful to prevent any abuse of the idea of merit: nothing happens without God’s grace. Thus in one of the sonnets, she adds to Flaminio’s *Divines poësies*:

Toutes les fois que ces beaux cieux j’advise
Où est assis le throsne glorieux
De ce seigneur et amy gracieux,
Dont mon ame est si ardemment esprise:
Je dy ainsi: O quand seray-je prise
Pour habiter en ce lieu precieux,
Et là repaistre et mon coeur et mes yeux,
Voyant celluy que seul j’honore et prise?
Helas mon Dieu! mon seul prince et seigneur,
Fay moy jouir de ce bien et bon heur,
Car je ne veux autre chose et ne pense.
**Mais quoy? j’entends par ta benignité,
Car je sçay bien que je n’ay merité
Une si sainte et digne recompense.**

(“Pour aspirer au royaume celeste. Sonet 16,” *Divines poësies*, Marquets 63)

Yet in the *Sonets spirituels*, she highlights the manner by which the pleasure of an announced reward *incites* one to pursue the path of virtue and living well, while it also *relieves* some of the pain involved in following that path:

Pour bien solenniser la feste venerable
Des Saints, il faut penser de combien de vertus,
Vivans, ils ont esté saintement revestus,
Et combien Dieu en eux s’est monsté admirable:
Car les ayant armez de force insuperable,
Il a faict qu’ils n’ont peu jamais estre abbatus,
Et qu’ils ont tellement les vices combatus
Qu’ils en ont rapporté un trophée honorable.
Sur tout en bien vivant, il les faut imiter,
Et pour incessamment à ce nous inciter
**(D’autant que le loyer soulage bien la peine),
Il faut considerer le guerdon precieux**
Que, pour avoir bien faict, ils reçoivent ès cieux:
Car jamais du Seigneur la promesse n’est vaine.
(S. CCCCLVIII, Marquets 355)

A glance at the surrounding sequence sheds light on the *ordering* of this logic's elements. The two sonnets that precede this one respectively describe the "banquet sumptueux" (1) filled with "**infinis biens et plaisirs gracieux**" (7) that the "Roy des cieux" (3) gives to all the "bien-heureux" (4) (CCCCLVI, 354); and the "beau jardin" (1) that Heaven is as well, full of "**fruits délicieux / Dont les bien-heureux sont à leur gré jouissants**" (5-6), which should not be confused with Epicurus' garden (otherwise known as this world), full of the expected "pourceaux" (CCCLVII, ln. 14, pp. 354-355). In the sonnet we quoted in full above, which follows these two, Marquets insists on the idea of a "guerdon" as reward for and relief from pain. Later, she addresses the Saints in the following terms:

O bien-heureux esprits, ô glorieuses ames,
 Qui jouissez du Ciel et du **souverain bien**,
 Et qui, conjoints à Dieu par un estroit lien,
 Sentez du vray amour les plus divines flames,
 Ne nous desdaignez pas, bien que pecheurs infames
 Qui ne sommes que fange et boubier terrien,
 Ains pour l'honneur de Christ, sans qui vous n'estiez rien,
 Faites-nous en fin part de vos divines palmes.
 Tous les membres d'un corps ont entr'eux amitié,
 Si le pied se deult, l'œil le regarde en pitié,
 Et pour le secourir la main se rend habile:
 Nous sommes avec vous un corps en Jesus-Christ,
 Guerissez donc nos maux et de corps et d'esprit,
Nous impetrant le bien qui plus nous est utile.
 (S. CCCCLX, 356)

It seems that the description of heavenly pleasures (infinite goods *as* pleasures) in sonnets CCCCLVI-CCCCLVIII, enticing as it is, cannot be left free to perform its magic on the readers' minds. Not only must the distinction between the celestial "jouissance" and its earthly counterpart (which produces suffering) be reiterated, but Sonnet CCCCLVIII's stress on the idea of a reward focuses more on the pain that will be rewarded than on the

pleasure of which the reward will consist; and Sonnet CCCCLX, which again names the “souverain bien” (ln. 2), emphasizes its *usefulness* rather than its delightfulness, as well as the unity of Jesus’ body rather than the unique *voluptas* given by Jesus to those who love Him. As a poet, Marquets is perfectly capable of depicting pleasure for its own sake; but she seems reluctant to travel too far down that road, and she uses the concept – the very words – of “souverain bien” as a *check* against what must feel, in effect, like the temptation of sensual expression.

This is the difficulty that we have seen addressed in Granada’s prose, which blames the sinful human heart for the necessity of promising pleasure as reward. Marquets’ version of this awareness (of the double bind it entails) is encapsulated – theorized, as it were – a few pages earlier, at the beginning of the entire sequence, by Sonnet CCCCXXVII, the first of fifty sonnets written “Pour la feste de Toussaints”:

En ce jour solennel, l’Eglise militante,
 Pour exciter en nous les celestes desirs,
 Represente les biens, les honneurs et plaisirs,
 Que reçoit ore au ciel l’Eglise triomphante,
 Dont la gloire et beauté sur toute est excellente:
 L’or y reluit par tout, les perles, les saphirs;
 Là sont les bons parfums, les fleurs, les doux zephirs,
 Et tout ce qui le cœur resjouit et contente.
 Mais ce qui plus en fin la comble de bon heur,
 C’est qu’elle voit son Dieu, son espoux et Seigneur,
 Qui est de tous esleuz le salaire suprême:
 Pour lequel obtenir et regner à jamais,
 Il faut que nous vivions saintement desormais:
 “Car qui fait bien sera recompensé de mesme”.
 (S. CCCCXXVII, 338-339)

Marquets discloses the reason why, on All Saints Day, “l’Eglise militante” (the Church in this world) *represents* the celestial goods, honors, and pleasures now (presently, “ore,” 4) bestowed in Heaven on “l’Eglise triomphante” (the Celestial Church, that of the Saints and the Saved). Such goods and pleasures delight and content one’s heart; they are full of

the glory and beauty that is expressed by precious materials and fragrances, gentle breezes and flowers. The goal of such representations, as displayed in a Church ritual here on earth, is to *excite* our desire, with objects that may well carry another meaning, another power for us; therein lies the danger. If we read the sonnet carefully, however, we realize that it does not describe the pomp of the ritual, of the “militant” representation, but what the ritual represents: the “triumphant” objects *themselves*, as enjoyed in Heaven by the Saints. Yet the poem itself, in turn, is nothing more than a representation, whose words *excite* us just as much as the rituals would do: reading them, we cannot help imagine this splendor by relying on the material substances with which we are familiar; by focusing on the things that represent rather than on what they represent.

That is why the sonnet, having explained the point of this rhetoric of excitement and now moving from quatrains to tercets, has to insist that *even in Heaven* what most contents the heart of the triumphant Church (which presumably does not need to be excited anymore) is *not* those goods, honors, and pleasures; but the fact that she “voit son Dieu, son espoux et Seigneur” (10), whom Marquets boldly celebrates as the ultimate “salary” of the saved (11): our task, back here on “militant” earth, is now to earn it. Thus the poem neatly performs a triple trick, first moving from the (earthly) representation to the celestial represented; and then from the celestial represented to what it represents; leading to in turn: the pure good of God’s presence as felt, for which a distinct term has to be reserved. Here it is “bon heur,” which lies beyond the plurality of “biens,” “honneurs,” and “plaisirs” that express and lead to it.

The *Sonets spirituels* are full of displacements and replacements of this kind, whereby a good is expressed only to yield to another good, which counts on the first one

for its own expression and is all the more obligated to transcend it. Sonnet CCCLXXXIX starts by asserting, in deliberately plain language, that the more ardently one desires something, the more pleasure one receives upon obtaining it:

**D'autant plus qu'ardemment quelque chose on desire,
D'autant plus on reçoit de plaisir en l'ayant:**
 Quel **aise** donc avoit Symeon en voyant
 Cet Enfant virginal, Roy du celeste empire,
 Lequel **il souhaitoit tant qu'il ne se peut dire?**
 Si que souvent au ciel ses souspirs envoyant:
 Hé! quand viendra celui, disoit-il larmoyant,
 Qui nous doit affranchir d'angoisse et de martire?
 A quoy le Saint Esprit, qui en luy habitoit,
 D'autant qu'il craignoit Dieu et que juste il estoit,
 Luy avoit respondu et faict promesse telle
 Qu'il ne mourroit jamais qu'il n'eust eu la faveur
 De voir et d'embrasser ce Messie et Sauveur,
 Qui viendrait aux esleuz donner vie immortelle.
 (S. CCCLXXXIX, 316)

This sonnet is the seventh within a series of twelve “Pour la purification Nostre Dame” (313), about which Ferguson notes: “Célébrée le 2 février, cette fête s’appelle communément la Chandeleur. Son nom officiel aujourd’hui est la Présentation de Jésus-Christ au Temple” (*ibid.*, n. 1). It is built on an implicitly *a fortiori* argument: if Simeon was so elated to meet the Messiah for whose arrival he ardently desired, the “esleuz” who ardently desire to meet (see and embrace) the Messiah will be all the more so when they are given “vie immortelle” (ln. 14) as promised. This argument is made explicit by the next sonnet, via Simeon’s own words, announcing that Christ “nous remplira de grace et de tout heur, / Puis nous fera jouir de son regne celique” (S. CCCXC, lns. 7-8, Marquets 317). Simeon travels effortlessly from his own joy of being presented with baby Jesus to what all the Blessed feel in eternal salvation. We, on the other hand, do not: we keep needing the example and image of Simeon to guide us from his own original wonderment

to his vision of what is to come. We are supposed to go beyond the initial step once we have taken it; yet, in effect, we are constantly retaking it.

A similar agenda, and conundrum, is at work in Sonnet CCCCXLIII:

Qui pourroit exprimer la gloire et l'excellence,
 La splendeur, la beauté, le bon-heur et plaisir,
 Dont se sentent au Ciel tous les esleuz saisir,
 Qui ont gardé la foy, l'amour et l'esperance?
 Crainte ne trouble point leur tranquille assurance,
 Sathan, peché ny mort ne leur fait desplaisir,
 Ils ont paix et repos, content est leur desir,
 Car voyans Dieu, ils ont de tous biens jouissance.
 Ha, qu'on doit estimer cestuy-là mal-heureux,
 Qui ne voudroit ja estre en ce lieu bien-heureux,
 Ains aime mieux languir en ceste terre basse
 Où n'y a que peché, que misere et tourment,
 Crainte, soucy, douleur et mescontentement,
 Si qu'à peine un seul jour sans mal-heur ne se passe!
 (347)

The opening quatrain consists of a rhetorical question evoking various celestial goods, honors, and pleasures (while conveying abundance, the plurality of nouns is also a sign that the representation is approximative, stumbles upon what cannot be expressed). Building on these elements, the poet proceeds to re-describe them *negatively*, by reminding us in lines 5-6 of the absence, among the Saints, of what is currently all too present for us: fear, sin, death, the Devil and his work. Then, the “bon heur” experienced by “les esleuz” is once again named, if not expressed: it is the sight of God (ln. 8), because it is only within and thanks to this blessed vision that we may have “de tous biens jouissance” (8). From these first eight lines, it is hoped that the reader will come to desire such an experience right away. Nevertheless, the point underlines its own trouble at being driven home, by the long, scornful exclamation completing the poem in lines 9-14: yes, it is obvious that no one in their right mind should be wanting anything else, should want to remain in the valley of death. *And yet*, unthinkably, that is what we do;

and so we have to be lured, “excited,” once again, to aim higher right now (“ja,” 10). What is self-evident is anything but.

Sonnet CCCCLXIII, therefore, travels the same road but in reverse, beginning with “mal-heur” and progressing toward “bon-heur”:

Devrions-nous point avoir un extrême desir,
 Veux les tristes mal-heurs dont cette vie est pleine,
 D’aller bien tost au Ciel, où la joye est certaine,
 Sans qu’il y ait jamais douleur ny desplaisir?
 Que si nous nous sentons aucunesfois saisir
 D’aucun aise et repos en cette vie humaine,
 Cela n’est rien qu’un vent, qui souvent nous amaine
 Cent mille et mille maux, masquez d’un faux plaisir.
 Car comme sous la rose, en peu de temps sechée,
 Est ordinairement mainte espine cachée,
 Ainsi sous le bon-heur instable et mal-heureux
 Que ce monde promet, mainte angoisse est latente:
 Mais l’heur et vray plaisir qui les ames contente,
 Dieu le reserve au Ciel pour les Saints bien-heureux.
 (358)

Yet another rhetorical question, aimed at an audience all too familiar with the “tristes mal-heurs” (2) of the Wars of Religion, diseases, famines and the like. In the middle of all this, however, the most fleeting pleasure has the power to retain and detain us. We need to be reminded of its consequences, and of the alternative:

Les Saints, lors qu’ils estoient en ce val de misere,
 Ont passé par le feu de tribulation,
 Et par les tristes eaux de desolation,
 Puis Dieu les a conduits au lieu de refrigerer.
 Quiconque rit tousjours et veut faire grand’ chere,
 Mettant en voluptez sa delectation,
 Ne peut avoir du Ciel la consolation,
 Car elle ne s’acquiert que par douleur amere;
 Mais ceste douleur n’est que pour un peu de temps,
 Et le bien qui en vient à jamais est durable;
 Comme aussi les plaisirs et mondains passe-temps
 Sont convertis soudain en mal-heur perdurable:
 Souffrons donc, mes amis, et pleurons desormais,
 Si nous avons desir d’estre heureux à jamais.
 (S. CCCCLXVIII, 360)

As was the case in the last two sonnets cited above, Marquets continues exploiting the rhetorical powers of juxtaposing the good with the bad and the positive with the negative; thus (in theory) provoking both the reader's rational faculties and natural instincts to disdain "cette vie humaine" (S. CCCCLXIII, 6) and "ce monde" (12) and, instead, to develop "un extrême desir, / [...] / D'aller bien tost au Ciel [...]" (1-3), a "desir d'estre heureux à jamais" (S. CCCCLXVIII, 14). It should be obvious to us that "l'heur et vray plaisir qui les ames contente, / Dieu le reserve au Ciel pour les Saints bien-heureux" (S. CCCCLXIII, 13-14). Yet what is supposed to be obvious can also be expressed as the starkest paradox: the ultimate advice might as well be "souffrons [...] et pleurons désormais" (S. CCCCLXVIII, 13). If we want to be completely happy later, we have to *want* to be unhappy now³⁸⁹, the better to realize that our unhappiness is not worth our concern – unless it results from having "lost" God.

Suffering and chastisement

As one might expect, in the devotional poems of both Coignard and Marquets, there is a recurrent shift in focus from what God is to us to the suffering that God endured on our behalf as an expression of His love for us and desire for us to exist with Him in that love: "O humain Redempteur qui as souffert pour nous," says Coignard (S. XXV, 12, 171); and Marquets, in the sonnet we discussed in our previous chapter:

Car qui a faict prendre et mourir en croix
Ce grand Seigneur, ce Prince et Roy des Rois,
Sinon amour, pour nous faire revivre?
("Pour louer la puissance, sapience et bonté de Dieu.
Sonet 38," *Divines poësies*, lns. 12-14, Marquets 78)

³⁸⁹ The preposition "par" (8) and pronoun "en" (10) inform us that the "douleur" is the means to acquiring consolation in Heaven (7) and a certain eternal "bien" (10).

In the literary *milieux* of Coignard and Marquets – familiar with the works of Petrarch and Ronsard, if not Labé³⁹⁰, among others –, the religious poet's message could easily be interpreted as an obvious role-reversal within the popular poetic complaints of unrequited love and of the pains the beloved inflicts (knowingly or not) upon the (bewitched) lover that we read about in much of secular lyric poetry. As we have already suggested, devotional poems may be read, against this particular background, as pointing to a salve or remedy made available to a lover's pain, as they offer a (virtual or actual) scenario in which love is not just reciprocated, but freely offered by God – our object of affection – and repose can be had through loving Him back. This seems a pleasant alternative to the option of becoming yet another reincarnation of Laura (that is, Laura as she was before she went to Heaven) – Petrarch's iconic, distant, unattainable, uninterested, pain-causing object of affection. On the other hand, the devotional poems also lead us to wonder if we (humans) have actually been playing Laura's role, while God finds Himself in the role of the faithful, spurned, suffering lover³⁹¹.

The process of this betrayal is described quite precisely by Marquets in one of the “Sonets” added to the *Divines poësies*. Speaking in her own voice, the poet explains how *she*, as an individual person, fails to respond to a love that encompasses all of *us*:

Quand à part moy je pense et considere
Du Seigneur Dieu la grand' perfection,
Sa grand' douceur, et la dilection
Dont il nous aime et cherit comme pere:

³⁹⁰ One of Mireille Huchon's arguments in *Une créature de papier* is the lack of echo encountered by Labé's work beyond the moment and circumstances of its first publication. For example, she never appears in the ubiquitous lists of poets that poets keep establishing throughout the second half of the century. One explanation is that she was known not to exist (as a poet at least).

³⁹¹ This dynamic may resonate with readers familiar with the story of the prophet Hosea, whom God ordered to marry a prostitute, then to redeem his wife who had continued being unfaithful to him (Hosea 1-3).

Je promects lors, je voüe et delibere,
 Par une ardeur d'extreme affection,
 Plustost souffrir cruelle passion
 Que faire rien qui luy puisse desplaire.

Mais aussitost que quelque autre pensée
 Vient arracher de mon coeur celle-cy,
 Ma volonté est toute renversée,
 Et mon amour se refroidit aussi.

Helas! fault-il, en chose si louable
 Et si divine, estre ainsi variable?

(“Pour deplorer l’inconstance humaine qui ne se peult arrester en
 une bonne volonté. Sonet 15,” Marquets 62-63)

Before we go further, we should note that there is a great deal of Christian tension and *direction* in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* itself³⁹². This is apparent in Laura’s repeated messages and warnings, after her death, about a higher calling, and, of course, in the ultimate canzone, strategically addressed to the Virgin Mary. H. and C. Weber describe Laura as “le guide spirituel du repentir chrétien,” but hasten to add that

Laure vivante résume toutes les séductions de la chair et de l’humaine beauté; cette obsession s’attache à la solitude champêtre, dans laquelle se réfugie le poète, peuple les eaux et les bois de son image lancinante. C’est surtout à ce dernier aspect de l’amour chez Pétrarque que s’attacheront ses imitateurs de la Renaissance.

(Ronsard, *Les Amours* vi)³⁹³

Petrarch’s ambivalent religious concern – also emblemized by his *Trionfi*, a work whose popularity preceded that of the *Canzoniere* in France – was largely abandoned by the subsequent Italian and French “Petrarchisms,” however. Yet, traces of the original tension do subsist. For example, Scève’s *Délie* builds a deliberate “idolatry” (while

³⁹² See, among others: 347 (Laura seated with the Creator); 348 (the poet hopes that *she* will win him grace so that he may be with her in Heaven); 352 (even when she was alive, he saw her as an angel); 357 (she guides his life toward Heaven, in the path of Christ); 358 (she and Jesus together make his coming death sweet to him); 359 (she visits him during his sleep; she calls him to follow God directly and to cease thinking in terms of her physical attributes because she is now a naked spirit in Heaven); 362 (she leads him to the Lord, he wants to contemplate both Laura’s face and that of the Lord); 364 (after 31 years of love, including 10 since Laura’s death, he offers the rest of his life to God); 366 (last poem: “*Vergin bella, che di sol vestita*” (pp. 510-516); his prayer to the Virgin).

³⁹³ Cf. Pamela Williams, *Through Human Love to God. Essays on Dante and Petrarch*. Leicester: Troubador Publishing, 2007, Chapter 5.

recycling Marian imagery among others, as Gérard Defaux has shown³⁹⁴). Du Bellay's *Olive* (the second, expanded version especially) and his *XIII Sonnets de l'Honneste Amour* use abstract, quasi-religious imagery (of the "Christian Platonism" variety) in earnest to worry and warn about idolatry. Ronsard's *Amours*, on the other hand, adopting a much more openly sensual outlook, mostly avoid this ambiguous territory.

– *Suffering according to Marquets*

Be this as it may, the expression of suffering, like that of desire itself, acquires a new character or meaning in a religious context. Two questions arise, however: in what sense does "spiritual pain" differ from other love torments? and: to what extent can it (or should it) be expressed *personally*? As we just saw, Marquets does practice personal expression in the sonnets she adds to the *Divines poësies*, even though, as their titles indicate ("Pour invoquer...", "Pour deplorer...", "Pour aspirer..."), the poems' language is meant to be appropriated and used by her readers: in other words, her "je" assumes a guiding role; its function is to be inhabited by others. On that basis, "Sonet 1" describes, enthusiastically, what distinguishes divine love from human love:

Pourroit-il estre une plus vive flamme,
 Plus sainte et chaste et plus proche des cieux,
 Que celle la qui d'un feu gracieux
 Brusle mon coeur, et embrase mon ame?
 Mais cest' amour qui tellement m'enflamme,
 N'est cestuy-la qui se bande les yeux:
 Car il est doux, l'autre est malgracieux:
 Il est honneste, et l'autre est trop infame.
 Bref, cest' amour est ferme et perdurable,
 L'autre inconstant, leger et variable,
 Qui ne produict que misere et tourment:
 Et cestuy-cy dont tant je suis ravie,

³⁹⁴ Notably in the introduction to his edition of Scève's *Délie, objet de plus haulte vertu* (Geneva: Droz, 2004, 2 vols.).

Après la mort me donnera la vie:
 Voyla le but de mon contentement.
 (“De l’amour divin. Sonet 1,” Marquets 53)

Likewise, “Sonet 13” describes the pain of being far from God’s love. Note how it expresses the feeling of having been abandoned – *and* makes sure to correct this feeling right away, by clarifying who is responsible:

S’esbahit on si je suis estonnée
 Tousjours en crainte, en douleur et tourment,
 Veu qu’il me semble, ô Dieu juste et clement,
 Qu’entierement tu m’as abandonnée?
 Helas! j’en ay l’occasion donnée,
 Qui t’ay laissé (mon Dieu) premierement,
 Car j’ay rompu ton saint commandement,
 Et puis me suis à tout vice addonnée.
 Plaise toy donc par ta sainte clemence
 Me regarder de ton œil de pitié,
 Et reparer la premiere alliance
 Me recevant en grace et amitié:
 Car je desire (ô mon Dieu) desormais
 Changer ma vie, et t’aymer à jamais.
 (“Estant en affliction pour ses pechez. Sonet 13,” 61)

“Sonet 14,” in turn (“Pour s’accuser et condamner, et toutesfois esperer au merite de Jesus Christ”), takes the next step – that of self-accusation – but makes sure, as its title indicates, not to take it so far that it sinks into despair, as secular poets like to do:

Suy-je point bien de perverse nature,
 D’ainsi souvent offenser mon Seigneur,
 D’ont [*sic*] j’ay receu tant de grace et d’honneur,
 Que j’ay en moy sa sainte pourtraicture?
 O moy meschante et vile creature!
 Vaisseau rempli de honte et deshonneur,
 Comment pourray-je esperer le bon-heur
 Qu’il a promis en la gloire future?
 Au moins j’enten [*sic*], si je veux prendre garde
 A la grandeur de mon vice et forfait:
 Car d’autre par si je pense et regarde
 Qu’il a pour moy en la croix satisfait,
 Je pourray lors avoir bonne esperance
 D’avoir des cieux quelquefois jouissance.
 (61-62)

This self-correcting movement is also exemplified by “Sonet 11,” which is entitled “Pour se complaindre à Dieu de ses ennemys,” and does seem to focus on a personal source of torment, however generically expressed. It opens with a complaint to God concerning unnamed “ennemis” (2), only to close by admitting that the speaker is actually her own worst enemy:

O Seigneur! voy quels assaults et allarmes
 Mes ennemis me viennent presenter,
 Qui plus cent fois me font espouvanter,
 Que ne feroient deux cens mille gend’armes.
 Helas! je suis sans vigueur et sans armes,
 Et ne puis rien sinon que lamenter:
 O mon Dieu! donc ne te vueille absenter,
 Et pren pitié de mes pleurs et mes larmes.
 L’un d’eux m’assault par violence et force,
 L’autre m’abbatre en trahison s’efforce,
 Usants vers moy de malices supremes:
Mais quand j’ay bien le tout considéré,
Bien que par eux mon cœur soit martyré,
Je n’en ay point de pire que moy-mesmes.
 (59-60)

While secular love will recklessly amplify its torment and throw accusations around, longing for God is forced to turn inward and confess its own shortcomings, practicing the “beam and mote” lesson of the Gospel (Mt. 7:1-5).

In the *Sonets spirituels*, on the other hand, as Ferguson notes, the personal “je” recedes and almost disappears³⁹⁵. Instead of “embodying” a first-person account of a (typical) believer’s travails, the poet dedicates most of her devotional energy to channeling *collective* contemplation. With respect to suffering, for example, she focuses on the torments endured by the Saints, which have earned them, through God’s grace, their present felicity:

Ils se sont affligez et de corps et d’esprit,

³⁹⁵ Ferguson’s introduction to Marquets’ *Sonets spirituels* (pp. 53-54); see our quotation above, p. 132.

Ils ont porté leur croix à l'exemple de Christ,
 Ils ont bien bataillé pour gagner la victoire;
 Pour recueillir en joye, ils ont semé en pleurs,
 Ils ont acquis repos par peines et labeurs,
 Et par humblesse ils sont en eternelle gloire.
 (S. CCCCLIX, 9-14, 355-356)

In turn, as we have also seen, the bliss in which they now live stands in contrast with our present suffering, and, in some respects, makes it worse – thus (if all goes well) inciting us to escape from such a wretched condition:

Que vous estes heureux, ô saints esleus de Dieu,
 Qui, sauvez de la mer de cette vie humaine,
 Avez atteint le port de gloire souveraine,
 Pour regner où tristesse et mort n'ont point de lieu.
 Las ! nous sommes encore agitez au milieu
 Des vagues et des flots, en grand' angoisse et peine,
 Fragile est nostre nef, nostre industrie est vaine,
 Et ja nous nous sentons submerger peu à peu.
 (S. CCCCLXXIV, 1-8, 363)

The “speaker” of such poems expresses the needs and hopes of a community of believers, or even of mankind as a whole. This is consonant with the poet’s goal (since her *Sonets spirituels* follow the liturgical calendar), but becomes far less hospitable to the personal, self-centered torment that allows Petrarch to shuttle back and forth between amorous and spiritual longing, and allows a poet like Coignard, as we will see in a moment, to “christianize,” as it were, the kind of self-expression that petrarchism encourages.

Indeed, as Sonnet CCXVIII makes clear, via an *a fortiori* argument and a comparison with the pain felt by the disciples when Jesus departed, that the kind of “douleur” we typically feel when desiring something does not entitle us to God’s grace. We see here why Marquets would not want to “whine” in her own name in her poetry:

Les disciples, sachans que leur maistre et Seigneur
 S’en alloit à son Pere au regne perdurable,
 Regrettans sa presence heureuse et desirable,
 Avoyent le cœur remply d’une extreme douleur.

Alors il leur promet que le consolateur,
 L'Esprit de verité, benin et favorable,
 Leur seroit tost apres tellement secourable
 Qu'il les viendrait combler de grace et de tout heur.
 Or s'il leur a fallu perdre, avec douleur telle,
 La presence de Christ, humaine et temporelle,
 Avant que recevoir le benoist Saint Esprit,
 Penserons-nous avoir sa grace precieuse,
 Si quelque affection charnelle et vicieuse
 Nous possede le cœur et retient nostre esprit?
 (S. CCXVIII, 216)

As for the acme of suffering endured on the Cross by Jesus himself, it is faced by two sonnets adopting different perspectives. Sonnet CLXI uses the *topos* of the inexpressible and even of the unfathomable:

Est-ce langue ou esprit qui sceust dire ou comprendre
 Ce que le Redempteur en ce jour a souffert,
 Quand volontairement il s'est pour nous offert,
 Jusqu'à mourir en croix pour la vie nous rendre?
 Las, un chapeau poignant il ha sur son chef tendre,
 Des cloux aux pieds et mains, et tout son corps couvert
 De playes et de sang, puis son costé ouvert
 Pour nous donner son cœur et le nostre au lieu prendre.
 O que le feu d'amour est violent et fort,
 Qui l'a contraint d'eslire un tel genre de mort,
 Voire et de prodiguer en faveur des fidelles
 Son cœur, son corps, son ame et son sang precieux,
 Pour les rendre affranchis des peines eternelles,
 Et les faire jouir du Royaume des Cieux!
 (S. CLXI, 183)

Sonnet CLXII, on the other hand, uses the second-person singular to demonstrate that, while *you* cannot express Jesus' suffering, *you* cannot *but* feel it in turn, unless you are evil:

Te peux-tu bien garder, ô pauvre vicieux,
 Quand tu vois le Sauveur en la croix pour toy pendre,
 De jetter gros souspirs et mainte larme espandre,
 Par grand' compassion, tant du cœur que des yeux?
 Voy-tu pas s'obscurcir le soleil radieux,
 La terre s'esmouvoir et les pierres se fendre,
 Comme portans le dueil, et voulans faire entendre
 L'injure que l'on faict au Souverain des Dieux?

Si donc tu ne ressens la douleur si terrible
 Qu'en mourant a souffert ce Roy du firmament,
 Tu es trop plus ingrat, plus dur et insensible
 Que les choses qui sont sans aucun jugement:
 Veu mesme que ton crime et l'amour indicible
 Qu'il te porte ont causé son extreme tourment.
 (S. CLXII, 184)

Another example of the way in which Marquets handles the rhetoric of suffering is the series of sonnets composed "Pour la feste de Nostre Dame de Pitié" (CCCXCV-CCCCII, *Sonets spirituels*, Marquets 320-324). Their task is to describe the torment endured by Mary when her Son was crucified. "A quoy compareray-je, ô Vierge de Sion, / Ton angoisseux ennuy, ta douleur vehemente [...] ?," asks the poet in S. CCCXCVII (lns. 1-2). This is indeed a personal challenge for her, but the sonnets that strive to show (quite powerfully) the very extremity of Mary's pain are rigorously *impersonal*: indeed, it would be indecent, inappropriate, for the poet to mix her own angst with (or reflect it in) that of the Mother of God. Sonnet CCCC establishes, by way of logical reasoning, that Mary's torment exceeded even the physical torture undergone by the Saints:

D'autant plus que quelqu'un est parfaict et louable,
 D'autant plus resent-il d'autrui l'affliction:
 Et qui eut onc en soy plus de perfection
 Et plus de charité que la Vierge honorable?
 Il ne faut donc douter qu'à l'heure déplorable
 Que son Fils endura si dure passion,
 Elle ne ressentist, par grand' compassion,
 Le glaive transperçant son ame venerable.
 Si que martyre elle est, voire plus que martyre:
 Car comme l'esprit est plus digne que le corps,
 Aussi faut-il penser son tourment estre pire
 Que celui-là qui est inferé par dehors.
 Bref, Marie en douleur tous saints martyrs precede,
 Ainsi qu'en pureté chaque vierge elle excède.
 (S. CCCC, 323)

Most remarkably, Sonnet CCCXCVI, a masterpiece of spiritual (and, indeed, carnal) empathy (the *contemplation* of pain makes one partake in it), manages both to express a

woman's pain in the most intimate way, and to express it *in the first-person singular*, without allowing the poet's own voice to assume it:

Quel glaive de douleur transperça la sainte ame
 De la Vierge sacrée, alors qu'elle apperceut
 Que son cher et seul Fils, que vierge elle conceut,
 Enduroit une mort si cruelle et infame?
 Voire et qu'on luy disoit mainte injure et diffame,
 Ce que sans grand' angoisse ouyr elle ne sceut;
 Et quand pour le Seigneur le serf elle receut,
 Lors qu'il dict de saint Jean: Voila ton fils, ô femme?
 Qu'elle luy eust donné volontiers la mamelle
 Quand il crioit: J'ay soif, alteré du tourment;
 Elle eust peu dire alors: J'ay une angoisse telle
 Que celle d'une femme en son accouchement,
 Car hélas! j'oy et voy des choses si funebres
 Que j'ay le cœur en pouldre, et les yeux en tenebres.^[396]
 (S. CCCXCVI, 320-321)

– *Suffering and chastisement according to Coignard*

Following the logic we just encountered with Marquets' second publication (the poems added to the *Divines poësies*), the sorrow expressed in Coignard's poems is presented as being caused either by her conviction and regret with respect to her own sin³⁹⁷ and its consequences (which separate her from her beloved God) or by her contemplation of Jesus' suffering on the Cross – in which case, the tears and sorrow are manifestations of the empathy and regret she experiences with respect to her crucified

³⁹⁶ The last two lines could be signed by a poet like Desportes, hyperbolically expressing his own torment. Here, they serve an entirely different purpose.

³⁹⁷ Such as the wavering of her will recorded in S. LXXXV (see above, Chapter II, p. 144).

Savior³⁹⁸. Different forms of pain are represented. At one extreme is an intimate moral and physical torment³⁹⁹ that does not need to be assigned a precise cause to imply it:

Je trouve le lict dur, la nuit m'est une année,
Il semble que mes draps soient de chardons poignans,
Que mon corps soit pressé dans des ceps estraignans,
Tant je suis de souci cruellement genée.

Après m'estre en tous lieux cent et cent fois tournée,
Et faisant enfanter à mes pensers preignans
Tant d'ennuys et regrets, mon repos esloignans,
Je passe ainsi la nuit au sommeil ordonnée.

(S. LXXX, 1-8, Coignard 236-237)⁴⁰⁰

Another sonnet both specifies and widens the diagnosis:

Le ciel tout obscurcy d'un nuage liquide,
Embrunit l'air serain de ces coulantes eaux,
Les tourbillons venteux frappent les arbrisseaux,
Rien n'est plus verdissant en la saison humide.

L'on ne voit plus les rais du grand flambeau lucide,
Ni le chant gracieux des voletantz oyseaux,
Tout demeure enfermé aux villes et chasteaux,
Pour l'amour d'Aquilon qui sur les ventz preside.

Plus que l'hyver glacé, mon coeur est refroidy,
D'un paresseux sommeil mon corps est refroidy,
Je ne sentz plus l'ardeur de la flame celeste.

Tous les ventz outrageux me frappent rudement,
Les brouillats^[401] ont saisi mon foible entendement,

³⁹⁸ See Cave on this subject and, on Coignard in particular, the analysis of her *Discours sur la Passion* quoted in our Introduction. See also sonnets XXXII, XXXIX, XL, XLIV, XLVI, LXXIII, LXXIV, LXXIX, LXXXVIII, LXXXIX..., practicing the "contemplation" of the Crucified's wounds and suffering. The result can be graphic in many poets of the time (including Coignard), and is in Granada as well ("Haulse les yeux vers la Croix...", p. 170 r°).

³⁹⁹ We recall that Sonnet LXXXI, which follows the one we are quoting here, goes further in this respect, by describing the poet's sickly appearance, her "couleur fort mauvaise" (4) as described by others (see above, Chapter II, p. 140).

⁴⁰⁰ The sonnet continues: "Heureux sont les bergers qui dorment sans soucy, / Sur le vert matelas du printemps adoucy, / Ayant pour pavillon le feuillage d'un chesne, / Sans craindre que la nuit et l'humide serain / Offence tant soit peu leur corps allegre et sain, / Et nous trop delicats, vivons tousjours en peine." As Winn explains, "Ce sonnet est bâti sur l'opposition de l'homme qui vit dans le péché (d'où l'image des 'ceps estraignans', cf. Hebr. 2, 15, etc.), s'exposant ainsi à la colère divine, symbolisée par les 'chardons poignans' du vers 2 (cf. Gen. 3, 18) et le 'berger', c'est-à-dire celui qui a trouvé le Seigneur et jouit de la grâce du Dieu de miséricorde" (p. 236, n. 1).

⁴⁰¹ The 1595 edition prints "brouillarts" (i.e., "brouillards," fog)

Delivre moy, Seigneur, de ce qui me moleste^[402].
(S. LXXXVII, 244-245)

This is a winter of the soul that reminds one of Baudelaire's "spleen." This time, an explanation is provided: it is not the celestial flame that is to blame for its withdrawal, of course, but whatever has made the speaker stop feeling its enveloping presence.

The other extreme – where pain becomes its opposite – is the burning experienced from the intense love with which God touches us: "Et je me fons en sentant approcher / Le doux rayon de ta flamme excellente" (S. IV, lns. 3-4, p. 143)⁴⁰³; also,

Jamais mon coeur ne puisse retenir
Autre penser que le doux souvenir
De la beauté dont le feu me devore:
(S. XCVIII, 9-11, 258)

In Sonnet XIX, the poet calls us to seek "cest autre amour qui fait la vertu suivre, / Qui est chaste et parfait, modeste, et gracieux" (11-12). Then, having already described Cupid, the mythological "god of love"⁴⁰⁴, as

[...] un cruel serpent, un devorant flambeau,
Qui brusle les humains par les flammes secrettes:
Dardant à tous propos des mortelles sagettes,
(3-5, 163)

⁴⁰² Winn refers us to "Ps. 31/32, 7: "Tu es mon refuge de la tribulation, laquelle m'a environné: ma joye: delivre moy de ceux qui m'environnent" (Coignard 245, n. 2).

⁴⁰³ On this Petrarchan imagery and the use that Coignard makes of it, see among others Caëtano (*Je suis Chrestienne*, p. 15) and Baker ("Gabrielle de Coignard's *Sonnets spirituels*: Writing Passion within and against the Petrarchan Tradition"). We would add that the use of such imagery by Coignard's song takes into account the difficulty of testifying to one's joy in God, however deeply felt; yet it allows her to establish a correspondence between profane love and sacred love which – whatever its substantial justification may be, e.g., according to Platonic conceptions – makes her work more accessible for those who are not yet touched by grace.

⁴⁰⁴ On Coignard's use of mythology, see Winn's and Caëtano's remarks quoted above, p. 122, n. 231. The pains of human love come up again in the *Vers chrestiens*. For example, in the very last poem of the collection, *Hymne de la vertu de Contenance*, we find a surprisingly bitter attitude concerning human love and marriage coming from a poet who, elsewhere, claims to have so enjoyed being married to her husband: "Que si l'on est lié du noeud de mariage, / Ayant tous les plaisirs que nostre jeune aage / Peut desirer ça bas comme sont les grandeurs, / La jeunesse et beauté, et les aises trompeurs. / **Ce sont d'attraits picquantz et d'amorces bruslantes**, / Pour forcer la raison des ames plus constantes" (lms. 149-154, 625).

Coignard, like Marquets before her, describes the “autre amour” (11) – which comes from the true God – as “Dardant ses traits dorez de la voute des cieux, / Non pour nous massacrer, mais pour nous faire vivre” (13-14)⁴⁰⁵. God’s divine flame is again evoked in Sonnet XXXIV, where it serves to burn away her “vains desirs et folles passions” (11)⁴⁰⁶. This purifying process allows her to “n’aimer rien que tes perfections,” she tells God (14). The language of Sonnet XXXVI (already quoted above, p. 242) goes even further, as the poet, presently burning *without* but *for* God’s divine flame, implores Him to burn, in turn, not only her sins but also her heart, flesh, and chest:

Helas! mon Dieu, subject de mes amours,
Helas! combien devois-je ardre tousjours,
Me souvenant de la flamme divine,

Dont vous purgez ceux qu’il vous plaist toucher,
Brusle[z] mon coeur, mes pechez, et ma chair,
Et de vos feux embrase[z] ma poitrine.
(9-14, 182)

When Coignard refers to God as being the cause of other human travails, it is made clear that He is causing them for the purpose of a just and merited chastisement, which ultimately makes way for or leads to a superior good. Moreover, when God is said to be the cause of such pain or trouble, the language used tends to evoke a paradoxically welcome violence that is counterbalanced by an even greater sweetness; and, in the end,

⁴⁰⁵ In *Poesie spirituelle*, the divine flames (4) of the Holy Spirit are expected to illuminate our souls (1) and cause us to cry out to God (5), our only source of comfort in the midst of misery (8), and the One whose flames light up our hearts, snuff out our sins (11-12), and consume our vices and sins (27): “Vien, ô doux Saint Esprit, lumière de nos ames, / Vien donner aux humains tes admirables dons, / Tous d’un commun accord prions et demandons / Un rayon gracieux de **tes divines flammes**. / Par tes divins effects nous cryons: Abba pere, / Pere doux et clement des plus calamiteux, / Et donneur liberal aux pauvres souffreteux, / Et nostre seul confort durant nostre misere. / O doux consolateur des ames oppressées, / Qui nous fait invoquer de Jesus le nom saint, / **Ton feu** nos coeurs allume, et nos pechez estainct, / Saints et divers effects qu’adorent nos pensées. [...] Consume de **tes feus** nos vices et pechez / Entretenant tousjours nos consciences pures” (lns. 1-12 and 27-28, 303-305).

⁴⁰⁶ See also *Les huict Beatitudes*: “Bien-heureux sont les coeurs nets et purifiez, / Que le saint feu d’amour purge de toute ordure, / Car ceux-là verront Dieu et sa gloire future, / Pour ce qu’à son vouloir ils sont sacrifiez” (lns. 21-24, 302).

God's approach is recognized as being more merciful and kind than the sinner deserves. For example, in Coignard's Sonnet XVII, God mercifully intervenes merely by means of a dream in order to warn the poet's soul that it needs to correct its ways:

Je beniray tousjours l'an, le jour et le moy,
Le temps et la saison, que la bonté divine
Lança ses doux attraits au fonds de ma poitrine,
Arrachant de mon sein le coeur que je portois.

Un soir il me sembla ainsi que je dormois
Dessous l'obscurité de ma sombre courtine,
Que je me submergeois dedans la mer mutine,^[407]
Hallettant à la mort peu à peu je mourais.

J'avois mille regrets de mes fautes commises,
Je promettois à Dieu des saintes entreprises,
S'il me donnoit loisir de vivre encore un peu.

Je m'esveille en sur-saut, et mon ame advertie
Par ce songe divin de corriger ma vie,
Demande ton secours pour accomplir son voeu.
(160-161)

In Sonnet LXIII, the poet also conveys a sense of gratitude as she asks:

Combien d'occasions nous donne l'Eternel
De marcher hardiment au chemin difficile,
Sans estre effarouchez d'une crainte servile,
Puis qu'en tous nos combats il s'est fait Coronel?
(1-4, 214-215)

In other words, the fact that God made Himself the leader for those on the difficult path of life should make such a path less frightening or troublesome, if not less painful to those on it. This question is then followed by assertions highlighting, in progressively endearing terms, God as a protector (7), father (8), and shepherd (9):

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Is. 43:1-2: "Et maintenant telles choses dict le Seigneur qui t'a créé, Jacob: et qui t'a formé, Israël. Ne crain point, car je t'ay racheté, et t'ay appelé par ton Nom: tu es à moy. **Quand tu passeras par les eaues**, je seray avec toy, et **les fleuves ne te couvriront point**. Quand tu chemineras par le feu, tu ne seras point bruslé, et la flamme ne te bruslera point" / "*Et nunc haec dicit dominus creans te Jacob, et formans te, Israel. Noli timere quia redemi te, et vocavi te domine tuo Meus es tu. Cum transieris per aquas, tecum ero, et flumina non operient te. Cum ambulaveris in igne, non combureris, et flamma non ardebit in te*" (Le Livre de Isaïe le Prophete XLIII.1-2; Benoist, vol. 2, 150 r°).

Lors que les vanitez de ce monde charnel
 Nous viennent desrober ce qui nous est utile,
 Il se tient pres de nous car il garde sa ville,
 Et recognoit les siens de son œil paternel.

C'est le divin Pasteur qui garde ses ouailles [*i.e.*, brebis]
 (5-9, 215)

In a sweetly inviting manner, rather than one that would incite fear or disgust, Coignard then celebrates God-given provisions and even God's method of and reason for chastisement: "Et les va repaissant de graces nompareilles, / Les chastiant aussi s'il les voit esgarer" (lns. 10-11, *ibid.*). This is followed by the compassionate exhortation:

Ne nous esloignons point de la troupe chérie,
 Demeurons en ce parc de la grand bergerie,
 Et ne veuillons jamais ce chemin ignorer.
 (12-14, *ibid.*)

The second half of Sonnet XCIV gratefully acknowledges that God (intimately addressed only as "tu" throughout) impedes the subject's wayward pursuits with a pleasant obstacle ("une plaisante haye" (11)) and draws her back to Himself in a manner that is, paradoxically, both violent and healing:

Lors que je m'esloignois de tes perfections,
 Suyvant le vain object de mes affections,
 Tu arrestas mon cours d'une plaisante haye,

 Et de ta sainte main les infinis bien-faits
 Firent dedans mon coeur et mille et mille traicts,
 Dont les coups sont si doux que j'en nourry ma playe.^[408]

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. the transformative effects Christ's appearance has on the Virgin Mary following his death and resurrection: "Elle voit les pertuis des playes glorieuses, / Qui furent à son coeur des pointes douloureuses, / Luy sembler maintenant des doux amoureux dards, / Tant elle a de plaisir en ses divins regards" (*La descente de nostre Seigneur aux limbes*, lns. 213-215, p. 583). Cf. Also this excerpt from one of Granada's particularly vivid model-prayers within the meditation "Pour le dimanche au soir" (162 r°): "Et puis qu'il n'y a moyen par lequel je puisse satisfaire à ce debte, qu'au moins (Seigneur) je te paye (s'il te plaist) en ne jamais le mettant en oubly. Je te prie (Seigneur) par les entrailles de ta misericorde, et immense charité, **que tu blece ainsi mon cœur par tes playes**, et enyvres mon ame avec ton sang, que quelque part que je me puisse tourner, je te voye tousjours crucifié: où que ce soit que je jette ma veuë, que tout me semble resplendir en ton sang precieux. **Que d'estre crucifié tousjours avec toy, soit toute ma consolation**, et penser ailleurs qu'en toy, ce ne soit que toute affliction pour mon ame" ("Du benefice de la Redemption. Tiltre 3." *Le Vray chemin*, 172 r°). Coignard picks up this vivid message, but uses a particularly surprising

(9-14, 252-253)

A specific example of a “plaisante haye” is later illustrated in Sonnet CXI. The presumed divine power – who commands even the weather – decides to cause such a fast-flowing rain that the poet’s proud mind (which had previously gone to “prendre une haute carriere, / Voulant de l’intellect fendre le ciel vouté” (7-8)), became “mouillé” and “fut constraint s’abaisser” (11). Her reaction to this event involves self-mockery and a concise confession of the lesson she has learned (or been reminded of):

Ha! vaine, dis-je alors, voicy le vol d’Icare,
 Il ne t’appartient pas de veoir chose si rare,
 Ne monte point plus haut qu’on ne te veut hausser.
 (12-14, 273)

Another example of God’s intervening chastisement is provided in Sonnet LXXXVI. Upon avowing her desire to cease writing poetry, due to a dangerous envy that has attempted to afflict the pure intentions of her poetic activity, Coignard reminds her readers (and herself) that God brings about certain humbling or painful events (like being misunderstood, disdained, blamed) in order to remind us of our sinful state and need for humility (on this side of Heaven):

turn of phrase to communicate her desire: “Au pied de ceste croix je feray mon logis, / **Je veux estre le fer du glaive de Longis, / Pour soulager ma peyne: / Je plongeray mon cœur dans ce precieux sang,** / Qui pour me rachepter ruissela de ton flang / Comme d’une fontaine” (*Complainte sur la Passion de Jesus-Christ*, lns. 49-54, pp. 332-333). Le Saulx’s words (quoted above, p. 153) may come to mind once more as we visualize, perhaps with shock, Coignard’s seemingly violent desire to be the iron blade that pierces Jesus’ side. Yet this type of language must be interpreted as “poétique;” this time conveying the poet’s aggressive passion and ravishing desire for Christ. If analyzed along the lines of gendered behavior (according to the cultural norms of her day), it is intriguing to note how the poet’s desires shift. First, she wants to follow Jesus’ steps up to Mount Calvary, her soul desires to be “Prez de la Vierge sainte” (ln. 27, p. 331), weeping of course. Her pursuits falling into the category of traditionally feminine activities (following, community with other women, weeping) extend into line 49, where she declares, “Au pied de ceste croix je feray mon logis,” thus reinforcing the traditionally feminine behavior of humble, subordinate posturing as well as home-making. But then, upon contemplating her Savior mounted on the Cross, she comes to desire taking up a role that is more closely associated with stereotypically masculine behavior: becoming a soldier’s weapon and piercing, then plunging into Christ’s side in order to experience relief from her pain. While Coignard may not have wittingly infused this passage with gendered and perhaps even erotic undertones, it stands out to us as one of the rare occasions in which the author conveys her desire to (metaphorically) perform an act that is traditionally reserved for male subjects.

Je veux quicter les vers, je veux laisser la muse,
 J'abandonne le lut, je ne veux plus chanter,
 Je hay ce que souloit mon esprit contenter,
 Et qui entretenoit ma vie langoureuse:

Puis que pour m'affliger l'envie dangereuse,
 Dessus mes actions ose bien attenter,
 Ores je quicte tout, je me veux absenter,
 Pour trouver le repos, solitaire et recluse.

Nous sommes quelque fois de tous favorisez,
 Et puis en mesme temps de chacun mesprisez,
 Il nous faut recevoir le blasme et les louanges.

**Dieu le permet aussi pour nous humilier,
 Et nous faire sçavoir qu'il ne faut oublier
 Que nous sommes pecheurs et ne sommes point Anges.**

(243-244)

This dynamic of self-correction – seconding the correction meted out by God – is also found in sonnets that refer to (actually or potentially) horrific public ordeals. Speaking on behalf of a collective (as Marquets did throughout her *Sonets spirituels*, but for a specific reason), and in a tone that quickly captures the speaker's pain and weariness, Sonnet LXXXIX evokes a "fleau commun à tous" (9)⁴⁰⁹. With due humility and repentance, Coignard begs the "Pere tout clement" (3) to revive their nearly extinguished souls. By confessing, in line 10, that God's chastisement, however gruesome, is too lenient still (in light of the extent of their transgressions), an even deeper level of humility is reached. In the closing tercet, the future tense serves to affirm the

⁴⁰⁹ The poet may be referring to the plague in this sonnet. As we saw in Chapter II (p. 141, n. 264), the *Annales de la ville de Toulouse* record no plague between 1563 and 1585. When the epidemic returns in 1585 (the year before Coignard's death), it is recorded as not being very severe (Lafaille pp. 247 and 391). The "graves pechez" (2) mentioned here are similar to those alluded to in lines 6-7 and 9-12 of the previous sonnet (LXXXVIII), where God's chastisement (or warning) comes in the form of a comet: "Helas! tout aussi tost qu'une guerre sanglante, / A cessé la rigueur de ses cruelz effaitz, / Et lors que nous pensons nous veoir un peu deffaitz / De la calamité et douleur precedente, / Nous sommes menassez de ceste main puissante, / Qui veut tresjustement chastier nos mesfaitz, / Nous voyans tous les jours estre plus imparfaitz, / Il monstre son courroux par une estoille ardente. / Las! nous pensions desja vivre tresseurement, / Sans avoir de noz maux aucun amendement, / N'en ayant desplaisir, regret ny repentence, / Mais nostre vain espoir nous pourra bien tromper, / Car ce juste Seigneur est prest à nous frapper, / Si nous ne l'appaisons par nostre penitence" (S. LXXXVIII, Coignard 245-246).

consoling hope that God is ultimately protecting us from the even graver prospect of Hell:

Le coeur humilié, la conscience attaincte
D'un mordant repentir de nos graves pechez,
O Pere tout clement, nous sommes attachez
Comme des criminels devant ta face sainte.

Voy nos corps langoureux, tous palissants de crainte,
Dans un lict ennuyeux dolentement couchez,
Tu es le medecin de nos maux plus cachez,
Vivifie dans nous nostre ame presque estainte.

Nous souffrons de ta main ce fleau commun à tous,
Confessant humblement qu'il est encor trop doux,
A nos transgressions la peyne n'est esgale.

Mais en nous chastiant tu nous corrigeras,
Et comme protecteur nostre ame garderas
De descendre au manoir de l'horreur infernale.
(247)

There is, however, at least one outlying sonnet that departs from this overall tendency to maintain sweet, consoling undertones that soften the blows of God-given chastisements. As noted above, in Sonnet XXVIII, entitled "Sur la coqueluche"⁴¹⁰, the language used by the voice of God is disturbingly angry. Even though the initial cause of divine wrath is human sin (3, 5-6, 8-10, and 13) and God's pity is also acknowledged (14), the poet, this time, chooses not to "let up" by the end of the sonnet:

Les efforts inhumains de la guerre heretique,
Renversoient l'univers d'un estrange pouvoir,
Et sans baigner les yeux, l'on ne pouvoit plus voir
Les persecutions de la foy catholique.^[411]

Dieu regardant nostre courage inique,^[412]

⁴¹⁰ The majority of sonnets in the collection are not given a title. See Coignard p. 120 for Winn's list of the thirty-one which are.

⁴¹¹ In all editions (of 1594 and 1595) that we consulted, the first letters of the following words are capitalized: "catholique" (ln. 4), "citez" (ln. 12). However, Winn explains "Les principes observés dans l'établissement du texte comprennent: [...] la substitution ou suppression de majuscules suivant l'usage moderne" (Coignard p. 122).

Qui pour tous ces malheurs ne pouvoit s'esmouvoir,
 Nous dit en son courroux: je vous feray sçavoir
 Comme je sçay punir la lascheté publique.

Vous craignez d'hazarder vostre vie pour moy,
 Laissant si prez de vous perdre ma sainte loy,
 Vous ne mourrez donc point en me faisant service,

Mais je vous frapperay dans vos fortes citez,
 Car le nombre infini de vos iniquitez,
 Offence ma pitié, provoque ma justice.

(“Sur la coqueluche,” S. XXVIII, Coignard 173-174)⁴¹³

Whether the sonnets that follow this one reflect the author’s intended sequence or not⁴¹⁴, readers will not enjoy a glimpse of consolation until the final tercet of Sonnet XXX:

Marche tout droit, de rien ne t’esbahis,
 Voyant de loin le celeste pays
 Qui t’est promis pour loyer de ta peine.
 (12-14, 176)

Fortunately, the penultimate poem of the *Sonnets spirituels* allows readers to hear God’s voice once more; and this time, His words are infused with sweet and gentle undertones as He promises the “pecheur” (2) – His “peuple bien aymé” (3)⁴¹⁵ – that He will drop His vengeance (14) if true repentance leaves their misdeeds behind (13):

Oyez les doux propos et mieilleuse complainte
 Que Dieu faict au pecheur à fin de l’attirer,
 Mon peuple bien aymé, te veux tu retirer
 De l’estroite union de mon amitié sainte.

Je ne veux rien de toy par force ny contrainte,
 Tu as un franc vouloir dont tu dois m’honorer,

⁴¹² Two syllables appear to be missing here. The 1595 edition (see Winn, p. 173, n. 2) has “Lorsque Dieu...,” which solves the metric problem but creates a syntactic one. Both editions (of 1594 and 1595), have a period at the end of line 4, even though its removal would resolve the syntactic problem.

⁴¹³ This is the first poem in the *Œuvres chrestiennes* in which God speaks directly. Out of 129 sonnets, God’s voice (be it that of the Father or the Son) is heard in only 9 poems (sonnets XXVIII, LXXIV, CXII-CXIII, CXV-CXVIII, and CXXVIII). To our knowledge, Christ’s voice is heard only once in the longer poems (lms. 63-72 in *Hymne sur la louange de la Charité*, Coignard 591).

⁴¹⁴ On this question, see our pp. 6-7, n. 14.

⁴¹⁵ God addresses the collective using the second person singular subject pronoun “tu,” which gives a greater sense of intimacy. In contrast, “vous” is used in Sonnet XXVIII, thus enhancing the reader’s sense of a separation and lack of intimacy between God and His sinful, cowardly addressees.

Obey moy tousjours sans jamais alterer
De mes commandemens la pieté non feinte.

Dy moy que t'ay je faict, je vois que tu t'enfuis,
Tu te vas engouffrer dedans l'infernal puis,
Revien dedans mon sein, ô ma pauvre facture.

Je suis ton pere doux qui te jure et promets
Que si d'un repentir tu laisses tes mesfaits,
Je lairay ma vengeance, oubliant ton injure.

(S. CXXVIII, 293-294)

Thus Coignard, faced with the critique and rejection of this concept by the Protestants, has God Himself affirm the “*franc vouloir*,” the sinner’s free will, meant to obey God’s commands but prone, on its own volition, to betraying them. The key lesson that this poetry wants to impart about our suffering is that it is of our own choosing: self-inflicted.

Excitement and humility

The differences we have observed thus far between (and within) the outlooks of Coignard’s and Marquets’ respective “spiritual” sonnets remind us that the renouncing and transforming of the secular love complaint by a 16th-century Christian or, for that matter, Catholic poet does not mean that the latter will, by definition, find herself in just one position – of celebration and adoration – *vis-à-vis* her God; from poet to poet, but from poem to poem as well, many choices remain possible in terms of *where*, exactly, a Christian writer purports to “be” in her journey toward the God in whom her whole “being” should (and perhaps will) ultimately reside. We have already observed different approaches to exciting or inciting – oneself and others – to love the (divine) object of one’s affection more ardently. Thus, in Sonnet XXV, as we have seen, Coignard “incites” herself by focusing mainly on who God is, and by humbly articulating her simple desire

to belong to Him, without hinting at any assurance that she already does so⁴¹⁶. The opening quatrains of Sonnet XCIV, however, would suggest exactly such an assurance, at least of her status as someone following Christ's banner (ln. 8), if not yet elected:

A l'instant que je vy ceste belle lumiere,
Que tu monstres à ceux qu'il te plaist appeller,
Mon esprit tout esmeu pensoit desja voller
Au lieu delicieux de sa source premiere.

Mes yeux qui sommeilloient ouvrirent la paupiere,
Et mes sens estonnez ne se pouvoyent saouler
D'admirer la bonté, qui m'a faicte enrouler
Au nombre des heureux qui suyvent ta baniere.
(1-8, 252-253)

As we have also seen, Marquets' "Sonet 38" strives to incite our hearts by celebrating the fact that *we* are presently the object of God's love and that we have benefited and continue to benefit from His goodness. She skillfully composes the sonnet in a manner that appears to pump her readers' spiritual blood through their minds and souls, arousing their affections. By suggesting that such joy is given even at present, as though the ideal state of being were *already* realized, one will be all the more incited, Marquets believes, to love God. Similar notions – the idea that we are already able to *enjoy* God's presence – animate the first "Sonets" (see 1, 2, 5, and 6 in particular) of the series added to Flaminio's *Divines poësies*. To be sure, other sonnets in the same series, however, illustrate what happens when we forget this calling or become attracted to another object (see 4, 8, 9, 13...). In fact this very contrast is essential.

Thus, the speaker of "Sonet 4" proclaims that God's beauty is the greatest there is, exceeding that of the sun, before asking *when* her soul might be allowed to contemplate

⁴¹⁶ Incitement strategies can have a more limited focus: see Sonnet XIII, where the poet castigates her own laziness and counts on her soul's "raison active" to awaken her body and make herself go listen to morning sermons "en ce temps de caresme," so as to "servir le Seigneur et gaigner les pardons" (Coignard 155).

it, and professing herself “encore trop indigne / De ce grand bien” (*Divines poësies*, lns. 12-13, Marquets 55), unworthy of accessing it; whereas the speaker of “Sonet 5” reminds us that Christ has already brought “le feu de charité” (ln. 3) to this world, in which, she says without a trace of reticence,

Mon ame vit en grand’ suavité
Y recevant plus de fœlicité
Que n’en sçauroit l’esprit humain comprendre.
O combien donc heureuse est l’estincelle
De ce feu saint ! Et bien-heureuse celle
Qui la ressent en son cœur tellement
Qu’elle n’aspire et ne cherche en tout lieu
Sinon d’avoir jouyssance de Dieu,
Comme celluy qu’elle ayme uniquement.
 (“Que l’ame vit par charité. Sonet 5,” 6-14, Marquets 55-56)

This would seem to be a flat-out contradiction, but as we saw this sequence of sonnets is not an autobiography: rather, expressed here in the (feminine) first person are various spiritual positions in which one can find oneself, with a sense of the chasm that separates them and of what it takes to progress (or regress) from one to the other. The most blissful state experienced here is *not* eternally liberated from death or sin. At the same time, there are moments and there are poems that can and should do justice to the intensity of God’s love, as experienced here and now. The overall effect is one of incitement.

Between sweet affirmation and mortifying doubt lies the space of (the need for) prayer. Marquets’ “Sonet 24” is such a prayer, carried by the tension of the “already-not-yet” aspect of our condition as believers who have yet to cross the threshold of death:

Fay moy, mon Dieu, tant d’honneur et de grace
Que toute à toy je me puisse donner,
Et tous mes faicts à ta gloire ordonner,
Sans que jamais ton saint vueil je trespasse.
Que ta grandeur qui toute autre surpasse
Puisse tousjours en mes vers resonner,
Et que pour toy je vueille abandonner
Tout ce qui est en ceste terre basse.

Bref, que je sois par desir pur et munde
 A toy ravie, et ja hors de ce monde,
 Ayant aux cieux ma conversation:
 Comme le lieu o[ù] sans doute j'espere,
 Que ta bonté favorable et prospere,
 A préparé mon habitation.

(“Pour obtenir grace de se dedier à Dieu totalement.
 Sonet 24,” 68-69)

As we can see, this particular prayer acknowledges, along with its own poetic nature, its poetic object (in other words, not celestial felicity as such in this case, but the wish that “mes vers” be capable of expressing it, even though “I” am not there yet). In a neat expression of the “already-not-yet” condition of the faithful who has not yet crossed the threshold of death, the sonnet both erases *and* marks the difference between here and there, between the request that I (as a believer and as a poet) feel as though “ja hors de ce monde,” installed “aux cieux” on the sheer strength of my desire, and the hope⁴¹⁷ that my future dwelling there, which I do not yet inhabit, has in fact been prepared for me – as promised, most notably, by Jesus Himself in the Gospel’s “Beatitudes”⁴¹⁸.

⁴¹⁷ Linked with faith of course: cf. Heb. 11:1-3: “Or la Foy est un soustenement des choses qu’on espere, et une certification des choses qu’on ne voit point. 2 Car par icelle les anciens ont obtenu tesmoignage. 3 Par Foy nous entendons que les siecles ont esté ordonnés par la Parole de Dieu, afin que des choses invisibles fussent faictes choses visibles” / “1 Est autem fides, sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium. 2 In hac enim testimonium consecuti sunt senes. 3 Fide intelligimus aptata esse secula verbo dei, ut ex invisibilibus visibilia fierent” (Epistre de l’Apostre aux Hebreux XI.1-3; Benoist, vol. 3, p. 132 r°).

⁴¹⁸ Matthew 5:3-12; see # 6 especially, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” In her article on the subject (“Les Béatitudes comme source d’inspiration”), which studies Coignard’s *Les huit Beatitudes, De la gloire et felicité de la vie éternelle*, and sonnets I, II, and XLV; and Marquets’ “huit sonnets sur les Béatitudes” (among others) from her *Sonets spirituels*, Brenda Dunn-Lardeau notes that both poets “conçoivent leur paraphrase des Béatitudes avec force commentaires explicatifs et interprétatifs, assortis de conseils pratiques” (176). Yet while Coignard “réécrit Matthieu pour **faire l’éloge des œuvres comme mode d’emploi pour accéder à la félicité promise**,” Marquets “cherche à **exciter le lecteur à l’imitation des saints comme moyen d’atteindre la félicité céleste comme ces derniers**” (*ibid.*). Dunn-Lardeau adds that Coignard “a pris peu de libertés avec l’inventio, quelques-unes avec la dispositio canonique des versets de l’évangéliste; elle a, en outre, donné à l’*elocutio* des pointes d’intensité pour figurer l’éternité de la félicité”; yet her work remains shrouded in “l’austérité de la Contre-Réforme qui s’éloigne de l’envolée originale des Béatitudes. Et c’est pour un autre poème qu’elle réserve ses élans sur la félicité céleste et qu’elle chante, sans les mépriser, les beautés de la création divine comme avant-goût de la vision béatifique avec les inflexions d’une chanson ronsardienne et les éléments d’une méditation de Louis de Grenade.” As for Marquets, “malgré les lourdeurs didactiques de la structure recherchée, mais répétitive

What is telling, nevertheless, is that Marquets feels compelled to acknowledge this difference and the tension (or possible misunderstanding) it generates. Her “Sonet 19,” entitled “Que pour escrire de l’amour divin, on ne mescognoist son imperfection” (this title alone says it all) shows, in the guise of another prayer addressed to God, that she is fully aware of the confident tone that some of her claims assume and convey. That some of her poems depict her as *already* possessing “extreme affection” for God to the point of not caring about anything else is justified by their goal, the task assigned to them, which is to excite her *own* soul (not just her readers’) to love God, even at the risk of appearing hypocritical:

Ne me reprens (ô Dieu) de fiction,
Si quelquefois en mes vers je raconte
Que je te porte extreme affection,
Et que de rien je ne fay plus de compte:
Car tant s’en faut (dont, hélas! j’ay grand honte)
Que j’aye en moy ceste perfection,
Qu’il m’est advis que je passe et surmonte
Tout autre en vice et imperfection.
Je le dy donc, non par hypocrisie,
Ains pour mon ame exciter à t’aymer:
Ne pretendant par ceste Poësie
Que si celeste on me doive estimer:
Car je ne puis telle me recognoistre,
Mais sans mentir je le voudrois bien estre.
 (“Que pour escrire de l’amour divin, on ne mescognoist son
imperfection. Sonet 19,” 65)

In Coignard’s Sonnet IX, similar language is used but to a different end:

Qu’on aye opinion que je suis hypocrite,
Ayant le coeur rempli de ruse et fiction,

de son poème, n’épingle aucune de ces pratiques précises, tels les pèlerinages, les aumônes ou les suffrages, et conserve un sens de la mesure pour relier, toujours en termes généraux, joies et récompenses de la vision béatifique. Sa préoccupation est avant tout que les chrétiens pratiquent l’imitation des saints, ce qui n’était pas explicitement le message christique du Sermon sur la Montagne. Certes, pour ces deux poétesses, les autorités scripturaire et ecclésiastique sont inextricablement liées. Malgré tout, celles-ci parviennent, avec une certaine subtilité, à reconnaître à l’autorité du texte sacré une préséance par rapport à celle de l’Église. Ainsi, Gabrielle lui accorde une place de choix dans les incipit des stances et Anne lui réserve les quatrains plutôt que les tercets des sonnets” (176-177).

Que tout ce que je fais est ostentation,
Que je suis envieuse, arrogante, et despite:

J'avoue tout cela, plus encor' je merite
Qu'on publie par tout mon imperfection.
Toutesfois le haut but de mon intention
Ne se changera point, quoy qu'on m'aye descrite.

Que l'on die de moy tout ce que l'on voudra,
Je m'asseure qu'en fin matiere leur faudra:
Car Dieu qui voit à clair la verité celée,

Permettra que ceux-là, qui blasment les vertus,
Seront de leur baston à la parfin battus,
Ayant d'un repentir leur ame bourrelée.
(Coignard 148-149)⁴¹⁹

In this case, admitting all the vices and shortcomings she is accused of does not prevent the female poet from striking back at her accusers: the poem's tone is far more aggressive than contrite. Yet what the two sonnets have in common is justification by intention: readers may misunderstand and misjudge, but God, first addressee, will not; He alone can vouch for the sincerity of what is being written.

Coignard's Sonnet XXV, however, has taught us how to read the poet's (potentially) hyperbolic statements concerning her present experience of and relationship with God. In Sonnet VII for example:

Plustost le ciel perdra ses clairs flambeaux,
Et l'esté chaut sera roidy de glace,
L'hyver aura du printemps les rameaux,
Et les mortels n'auront plus de fallace.

Plustost la mer environnant la masse,
Et seiche et froide, ayant perdu ses eaux,
N'aura poissons, ne portera batteaux,
Que de chanter ta gloire je me lasse.

⁴¹⁹ Winn sees this sonnet as an "[e]xamen de conscience auquel l'exercitant est invité afin que s'ouvre en lui une disposition nouvelle et qu'il puisse percevoir la proximité de Dieu à sa vie (cf. Ignace de Loyola, *Exercices spirituels*, première semaine; Louis de Grenade, *Le vray chemin*, contemplations du lundi soir). Ce sonnet appartient aux sonnets de pénitence, cf. IV, V, XLI, XLVI, LXVII, LXXXII, LXXXV, LXXXVII, XC et le long poème intitulé *Combat de plusieurs ennemis qui nous assaillent* (2ème partie)" (Coignard 148, n. 1). The sonnet also brings to mind Lam. 3:29-66 and Lk. 6: 23-26.

Je chanteray, ô Dieu de mon salut,
 Je chanteray ton los dessus mon lut,
 Jamais au cœur ne sera que je n'aye

Un trait fiché de ton doux souvenir,
 Pour le combat hardiment soustenir,
 Contre le mal qui mes forces essaye.
 (146-147)

This is an *adynaton*, a figure inherited from Antiquity and used by the poets of human love (most famously Petrarch⁴²⁰), who count on this “impossible” hyperbole to express the perennity of their passion. In a case like this the figure is not made literal: Coignard’s “impossible” remains a pure hyperbole. Yet it is remotivated, made to express the strength and sincerity of her commitment to God. Which does *not* amount to denying her imperfection, as another example of the same figure, found in Sonnet XC, makes clear.

We already quoted this sonnet in full, but it deserves to be read again:

Seigneur, si quelque fois mon amour diminue,
 Et de ton feu divin mon coeur se refroidit,
 L'on ne peut pas tousjours aussi comme l'on dit,
 Estre en un mesme estat et force continue.

Il n'est rien d'asseuré qui soit dessoubz la nue,
 Mesme l'astre nuictal descroit et s'arrondit,
 Ainsi quand peu à peu mon desir s'attiedit,
 Je sens un vray regret de ma faute connue.

**Or tant que la grand mer nourrira des poissons,
 Et l'esté chaleureux meurira les moissons,
 Et les bois porteront leurs espesses ramées,**

Je te louray, Seigneur, et la posterité
 Lira des vers de moy, qui chauds de charité,
 Rendront de ton amour nos ames enflammées.
 (248)

⁴²⁰ *Canzoniere*, 22 (37-39, p. 24), 57 (5-11, p. 92), 195 (5-8, p. 286), 237 (16-18, pp. 336-339), *etc.*; endlessly imitated, by Scève, for example (*Délie*, XVII, CXIX), Du Bellay (*L'Olive*, LXXVI), or Ronsard's no less famous “Plus tost le bal de tant d'astres divers...” (*Amours*, XXVI).

The first line of the sonnet contradicts the logic of the *adynaton*, whose point, in a secular context, is to assert that the poet's love *will never diminish*. Here, this possibility is humbly accepted: the decline of desire is as certain as sin – for it *is* sin, into which we *will* fall. The *adynaton*, therefore, must express something else: the poet's promise to continue writing in praise of the Lord, which in turn ensures that her "vers" will convey God's love (which never falters) to present and future readers, even though her own heart may not feel it as strongly as it should. Thus a second trope of secular poetry (the immortality claim) is being remotivated by a holy "intention"; and a likely accusation of hypocrisy (since the poet, at times, may be "going through the motions," expressing God's love more strongly than she experiences it) is parried, since the conveying of God's love carries its own justification and has the power to rekindle love in "our souls" – the soul of the author very much included.

Other sonnets play, differently, on the gap between what the poet wants, and firmly commits to, and what she knows herself to be capable of. In a polemical (anti-Protestant) context, the commitment is as firm as it could be:

Je ne sçaurois escrire d'autre chose
Que de la croix, où j'ay le coeur fiché,
En ceste object mon amour est niché,
Autre chanson ma muse ne compose.
(S. LXIX, 1-4, 223)⁴²¹

Elsewhere, it is expressed in the mode of a wish (or a prayer), hoping that memory ("souvenir") and will ("vouloir") will make up for the insufficiencies of her love itself.

We have already quoted these lines:

Jamais mon coeur ne puisse retenir
Autre penser que le doux souvenir

⁴²¹ Winn explains that this sonnet attacks the "refus du Crucifix chez les réformés français" (p. 224, n. 2).

De la beauté dont le feu me devore:

Heureux desirs dressez si hautement,
Heureux vouloir d'aymer parfaitement,
Ceste beauté qu'en silence j'adore.

(S. XCVIII, 9-11, 258)⁴²²

Such declarations anticipate the obvious fact that Coignard does write of things other than the Cross, has other “muses” than the Cross, or will even, at times, refuse to carry the Cross⁴²³ (which promises much suffering before bliss); or the fact that her heart holds to other thoughts or desires in addition (or contradiction) to that of divine beauty. Lack of constancy, confessed by the devout female poet⁴²⁴ and contradicting the facile oaths of her male (and secular) counterparts⁴²⁵, is a given, but never a reason to give up on the subject: rather, the poems that confess to it draw from this very confession an additional power to move us (inasmuch as we are afflicted by the same weakness) and, at the same time, spring toward their desired goal.

Coignard’s overall tendency, in such reflective pieces, is to be less assertive in her language than Marquets is when she explores the same ambiguities. In this sense, we may situate Coignard’s devotional poems closer (than Marquets’) to the secular examples of personal longing we have examined, even as Coignard rejects or debunks their model (starting with their habit of blaming the beloved for the lover’s tears, sorrow, lost time,

⁴²² See above, pp. 124-125, for a comparison of this sonnet with its predecessors.

⁴²³ As noted earlier, Sonnet LXXXV confesses that, at certain moments, she wants the Cross (*i.e.*, to carry her metaphorical burden), and at other moments, hates it; thus making it the symbol and vector of a “guerre intestine” (12, Coignard 243).

⁴²⁴ It is of course a familiar accusation thrown at women, by poets in particular: see Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 183: “Femina è cosa mobil per natura, / ond’io so ben ch’un amoroso stato / in cor di donna picciol tempo dura” (lms. 12-14, p. 274); “Woman by nature is a changeable thing: / so that I know a loving mood / lasts only a little time in a lady’s heart” (adaptation of Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 569 “*Varium et mutabile semper femina*”). A comparison with the use that female authors themselves (such as Marguerite d’Oingt, Christine de Pizan, or Teresa of Ávila) make of this *topos* would be enlightening.

⁴²⁵ See Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 97, lms. 12-14 (I could not write of anyone else) or the *adynata* mentioned above; or, again, Ronsard’s own *adynaton* in Sonnet XXVI, which the poet’s ulterior, systematic “inconstance” will playfully belie many times over.

incoming death, and so forth, with no substantial hope of a better good to eventually alleviate or make up for such torments). Our poet's desire, in Sonnet XXV and many others, is presented in a manner that conveys a certain humility, stemming from a posture of genuine conviction rather than from a (potentially) disingenuous desire to charm or disarm the reader. Indeed, Coignard conveys her sincere humility⁴²⁶ through the simplicity of her message, by the relative lack of variation she allows herself, and by not focusing on herself *even though*, contrary to Marquets, she chooses to make her message

⁴²⁶ Which we could again compare to the "humility *topos*" used by countless writers from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance: yet another example of a common rhetorical device remotivated by a religious outlook (as already happened, for example, in the poetry of Marguerite de Navarre). Cave (*Devotional Poetry*, p. 61) shows how the *topos* is reapplied in the context of the religious literature of the later 16th century; it is a reaction against formalism, he explains, and it reflects a less self-conscious form of rhetoric. Be this as it may, the Pléiade poets were known for having either jettisoned such declarations of humility (in the case of Ronsard) or made them ironic or bitter (in the case of Du Bellay). Paula Sommers brings to light the unique exploitation of the humility *topos* that Coignard carries out in her sonnets CXXII and CXXIII. Sommers demonstrates how the texts of Ronsard's *La quenouille* and Theocritus' *Idyll 28* "call attention to the poet's cultural authority and to his ability to spin words into literary artifacts" ("Gendered Distaffs" 205). Sommers also reminds us of Labé who, in her famed prefatory letter to Clémence de Bourges, "encourages her female readers to seize opportunities for intellectual development and even fame" ("Female Subjectivity," 140). In addition, Sommers perceives in Catherine des Roches' sonnet "A ma quenouille," a female poet who is "assuming a playful stance appropriate to the salon society she addresses" and "invent[ing] metaphorical transformations – distaff-sword/distaff-spindle-pen – that legitimize female writing" (147). Coignard's two sonnets, on the other hand, reveal a very different attitude and development of the humility *topos*. In contrast to Ronsard who, "like Theocritus, anticipates a positive reception for his poem" ("Gendered Distaffs" 207), Coignard "does not speculate upon the reception of her text. Her persona seems to be self-absorbed. Engaged in useful productive work, she does not look beyond the technical details of her spinning. Her gaze is focused downward and inward" (*ibid.*). Moreover, in Coignard's rewriting of the Arachne myth, the poet's "brief representation of a contented, domestic spinner soon yields to the repressive drama of the Arachne sonnet where Jupiter intervenes to save the poet-spider from a hostile public" ("Female Subjectivity" 147). More specifically, the hostile public, represented by the figure of Pallas-Athena, is that of "a violent and erring patriarchal culture" (146); whereas Coignard's Jupiter represents a compassionate "God-the-Father" (*ibid.*). Sommers adds that, until Jupiter-God "wills otherwise, Arachne ensconced in her corner and identified with the larger Biblical category of the meek and powerless [as opposed to the smaller, gendered category of women], spins for him alone" ("Female Subjectivity" 147). Nevertheless, her spun product differs significantly from that of Ovid's Arachne. Sommers points out that Ovid's weaver is "condemned to the ceaseless production of 'sticky incomprehensible designs'"; whereas Coignard's humble spider "weaves fragile but intelligible webs for Jupiter" (*idem*, 145, quoting pp. 50-51 of Patricia Joplin's "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours." *Stanford Literature Review* 1.1 (Spring 1984): pp. 25-53). (Sommers, Paula. "Gendered Distaffs: Gabrielle de Coignard's Revision of Classical Tradition." *Classical and Modern Literature* 18.13 (Spring 1998): pp. 203-210. and "Female Subjectivity and the Distaff: Louise Labé, Catherine Des Roches, and Gabrielle de Coignard." *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 25 (1999): pp. 139-150.)

personal, rooted in her personal experience, rather than collective⁴²⁷. When Coignard puts herself in the picture, it is in order to focus, with maximal honesty, on who and what God is to her – but to all other beings as well –, and on what is lacking in herself as she strives to belong to Him. She has one simple desire and addresses one instance (her God) in one principal tone – that of humble adoration.

Sonnet LXII (Coignard 213-214), quoted above (pp. 177-178), reprises some of the notions already evoked in Sonnet XXV, but the correlation between the devout poet's desire (expressing "all" that God is to her in the quatrains, via an avalanche of characterizations: "ma portion, mon loier, ma fiance, / Mon appuy, mon repos, mon amour, mon desir," *etc.*) and her posture of humility becomes even more evident as she proceeds to acknowledge all that she does not merit. Thus, her overwhelming desire to be united to God (ln. 6) produces a humble request for mere crumbs from Christ's heavenly table. She does desire to have her soul given to or intertwined with her Creator; however, as we saw in Sonnet XXV, it is not a given that her soul is *already* in that enviable position, or authorized to assume it, even temporarily, for pedagogical purposes; although she does allow herself to express exceptional moments of "burning" with charity⁴²⁸. Having stated her desire in negative terms, and having humbly acknowledged what she does not merit, she confesses, in positive terms, that which she does desire: not a full meal, but "des miettes petites" (14). Between the worldly pleasures to be rejected and the heavenly pleasures not yet to be had, there is room for "crumbs" from the latter – which

⁴²⁷ See Kaiser, pp. 127-129: Marquets' writing does not have the "élan" nor the fervor that characterizes that of Gabrielle, because Marquets writes for a community; "la Dominicaine disparaît derrière le 'nous collectif.'" Marquets' own brand of simplicity is fundamentally didactic, eschewing all forms of excess. Overall, she is even more sober than Coignard; the result of a more detached stance.

⁴²⁸ As happens for example in sonnets XCVIII and CXXIV (esp. lns. 10-11).

are enough to feed and satisfy the (female) soul in her time of need⁴²⁹. Interestingly, instead of continuing her “tres-humble instance” (8) with her own original words in the final verse of the sonnet, the poet opts for a safer, even humbler approach – borrowing from the words of the Canaanite woman whose faith was complimented by Jesus (Mt. 15:28)⁴³⁰. She conveys her own faith and humility but also exposes a sense of insecurity about the state of her salvation compared to that of Jesus’ “familiers” and “ames favorittes” (Ins. 10 and 11). Nevertheless, we must note that, in addition to enhancing, by means of antithesis, the level of humility conveyed by her desire for “seulement des miettes petites” (14), her very naming of the goods, the “sainctes douceurs” (11), granted by her “liberal Sauveur” (5) to more deserving souls arouses the senses of touch, sight, and taste, culminating with “ce miel” (13), thus assuming an “exciting” or enticing role:

⁴²⁹ Granada, whom Coignard may remember here, stresses the *necessity* of humility as preparation for prayer (*Le vray chemin*, Première partie, Chapitre V, “De la preparation requise avant l’oraison”). One way is to recall one’s sins (albeit not in too much detail), confess them, and ask God for forgiveness. Doing so, one virtually “se deschausse les pieds pour entrer en la terre de promission, et [...] se lave ses habits pour sortir au devant de Dieu lors qu’il viendra s’accoster des hommes, et leur enseigner sa loy sainte” (176 v°). A second way is to consider “la majesté et grandeur de ce seigneur” (177 r°): “Ceste contemplation est comme une profonde reverence, que l’ame fait en soy-mesme devant le throsne divin, lors qu’il y entre pour parler à ceste majesté. Avec ce genre d’humilité et reverence nous a enseignez le fils de Dieu à prier Dieu, lors qu’il se prosterna en terre faisant son oraison: afin de nous donner à entendre combien abaissé doit estre l’homme, et combien englouty en l’abisme de sa vilté et petitesse, lors qu’il se met à parler avec Dieu” (177 r°- v°). At this point, one may repeat the words of Abraham [Gen. 18:27]: “Parle à moy Seigneur, quoy que je ne sois que pouldre, et cendre” (177 v°). We are exhorted to open our souls with humility and reverence, so as to receive “l’esprit de Dieu, et les influences de sa grace, et la joye de sa charité, et devotion” (177 v°); after which we must “tenir closes les portes de ton entendement et volonté à tous les soucis du monde” (*ibid.*). Granada likens this prescribed disposition to that of a man suffering from dropsy, a leper, and a dog: “ainsi que cest hidropique qui se tenoit devant [Jesus], esperant santé de sa main pleine de misericorde: ou comme le ladre agenouillé à ses pieds, qui disoit humblement: Seigneur, si tu veux, tu me peux guerir, et nettoyer. Voy quel est **un chien devant la table de son maistre**, ayant yeux et corps attentifs, esperant **quelque petit morceau de la table**: car ainsi te dois tu presenter devant la riche table de nostre Dieu, te confessant **indigne** de ses misericordes, et luy en **requerant quelque parcelle** d’icelles pour ton support. Et avec ce desir peux tu dire ce qui est au Psalme [*i.e.*, Ps. 123:1 (122:1 for Benoist)]: j’ay levé mes yeux vers toy qui habites és cieux: lequel Psalme, bien que soit court, si est-il propre à esveiller, et enflamber ceste susdite affection, te preparant à la prière” (177 v°-178 r°).

⁴³⁰ The desired crumbs are a metaphor for the healing that the woman seeks for her daughter; although, the implications of such a desire extend beyond its immediate cause and occasion. Even though the woman’s faith was praised and her request that her daughter be healed was fulfilled, she is not explicitly offered eternal salvation in the biblical account. For that matter, Jesus did not seem to want to help this foreigner at first. Humility can go hand-in-hand with insistence – provided that faith be behind both.

even what she refuses for herself can be offered to her readers as the ultimate image of what they should desire for themselves.

Sonnet XXVI amplifies Coignard's focus on God's past suffering for the sake of mankind, already read about in line 12 of Sonnet XXV. Now the poet formally⁴³¹ exhorts her own heart and soul to stop and rest, to attach "the hope of [their] desires" to the nails of the Cross, and to "ground" their pleasures and joys below it (lns. 1 and 9-10) while their "eyes" remain set ("fichez"⁴³²) on the Crucified's blood (ln. 11). Having held the highest "marvel" (ln. 14), the Cross is now the "divine oar" of the "rudder" that will guide them to the port of Heaven:

Arrestez vous, mon coeur, reposez vous, mon ame,
Il n'est plus ores temps de vaguer et courir,
Vous estes chasque fois en danger de perir,
Vivant dans le las de la mondaine trame.

Embrassez ardemment ceste divine rame,
Qui sur ces flots mondains vous pourra secourir,
Où le Fils du treshaut voulut pour nous mourir,
Monstrant la charité de sa divine flame.

Attachez à ces clous l'esperoir de vos desirs,
Atterrez sous la Croix vos joyes et plaisirs,
Tenant les yeux fichez sur sa liqueur vermeille.

Voyez ce gouvernail qui vous conduit au port,
Après estre sauvez des abismes de mort:
C'est l'arbre où se brancha la plus haute merveille.
(S. XXVI, 171-172)

⁴³¹ Note the use of the formal "vous" for the heart and the soul individually in line 1. Throughout the *Œuvres chrétiennes*, God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) is mostly referred to as "tu": 39 times, vs. 7 times for "vous." About subjects (or objects) other than God, the distribution is more even ("tu" occurs 25 times, "vous" 30), but "tu" tends to prevail for feminine subjects (excluding Coignard herself), "vous" for masculine ones.

⁴³² The choice of this adjective is particularly appropriate, since "ficher" in the literal sense means "to pierce with a sharp object" (or "to plant on a sharp object"). In other words, the eyes are proactively *looking at* (fixed upon) but also, conversely, passively *pierced by* Christ's blood.

This poem is particularly interesting for at least three reasons. First, the destination is mentioned, but the eyes of the heart and soul are called to focus on the instruments, the *means* to the port, not on the port itself. Now is the time to knock down and crush (“atterrer”) our own joys and pleasures – far from using them to imagine the “joye perdurable” evoked in the opening quatrain of Sonnet XXV.

Second, even though Christ’s blood remains fresh (“liqueur vermeille,” 11) on the Cross (as though seen in the moment of the wounding), Christ’s presence on the Cross remains somewhat indirect. The sonnet only refers to Him in person in the “passé simple”: “Où le Fils du treshaut **voulut** pour nous mourir” (7); “C’est l’arbre où **se brancha** la plus haute merveille” (14). The mystery of Jesus’ (non-)presence is implied in some of the sonnets leading up to this one. For example, Sonnet XXI declares that Jesus (“Le vainqueur,” 12) “**mit** sa chair precieuse”(4) on the Cross; and then, switching to the present tense, that Jesus (presently) “nous **conduict** aux joyes eternelles” (14). Sonnet XXII reminds us that “nostre Seigneur et maistre / **A respandu** son sang” (12-13) there, on the Cross⁴³³. Sonnet XXIII, however, alludes to the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 and celebrates those whose “lampes brusleront d’un feu continuel, / Attendant le retour de l’espoux eternel” (12-13): thus implying that one is to patiently and vigilantly await Christ’s return. We also saw that, in Sonnet XXV, the present tense is used to describe God (specifically the Father, it would seem) who conducts the poet’s “ame à son salut” (10), while God (specifically the Son) is addressed in the past tense: “O humain Redempteur qui **as souffert** pour nous, / O tres-haut Fils de Dieu qui **t’es fait**

⁴³³ In focusing on the Cross, one develops a sense of humility, gratitude, and hope; all of which help on the path to union with God. As we have seen, the meditation can focus on the Crucified’s wounds and suffering. However, in Sonnet XXII, Coignard celebrates the “douceur” of the Cross. As she moves from worldly pleasure to the Cross’s higher pleasures, she also shifts from the personal to the collective.

nostre espous” (12-13). All of this illustrates (dictates) the movement that is required of contemplation: *objects*, signified by nouns, described by adjectives, are being given to contemplate (our senses and imagination need as much); but the meaning of which they are the repositories consists of the past, present or future *actions* of God on our behalf, best signified by verbs. Nailed to the Cross in turn, our spiritual eyes also see the metaphors (the oar, the rudder, the tree) that “translate” them higher and further, toward the haven of Heaven and the contemplation of God in person⁴³⁴.

Third, even though we have to forgo mundane pleasures and focus on an image of supreme sorrow, the poem does suggest that this vision affords an intermediary pleasure of repose (as opposed to the eternal one, to be found upon arrival in Heaven), a rest from wandering and running aimlessly in “le las de la mondaine trame” (3). Yet the fact that the heart and soul are instructed to *ardently embrace* the divine oar (5) suggests that this repose requires a willful effort on the part of sinners in pursuit of Heaven’s port. The imagery of desire and fire is only deployed in the service of a firmly Catholic doctrine concerning free will and the salvific role of human works.

Back to the “bien souverain”

It goes without saying – although they never tire of saying it – that the God of Christianity is the ultimate object of affection and desire for Gabrielle de Coignard as for Anne de Marquets; and that He is also identified by both as the “sovereign good.” Yet their expression of the latter is notably different. Coignard, as we have seen, uses the term sparingly – in fact, only once –, insisting that the “bien souverain” cannot be attained in

⁴³⁴ See Sonnet LXXVII, which we will discuss in our next chapter, as a striking example of an ascending movement that seems, in some blessed cases, almost seamless.

this mortal life, even though, before one's corporeal death, some preliminary sense of it may be momentarily experienced when taking one's focus off of worldly desires for pleasures and onto – for example – a higher (albeit still intermediary) object such as the Cross. This brings to mind the notion of pleasure as repose, taken by way of suffering and then remission thereof. As we know, however, suffering as *sacrifice* is not meant to be endured merely for the sake of such a pleasure. Rather, it is endured for the sake of that which is hoped for – yet not fully comprehended – beyond this mortal life. That hope, made attainable by Jesus' own suffering and death, is, for Coignard, really what causes us to experience repose, not the suffering in and of itself. The pleasure of such hope, made attainable through Jesus' suffering and death (not our own), is announced in Sonnet LIX ("Pour le jour de Noël"), where Jesus is felicitously alluded to, on the occasion of His birth, as "le fruit qui porte tous plaisirs!" (10, 209). Beyond the *exercise* of contemplation, the celebratory Sonnet XXV showed us how every positive characterization can be safely "piled" on the "tout" that is God, while also forcing the mind to travel from here to there and allow the "tout" to transcend its parts.

While Coignard explicitly writes of the "sovereign good" in as many words in only one instance, Marquets mentions it on multiple occasions in all of the works we have cited. Two mentions appearing in her earliest published work (1562) are quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The pieces that she added to Flaminio's *Divines poësies* (1569) use the expression "souverain bien" in four instances: the dedicatory epistle addressed to Marguerite de Valois⁴³⁵ clarifies the stakes from the outset; a *cantique* uses

⁴³⁵ We must move past "tous biens et plaisirs qu'on voit en ce monde estre, / Dont l'homme ne se peut contenter ny repaistre. / Aussi Dieu ne l'a pas créé pour ceste fin: / Ains pour heur bien plus grand, c'est à sçavoir, afin / Qu'au **seul souverain bien** il aspire et pretende, / Qu'il le cherche par foy, le cognoisse et

the term, as its title indicates, “Pour s’exciter à l’amour de Dieu”⁴³⁶; so does a “chanson spirituelle” about “la Nativité de nostre Seigneur”⁴³⁷; while “Sonet 28,” entitled “Que l’on procure plus affectionnément les biens caduques que les celestes,” not only stages the contrast of the two sorts of goods (true and fake), but deplores the speaker’s inability to pursue the right one, even though she wants to:

Helas! je voy que l’homme vain procure
 Plus ardemment **quelque bien perissable**,
 Que je ne fay **cil qui est perdurable**,
 Duquel je n’ai quasi ne soing ne cure.
 Si quelque mal mon corps souffre et endure,
 Soudain je veux luy estre secourable,
 Et je permets mon ame miserable
 Souvent languir en tout vice et ordure.
 O bon seigneur! d’un oeil doux et serain
 Regarde moy, et fai tant que je puisse
 Tousjours chercher **le seul bien souverain**,
 Et m’eslongner de toute offence et vice:
 Si que mon ame au ciel heureusement
 Puisse regner perpetuellement.

(*Divines poësies*, Marquets 71)

Two sonnets earlier, “Sonet 26,” entitled “Combien sont abusez ceux qui aspirent à autre chose qu’à l’amour de Dieu,” uses slightly different language to make the same point. It is not enough to *know* about the supreme good, one has to actually, actively love it:

O Dieu! combien est lourde l’ignorance
 Des hommes vains, qui ordinairement
 Laissent **le seur et vray contentement**
 Cherchent ennuy, douleur, peine et souffrance?
 L’un veult des biens, l’autre honneur et puissance,
 Et tout cela n’apporte que tourment:
 L’autre se plaist d’aimer lascivement,

entende, / Et qu’en le cognoissant, il l’ayme entierement, / L’aymant qu’il le possede en fin heureusement: / Puis en le possedant en gloire supernelle, / Qu’il en ait jouissance heureuse et eternelle” (*Divines poësies*, Marquets, n. p.). The role of spiritual or devotional poetry is to *initiate* this chain of events.

⁴³⁶ “Il est mon attente et desir, / Et l’heur seul que je veux choisir / Plus grand qu’on ne peut exprimer. / Je le veux donc tousjours aimer. / N’est-il pas **le souverain bien** / Que j’espere estre une fois mien, / Puis qu’il vient mon cœur enflammer / Pour eternellement l’aymer?” (*Divines poësies*, St. 15-16, Marquets 38).

⁴³⁷ “Nous pouvons donc bien chanter / Et seurement nous vanter, / Que ce prince desirable / Nous veult au royaume sien / Donner **le souverain bien** / A nul autre comparable” (*Divines poësies*, St. 5, Marquets 51-52).

Dont il parvient à honte et indigence.
 Et cependant las! ils negligent tous
 De savourer **le fruict suave et doux**
De ton amour, qui est **un bien supresme**.
 Mais si je blasme et repren leur meffaict,
Et que je sçay ton amour si parfaict,
Que ne t'aymé-je ardemment donc moy-mesme?
 (*Divines poësies*, Marquets 70)⁴³⁸

In the posthumous *Sonets spirituels* (1605), Marquets varies her expression, calling the *summum bonum* the “bien souverain” (S. CCCCLXXII⁴³⁹) or “souverain bien” (S. X, CCCCXXIX⁴⁴⁰, and, as we saw earlier, CCCCLX), the “bien qui ne default” (S. CCCCLI⁴⁴¹) or the “bien parfaict qui jamais ne default” (S. CCCCIX), and again the “bien supresme” (S. CCCCLXIX). Six of these seven instances occur near the end of the *Sonets* (within CCCCIX-CCCCLXXII); one outlier appears near the beginning, in S. X, as part of a segment intended “Pour le premier dimanche de l’Advent”⁴⁴² – thus focusing specifically on the incarnation, the coming of the Lord in the flesh. Sonnet X describes the peace and unity that Christ will bring about upon His return; by the eventual

⁴³⁸ Marquets also alludes to the sovereign good in the third *chanson spirituelle* intended to praise “le mystere de l’incarnation et la tressacree mere de Dieu”: “Elle a porté par longue espace / Dedans son ventre precieux / Celluy qui la terre compasse, / Qui tourne et gouverne les Cieux: / Et **qui est la premiere cause / Donnant essence à toute chose, / Le prince et souverain des Dieux**” (*Divines poësies*, Stanzas 4-5, Marquets 42-43). Similarly, in the third *chanson* about “la Nativité de nostre Seigneur,” we read: “**Toute chose qui peut estre / Prend sa vigueur et son estre / Et sa naissance de toy** [*i.e.*, the “Sapience eternelle” addressed in ln. 1]” (*Divines poësies*, lns. 8-10, 47).

⁴³⁹ “Si, lors que Christ voulut son corps transfigurer / Et donner un signal de sa divine altesse, / Saint Pierre fut ravy de si grand’ alaigresse / Qu’il dict: O qu’il fait bon en ce lieu demeurer! / Combien plus le Chrestien se doit-il asseurer / Qu’il sera plein de joye et d’extrême liesse, / Quand il verra la gloire, excellence et richesse, / De ce grand Roy des Rois qui le veut bien-heurer? / Ce regard est des Saints l’aggreable salaire; / C’est **le bien souverain** qui les peut satisfaire; / C’est le divin torrent de toute volupté, / Dont ils sont enyvrez en juste recompense / D’avoir en terre beu du torrent de souffrance, / A l’exemple de Christ qui pour nous l’a gousté” (S. CCCCLXXII, Marquets 362).

⁴⁴⁰ We must praise God, “Car il est le repos, la vie et la lumiere, / La beauté, le bon-heur, la joye singuliere, / L’excellence, la gloire, et la perfection: / Bref, **le souverain bien**, qui seul est desirable, / Si qu’on doit estimer le cœur bien miserable, / Qui ne se joint à luy d’ardente affection” (lns. 9-14, Marquets 340).

⁴⁴¹ “[...] maintenant qu’ils [*i.e.*, les Saints] sont montez au Ciel là haut, / Ils reçoivent de Dieu misericorde telle / Qu’ils jouyssent **du bien qui jamais ne default** / Estans recompensez, par grace du Tres-haut, / D’un infiny loyer en la gloire eternelle” (lns. 10-14, Marquets 351).

⁴⁴² The sequences in which we find the five remaining instances are entitled “Pour le jour de l’Assumption Nostre Dame” (p. 324) and “Pour la feste de Toussaints” (p. 338).

outpouring of His blood, all discord on earth and in the skies will be appeased; He will unite the Jews and Gentiles by means of salvific faith, making one people and ruling over them, freed from death and all adversaries:

Puis en Jerusalem, sa paisible cité,
 Ils les introduira en triomphe appresté,
 Pour jouir de repos et chanter ses louanges;
 Là, benissans ce Roy, les hommes mariront
 Leurs immortelles voix aux doux accords des Anges,
 Et du **souverain bien**, le voyant, jouiront.
 (9-14, 94-95)

This depiction – set in the future tense of prophecy – of the voices of men and angels in unison and of the *sight* of the sovereign good causing the Saved to rejoice and enjoy it differs starkly from that which we find in Coignard’s Sonnet XXV, where the very image of our “marriage” with and pleasure within the sovereign good remains comparatively abstract and subdued, narrow even, as the acme of the *personal* expression of the poet’s own desire to get there. Unlike what we find in Marquets’ Sonnet X, Coignard’s expression does not so much celebrate what will, for sure, occur for the Saved – *i.e.*, being ruled by, seeing, and enjoying the *summum bonum* – as it yearns for the marital union between her, as an individual, and the *summum bonum*; for the sense of belonging fully to Him alone.

Later in Marquets’ collection, Sonnet CCCCIX brings forth the manner in which the experience of initial pain and great desire can actually play a role in *enhancing* the happiness and pleasure one experiences in the soul when the object of affection has finally been obtained – when the “bien parfait” (8) that never lacks is finally tasted:

Jamais le cerf, pressé d’extreme soif et chaud,
 N’eut un si grand desir de trouver la fontaine,
 Que la mere de Dieu et Vierge souveraine
 Desiroit voir son Fils et parvenir là haut.
 Ores donc qu’elle y est, demander il ne faut

(Car cela passe aussi l'intelligence humaine)
 De quel heur et plaisir son ame est toute pleine,
 Goustant **le bien parfait qui jamais ne défaut.**
 (1-8, 328)

In this instance, it is specifically the soul of the Virgin Mary, the maternal temple of Jesus (13), that is full of “heur et plaisir” (7), having seen

[...] son Fils mourir en croix pour nous,
 Hay, blasmé, moqué, par mal-heureuse envie
 (9-10, *ibid.*)

but, now in Heaven, enjoying seeing her son

[...] estre adoré de tous,
 Comme Dieu souverain et seul auteur de vie
 (11-12, *ibid.*)

Moreover, Mary's son, the sovereign God and single author of life, honors her so much that He prefers her to all who are within His eternal reign (12-14). While it is implicitly required to celebrate the happiness and pleasure of which Mary's soul is “toute pleine” (7), readers are warned not to inquire about the type or degree of happiness or pleasure mentioned. It is definitely beyond our grasp, since the Virgin is presently in Heaven (5), and her bliss surpasses “l'intelligence humaine” (6). Like Coignard, Marquets acknowledges the distance between “us” now and others in Heaven; but her expression of that distance is characteristically “theoretical”; it amounts to a doctrinal explanation.

Sonnet CCCCIX is placed within a segment entitled “Pour le jour de l'Assumption nostre Dame.” The “bien parfait” (8) it mentions referring to something that is specifically tasted by the Virgin Mary, the poet does not, here, claim that such a perfect good will be enjoyed by anyone else. One primary effect of this is that the reader's focus rests uniquely on the Virgin, whose ascension is to be remembered, celebrated, honored, and reflected upon during this liturgical event. Her unique status

amongst all other living beings is also highlighted by the poetic conceit that not even the desire that a deer⁴⁴³ suffering from extreme thirst and heat to find a fountain is as great as Mary's desire (was) to see her son and arrive where she is now. Her unique status is further highlighted by the epithet "Vierge souveraine" (3) – the adjective bringing her status closer to that of the "Dieu souverain" (12) – and by the explanation that we are not to try to understand, or project for ourselves, the type of happiness and pleasure she now experiences. A final and quite obvious difference made between the Virgin Mary and all other humans is, simply, that Jesus is her son.

The Virgin's unique status notwithstanding, the message of pain followed by pleasure that she embodies more than anyone (except Jesus?) is later applied to all Christians in Sonnet CCCCLXIX. The sonnet we just read focuses on Mary's desire to see her son and "parvenir là haut" (4); this one focuses on *our* defective desire:

[...] nous desirons du Ciel le beau partage,
 Mais sçachans qu'on n'en peut avoir possession
 Qu'en espousant angoisse et tribulation,
 Cela nous refroidit et fait perdre courage.
 Cependant nous souffrons mille maux bien souvent
 Pour un plaisir mondain qui passe comme vent,
 Pour un gain temporel, pour un honneur frivole;
 Et pour **le bien supresme** et qui dure tousjours,
 Nous ne voulons patir, tant sommes d'esprits lourds,
 Le moindre mal qui soit, de faict ny de parolle.
 (5-14, 361)

Mary was described as having suffered the ultimate pain, the sight of her son, the Son of God, dying on the Cross, "Hay, blasmé, moqué, par mal-heureuse envie (S. CCCIX, 10,

⁴⁴³ In the 1569 publication, "Sonet 34," entitled "Que les adversitez et tentations font secourir à Dieu," makes use of this simile as well: "Comme le **cerf** courant à grosse haleine, / Lors qu'il se sent des veneurs pourchassé, / Pressé de soif, et durement lassé / Cherche et desire une fraische fontaine: / Ainsi, mon Dieu, quand par angoisse et peine / Je sens mon cœur vivement oppressé, / Ou que Satan le combat m'a dressé / Le cherche alors ta douceur souveraine. / Helas Seigneur! ce n'est pas sans propos / Car en travail tu me donnes repos, / Et contre ardeur tu m'es doux refrigere. / Tu me rens forte en imbecillité, / Et me remplis d'heur et fœlicité, / M'affranchissant de tout mal et misere" (*Divines poësies*, Marquets 75).

328). By contrast, our lot is not so much that we cannot endure suffering, but that we endure a lot of it in the pursuit of frivolous causes, and cannot bring ourselves to do a fraction of the same for our own salvation⁴⁴⁴. Ideally, one would be encouraged by this diagnosis to exercise reason, weighing out the value of the “bien supresme” compared to a variety of fleeting pleasures: this reasoned judgment should prevent us from losing courage in the face of necessary torment⁴⁴⁵. The poet’s hope in this respect is precisely expressed by a subsequent sonnet, which evokes the beauty of our world:

Tout ce qu’on voit icy de beau et d’admirable,
 Nous doit incontinent aiguillonner le cœur
 A penser combien plus le souverain auteur
 De toute chose est beau, parfaict et desirable.
 Que s’il a cet exil et prison miserable
 Orné de tant de biens et de claire splendeur,
 Quels sont les beaux tresors, la lumiere et grandeur
 Du celeste pays et regne perdurable?
 Si le sejour commun aux bestes et aux hommes,
 Aux bons et aux mauvais, ceste terre où nous sommes,
 A tant et tant en soy de grace et d’ornement,
 Combien plus, je vous pri’, doit-on penser et croire
 Le Ciel estre remply d’excellence et de gloire,
 Que Dieu reserve à soy et aux siens seulement?
 (S. CCCCLXXI, 362)

This is another version – to which the entire sonnet is dedicated – of the *a fortiori* argument we have already encountered: if there is beauty in this world of death and suffering, then all the more so in Heaven; if human love brings pleasure, then all the more so divine love; and so on. The key phrase, though, is “aiguillonner le cœur / A penser

⁴⁴⁴ We know that the “beau partage” can only be possessed if we first espouse “angoisse et tribulation,” but this requirement discourages us. The folly of human nature is thus exposed: we often endure many evils for the sake of some pleasure or honor, yet are not willing to suffer “Le moindre mal qui soit” for the sake of an eternal “bien supresme.” This is the “négligence” that will so scandalize Blaise Pascal: “Elle m’étonne et m’épouvante: c’est un monstre pour moi” (*Pensées*, fr. 194, text of the Brunschvicg edition; ed. Ch.-M. des Granges. Paris: Garnier frères, 1964, p. 124). But, contrary to Pascal (who will look for a deeper cause and a different strategy), Marquets still believes that an argument of this sort can persuade us.

⁴⁴⁵ Sonnet CCCXXIX has already told us that the heart is to be esteemed miserable if it does not join itself to the “souverain bien” (lns. 12-14, Marquets 340); see above, p. 297, n. 440.

combien plus [...]” (2-3): this is *not* a purely rational argument (although it is one). It speaks to the heart first, inciting it to compare objects of desire and pleasure; one visible and palpable, the other conceivable – it must be “thought,” even though it lies past the reach of human intelligence – only through the *a fortiori* argument; the upshot being that this “pensée” will present us with an object, however distant, that we will now desire all the more. This, in a nutshell, is Marquets’ rhetoric of “excitement”: a seamless blend of reason and passion; one cannot work without the other. Even though it is not enough to know what the “souverain bien” is about (one should love it first and foremost), it turns out that it is necessary (for us sinners) to acquire some sense of it to love it properly.

Or so Marquets believes. It is through this type of mental operation that her poetry teaches us that the sovereign good found in Heaven will cause us to enjoy it and rejoice *upon seeing it* (as we currently do not); that, once enjoyed, it lasts forever, never falters or lacks; but that it can only be possessed by us if we first espouse “tribulation,” as Christ and his mother did before us. In Sonnet X, Jesus is the “souverain bien” (14), but it is upon seeing it that humankind will rejoice in it (14). In Sonnet CCCCIX, “le bien parfait” is said to be tasted by Mary, though it is not made explicit whether this “bien” is to be understood, here, as Jesus *Himself* or as the *sight* of Jesus being “adoré de tous, / Comme Dieu souverain et seul auteur de vie” (11-12). In Sonnet CCCCXXIX, it is explicitly “ce grand Dieu” (5) that is “le souverain bien” (12; the heart would be foolish not to join it “d’ardente affection”). In Sonnet CCCCLXIX, the message is that one must not fear espousing the suffering that is endured for the sake of possessing (6) the everlasting “bien supresme” (12), which is “du Ciel le beau partage” (5). It is the *viewing* of God that Sonnet CCCCLXXII describes as “des Saints l’aggreable salaire” (9), as

well as “le bien souverain qui les peut satisfaire” (10) and “le divin torrent de toute volupté, / Dont ils sont enyvrez en juste recompense” (11-12) for their suffering on earth. The sonnet in question, also built on a “combien plus” argument, presumes that a Christian can draw from it the certainty of becoming “plein de joye et d’extrême liesse” (6) like those Saints currently are, when s/he finally sees the glory, excellence, and wealth of the great king who wishes to make *her/him* happy⁴⁴⁶.

Sonnet CCCCXXIX, by contrast, strives to describe the sovereign good as such – not as viewed, nor as viewing:

C’est ce grand Dieu immense, eternel, immuable,
 Tout-puissant, sage, juste et bon infiniment,
 Dont toute chose a pris estre et commencement,
 Et qui se donne aux siens pour loyer perdurable.
 Car il est le repos, la vie et la lumiere,
 La beauté, le bon-heur, la joye singuliere,
 L’excellence, la gloire, et la perfection.
 Bref, le souverain bien, qui seul est desirable [...]
 (5-12, 340)

No “combien plus” here: only the reaffirmation of the credo. The declination of God’s identity, of everything that is (in) Him, from which it follows that no other good could possibly be desired, lest one wishes to be “bien miserable” (13). And yet, apparently, “miserable” is what we allow ourselves to be... Marquets’ poetry oscillates between the pure *imposition* of this supreme object, which should suffice to convince us, and elaborate, ascending comparisons designed to give us a glimpse of its sovereignty, along with the promise of more “regard” to come... because – alas – mere imposition does not suffice.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Sonnet CCCCLXVII for one of her descriptions of what the beatific recompense involves (*i.e.* glory, possessions, and ruling authority).

To conclude briefly, before returning to Coignard's own poetry in our final chapter: we are now better equipped to understand what our poet gains by *refraining* from alleging or touting the sovereign good as much as Marquets does. Sonnet XXV, the only one to use the term, attributes it strictly to God Himself, rather than to any kind of "regard" over or even enjoyment of the divine presence. If this particular good is "sovereign," then it contains everything; but that is not a reason to appear to reduce it, be it for "exciting" purposes, to one of its aspects or parts, including the bliss it will cause us. Rather than playing with or risking potential ambiguities, Coignard enforces distinctions – and forcefully reaffirms, in that one sonnet, that God is the *only* end and she wants to belong to Him (as opposed to enjoying herself by possessing Him, or being "bien-heurée" by Him, or anything of the sort).

This does not mean that Coignard places herself above the ambiguities of human desire or human pleasure: her poetry too is made of this ambiguous substance (all the more so as she deals with it *personally*, not claiming to write for, nor on behalf of, a community); but she clearly refuses to mix it with the perfection of the "bien souverain" envisioned as such, named as such, at the very extremity of what she wants ("je veux").

Nor does it mean, on the other hand, that Coignard abstains from evoking the beatific vision. In *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle*, the long poem to which we will now turn our attention, she does write of a such a vision, which she describes as the cause of the soul's ravishment. But, as we will see, she remains careful not to suggest (or appear to suggest) that such ravishment is more valuable or important, in any way or from any perspective, than God and His glory.

CHAPTER V

EXPRESSING THE INEXPRESSIBLE:

THE CHOICE OF SIMPLICITY IN

DE LA GLOIRE ET FELICITÉ DE LA VIE ETERNELLE

On the two parts of the *Œuvres chrestiennes*

Our Introduction (see above, p. 6) quotes Colette Winn's striking description of Coignard's *Œuvres* as "une longue élogie autobiographique," revealing "les étapes successives d'une évolution spirituelle," through the division of the book in two parts: while the *Sonnets spirituels* show a soul torn between the "émotions contraires" of progress and failure, the *Vers chrestiens* are more fully and clearly dedicated to singing of "ce grand Dieu," thus marking a "rupture définitive" with the literary and formal ambition that remains perceptible in the sonnets (Coignard 26-28). We agree that the two parts reflect different facets of a spiritual experience; but we are less certain that they represent two successive degrees of an evolution; nor do we perceive a "rupture" between "le détachement laborieux de soi et du monde" (*ibid.*) that Winn observes in Part I and the purer "élan vers le divin" (*ibid.*) exhibited by Part II in her view. Winn's own words acknowledge that the sonnets feature "élans spirituels" of their own, even if they are often followed by "retombées funèbres." Conversely, the painful dialectics of attachment to and detachment from the perishable world is far, in our opinion, from being wholly forgotten by the *Vers chrestiens*.

– *From prayer to epic*

While the poem aptly entitled *Poesie spirituelle*, for example, largely consists, as Winn notes, of paraphrases of lines from the liturgical prayer *Veni, sancte Spiritus* (sung “le jour de Pentecôte”⁴⁴⁷), it also takes care to mention the needs, discomforts, and struggles that the poet and her community are presently experiencing. Here, for example, is a kind of prayer also found in many of the *Sonnets*:

O eternelle amour, ô lumiere infinie,
 Illumine mes yeux de ta sainte clarté,
 Vueilles nous destourner du sentier escarté,
 Nous montrant le chemin de l’eternelle vie.
 (*Poesie spirituelle*, 17-20, Coignard 305)

Readers would be hard-pressed to associate those lines with a speaker who is *already* detached from personal or worldly concerns. A subsequent passage hits even closer to home for a widowed mother of two daughters:

Tu es le protecteur des pauvres orphelins,
 Le port des navigants et le juge des vefves

 Donne à tes chers enfans conseil et sapience
 Force pour resister, science pour aymer,
 Entendement et foy pour tes dons estimer,
 Craincte, pitié, bonté, chasteté, patience.
 (*Poesie spirituelle*, 31-36, 306)

We recall (see above, p. 139) the same poet describing, in Sonnet CXIX, her eyes “chargés de pleurs” (1) as she thinks of her daughters, now “Orphelines de pere” (13). Admittedly, the tone of the *Poesie spirituelle* is far less personal. It is not so much that the author has overcome her worldly torments; her goal is now to present them as more generic and collective; as common to all (Catholic) believers.

⁴⁴⁷ See Winn’s note 1, p. 303.

Yet the author of the *Poesie* does not refrain from concluding by calling attention, in the first person singular, to her own poetic endeavor, in a manner that is both humbled and paradoxically enhanced, as she offers herself and her work to God:

Et moy qui suis, ô Dieu, ton humble chanteresse,
Assiste moy tousjours, inspire mon esprit,
Que dans mes vers ton los soit dignement escrit,
Et de chanter ton los que jamais je ne cesse.
(*Poesie spirituelle*, 37-40, 306)

This is not that different from what we read in Sonnet II (above, p. 127):

Guide mon coeur, donne moy la science,
O Seigneur Dieu, pour chanter saintement
Ton haut honneur que j'adore humblement,
Reconnoissant assez mon impuissance.

[...]

Et reclamant ton nom à haute voix,
Je sacrifie à l'ombre de ta croix,
Mon tout, mon corps, mes escrits, et mon ame.
(Sonnet II, 1-4 and 12-14, 141)

Nor do we perceive a rupture between “un lyrisme trop complaisant,” as Kaiser puts it, and elevated meditations on the “grandes vertus” and the Passion, from which, as Cave noted, the sweet charm of “profane poetics” is not always absent.

In sum, we are not convinced that “l’espérance de la gloire qui motive l’entreprise littéraire” (Winn, Coignard 28) and surfaces in some of the *Sonnets* is renounced by the *Vers*. To wit, the opening of their largest piece, the *Imitation de la victoire de Judich*:

Soubs ta sainte faveur je veux prendre carriere,
Voulant chanter le los d’une belle guerriere,
Estoilie de son temps qui encore reluit
D’un esclat flamboyant sur nostre obscure nuit.
Toy par qui sont tousjours en divers tons unies
De ce grand univers les hautes harmonies,
Accorde mon esprit aux celestes accords,
Donne moy donc la voix, que je pousse dehors
Dix mille et mille vers, saints courriers de ta gloire,
Chantant avec Judich l’hymne de ta victoire.

(*Imitation*, 1-10, 368)

The “je” here is not personal: it is the epic “je,” asking for divine inspiration, as required by the genre and the poem’s subject. The story as told separates the false glory of tyrants like Nabuchodonosor from the true glory of humble servants of God like Judith, who

[...] conceut en son coeur un[e] emprise nouvelle,
 Qui la doit honorer d’une gloire immortelle,
 Et rendre son beau nom fameux par l’univers,
Beau subject de louange et subject de mes vers.
 Dieu voulut se servir du bras de ceste dame
 Pour son peuple affranchir par ce qu’elle avoit l’ame
 Remplie de vertus [...]

(*Imitation*, 621-627, 404-405)

An epic’s greatness is supposed to be based on that of its subject (all the more so if the subject is holy), and no Renaissance reader would fail to recognize the ambition declared by such passages, even though the poem’s 1548 lines are far from the “dix mille et mille” the subject is said to deserve. An epic hero deserves to be glorified; which makes the epic poet’s glory legitimate in turn, as the highest form of merit in the literary domain. The effect is all the more striking here, as it benefits (implicitly) the gender shared by the author and her heroine⁴⁴⁸. Even on a reduced scale and about a woman depicted as humble⁴⁴⁹, human glory (including the poetic kind) ends up coexisting with the humility required of other pieces in the *Vers chrestiens*⁴⁵⁰. This fact alone suggests that *if* the *Vers* manage to rise higher et get “closer to God” than the *Sonnets* did (assuming this premise for a moment), it is not necessarily by leaving authorial ambition behind.

⁴⁴⁸ Unlike Du Bartas and his *Judit*. Both Judith and Coignard are also widows; see above, p. 136, n. 260.

⁴⁴⁹ As Winn points out (p. 406, n. 119), Coignard softens Judith’s great speech to the elders of Bethulia (Ins. 645-716, Coignard 406-409) to emphasize “le trait dominant de l’héroïne, l’humilité,” replacing the accusatory “vous” of the Biblical text with an inclusive “nous.” So this is a small epic about the great deed of a humble woman. But an epic it is, looming large among the other pieces of the *Vers chrestiens*.

⁴⁵⁰ Again, we do not know whether – nor how – the poet would have managed this coexistence, had she published her works herself. The *Imitation* is as distinct from “hymnes” or “Noëls” as it is from any sonnet.

One of the many confessions that Coignard makes in *Combat de plusieurs ennemis qui nous assaillent* – a penitential poem if ever there was one – could be associated with her “entreprise littéraire” just as it is with her general “discours” (ln. 68):

Mesme de tes faveurs pour peu que j’en reçoive,
 Je veux incontinent qu’un chascun l’apperçoive,
 N’ayant plustost senti quelque devotion,
 Quelque fervent desir et bonne affection,
 Que je le veux monstrier comme une chose mienne,
 Sans te remercier de ceste grace tienne.
 Ne vois tu pas, mon Dieu, ce mien interieur
 Qui ne peut retenir le silence du coeur?
 Toute chose me fasche et rien ne me peut plaire,
 Me picquant promptement de despit et colere,
 Avec les yeux d’Argus je veux contrerooller
 Les faits de mes prochains pour tousjours en parler,
 Et faisant apparoir ma faute remarquable,
 Je n’ay point tant d’ennuy, ô Pere pitoyable,
 De t’avoir offensé car j’ay plus de regret
 D’encourir le mespris que non pas du meffait.
Je parle volontiers un superflu langage,
Voulant qu’en mes discours l’on m’estime fort sage.
 (*Combat*, 151-168, 362)

Either accidentally betraying herself, or cleverly providing a case-in-point, the poet echoes secular sources of inspiration. Obviously, “Argus” (161) originates from the 100-eyed guardian from Greek mythology, and is a stock figure used by many love poets – Ronsard and Desportes among them⁴⁵¹. We also wonder if the language of line 159 (“rien ne me peut plaire”) was inspired by Ronsard’s famous “Prometheus” sonnet:

J’espere et crains, je me tais et supplie,
 Or je suis glace et ores un feu chault,
 J’admire tout, et de rien ne me chault,
 Je me delace, et puis je me relie.
Rien ne me plaist si non ce qui m’ennuye [...]
 (*Les Amours*, S. XII, 1-5, Ronsard 10-11)

⁴⁵¹ See above (p. 224) an example from the latter.

Subtly echoing Ronsard's self-diagnosis "Cent foys je meur, cent foys je prens naissance. / Un Promethée en passions je suis" (lns. 11-12, *ibid.*), Coignard transforms a *topos* of Petrarchan love to confess her own – and any sinner's – self-destructing tendencies:

Quand je veux commencer quelque oeuvre vertueuse,
Je me trouble beaucoup sans rien plus avancer,
Mes imperfections sont à recommencer,
(*Combat*, 76-78, Coignard 363)

The *Combat*, which (as Winn notes⁴⁵²) lists a series of generic sins typically attributed to women, is careful *not* to "individualize" its female speaker too much, nor to call attention to Coignard's literary prowess as such. But it is not a stretch to think that the latter is implicitly alluded to in the lines quoted above, as well as legitimized, *a contrario*, by their subtle rewriting of male boasting or self-pity.

Finally – and as we just saw with the *Imitation* and the *Combat* –, while we agree with Winn that the "je," after dominating the sonnets, tends to yield to the third person in the *Vers chrestiens*, it does not disappear entirely. In the *Sonnets spirituels*, we found that the "je" appears without a "nous" in 57 poems; the "nous" appears without a "je" in 30 poems; the two pronouns⁴⁵³ appear together in 33; and both are absent in the remaining 9. In the *Vers chrestiens*, by contrast, the "je" appears without a "nous" in only 1 poem (*Stabat Mater*); the "nous" appears without a "je" in 2 poems (*Pour la nuict de Noel* and *Noel* [#1]); both pronouns appear together in 17 poems; and both are absent in only one, *Les huict Beatitudes*. So the "je" is given precedence throughout the *Sonnets*, and a shift does occur in the *Vers*, where the precedence, as far as the first person is concerned, goes to combined uses of "je" and "nous." Obviously this analysis does not measure the

⁴⁵² See notes 11, p. 361, and 21, p. 365.

⁴⁵³ Or verbs or adjectives informing us that the implied subject is either the first-person singular or the first-person plural.

quantitative presence of the third person: there is no question that the “il” (or “elle”) dominates narrations and descriptions, for example. Yet the count above does allow us to confirm that the “je” (as authorial or narratorial self-reference) has not vanished from the *Vers chrestiens*. In the *Imitation*, for example, the authorial “je” is very discreet compared to the third person or to the internal “je” used by the characters when they speak; but this discretion does not make its few occurrences less significant.

– *The sonnets as “exercices”*

Instead of characterizing the difference between Parts I and II of the *Œuvres chrestiennes* as a “rupture,” we would argue that it is shaped, at least in part, by two distinct strategies, corresponding to two different devotional approaches – one headed more directly and promptly towards “perfection” than the other – described by Granada in Part II of *Le vray chemin*. The Dominican friar opens his exposé, in the first chapter, with the following explanation, first of what devotion is not, then of what it is:

A proprement parler donc, devotion est chose bien differante de ce que plusieurs pensent, d'autant qu'ils estiment que devotion **soit un attendrissement de cœur, que sentent quelquefois ceux qui prient, ou quelque goust et consolation sensible des choses spirituelles: ce que (à bien dire) n'est pas devotion.** Car cest attendrissement et consolation sensible s'espand souvent sur les charnels et sensuels, et souvent sur ceux qui sont en peché mortel: et au contraire, les saints personnages n'ont quelquefois rien de cecy en priant: et n'est raison, que disons que ceux cy ont faute de devotion, ou que les autres l'ayent, estans vicieux comme ils sont. A ceste cause saint Thomas dit, que devotion n'est pas proprement l'attendrissement de cœur, ny consolation spirituelle, mais **une promptitude pour bien operer, et pour accomplir les commandemens de Dieu, et les choses de son service:** Car eu esgard à la propre signification du vocable, homme devot est celui qui est dédié, et prompt pour le service de nostre Seigneur: et par consequent **devotion sera celle promptitude, par laquelle l'homme est offert, et dédié à Dieu, et prest à faire sa sainte volonté**^[454]. Et pource appellons nous devotion, ce qui accompagne tousjours la bonne et sainte oraison: et ce qui l'accompagne, est ceste promptitude, et **effort à faire tout bien: ce que souvent se voit sans ces consolations, ny attendrissemens, desquels est faict mention cy dessus.** D'où advient, que tout ainsi que celui qui voyage se sent allegé, et refrechy, voire renforcé pour

⁴⁵⁴ *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 82, a. 1.

faire son chemin, ayant prins sa refection, encore qu'il ne mangeast de guere grand appetit: **aussi est-il le propre de l'oraison (qui est un repas spirituel de l'ame) de causer en l'esprit une promptitude, et allegeance pour aller par le chemin de Dieu, quoy que aucunefois il ne trouve ny sente aucun goust en icelle.** Ceste affection et sentiment de l'oraison nous represente nostre Sauveur en l'oraison qu'il fait au jardin, en laquelle il se leva pour la troisieme fois, avec un si grand effort, pour aller au devant de ses ennemis, que d'une seule parolle, il les fait tous tomber à la renverse: quoy qu'il n'eust goust ny consolation spirituelle en ceste sienne priere, ains au contraire sentoit il des angoisses et tristesses si grandes, qu'il en sua les grosses gouttes de sang^[455]. Et voulut que cecy advint ainsi, non que sa grace, ou force augmentast, ou prit diminution en ceste oraison (veu qu'en luy sont toutes graces) ains pour nous représenter en sa personne, **la vertu et efficace de l'oraison: laquelle si n'a tousjours cest attendrissement de cœur, aumoins obtient-elle ceste force et promptitude pour tout labeur:** et si elle ne fait avec Dieu qu'il nous allege de nostre charge, elle obtient aumoins qu'il nous donne force pour la supporter. Mais il faut noter en cest endroit, que **pour l'homme de bien il sort souvent de ceste devotion, et promptitude, celle consolation d'esprit, que les simples appellent devotion:** et au contraire **ceste mesme consolation accroît la vraye devotion, qui est la promptitude à bien faire,** servant ainsi que fait la bonne fille à l'endroit de sa mere, et rendant l'homme **d'autant plus prompt au service de Dieu, comme il se sent lors plus allegre, et consolé en son ame:** tellement que **ces choses s'entr'aident l'une à l'autre,** comme la mere use vers la fille, et ceste cy envers sa mere. Ce qui advient souvent és choses spirituelles, ainsi qu'il appert **en ces deux vertus foy et charité:** d'autant que **la foy est la racine et commencement de la charité, et la charité est la forme et l'ame de la foy.** Or que ceste consolation susdite accroisse la devotion, et la gaillardise à bien faire en l'homme vertueux, le monstre clairement le Prophete David: lors qu'il dit: J'ay couru, Seigneur, par la voye de tes commandemens, lors que tu as eslargi mon cœur^[456]. **Ceste dilatation procede de la joye spirituelle (estant le propre de la liesse d'eslargir le cœur,** comme de la tristesse de le saisir et contraindre) et dit que ceste allegresse ne le faisoit pas aller le petit pas, ains à la course par le chemin de ceste sainte Loy, qui est la propre voye de la vraye devotion. Et ceste est la raison, pour laquelle les serviteurs de Dieu peuvent justement desirer, et demander à nostre Seigneur ces allegresses et consolations spirituelles (ainsi que diront cy apres) **non pour le goust et contentement qui est en elles (car ce seroit s'aymer plus soymesme que Dieu) ains pour le proufit qu'elles nous font, nous attirans à bien faire:** d'autant que celle sentence, qui dit, que **le plaisir met fin à l'œuvre,** est tres-veritable^[457].

(*Le vray chemin*, II, "où est parlé de la devotion, et choses qui aident, ou empeschent à l'acquerir." Chapitre 1, "Qu'est-ce que devotion," 211 v°- 213 v°)

It is a common error to mistake the emotional experience (the pleasant feeling) of consolation, which is an effect of devotion and enhances it in turn, for devotion itself, which Granada defines as an urge to do good caused by the power of "oraison" (prayer).

It is on this basis that the next chapter proposes no less than thirteen means that help to

⁴⁵⁵ Luke 22:44; John 18:6.

⁴⁵⁶ Psalm 118:32.

⁴⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 4.

“obtenir la vraye devotion” (216 v°). The first three are: a great desire to obtain it; force and diligence to help vanquish “toute difficulté qui pourroit s’offrir pour nous destourner de [la vraye devotion]” (219 v°); and a “guarding” of the heart, described via the metaphor of a musical instrument that needs to be tuned before one can play it (222 v°).

These three ingredients appear in many of Coignard’s texts, but the next two, in our opinion, bring to the forefront a particular aspect of what Coignard achieves by writing sonnets as well as longer poems. “[L]a quatriesme chose aidant à la devotion,” Granada explains, is “la continuelle memoire de Dieu” (216 r°). While we do not assert that there is a “rupture définitive” between Coignard’s sonnets and what is achieved by her longer poems, it seems that the latter better reflect this fourth devotional practice, which stresses continuity. Again, it helps to quote at length:

Pour la sauvegarde sus alleguee du cœur, n’y a chose si proufitable, que **d’estre tousjours en la presence de Dieu, l’avoir sans cesse devant ses yeux, non seulement en priant, ains en tout lieu, et en tout temps [...].** Or le serviteur de Dieu [doit] **conserver celle ardeur qu’il a tiré de l’oraison, et continuer ce saint pensément qu’il y a trouvé et eu: estant ceste continue la chose qui le plustost nous fait venir au comble de toute perfection:** car autrement toute nostre vie se passeroit en tissant et destissant, sans jamais conduire rien à perfection. Ceste cy est celle **bienheureuse union de nostre esprit avec Dieu,** que les saints ont tant jadis pourchassée et prisee, qu’ils la tenoient pour **la dernière fin de tous leurs exercices.** Ceste cy est celle que David declare qu’il avoit, lors que si souvent il repete és Psalmes, que **tousjours il avoit Dieu devant ses yeux,** que sans cesse il pensoit en sa Loy sainte, et tiroit tousjours ses louanges de sa bouche^[458]: de sorte que bien qu’il fust Roy [...], neantmoins **il estoit en repos parmy tant de soucis, et au milieu de tant d’affaires, et de serviteurs, il estoit avec Dieu tant seulement.** Ainsi tu dois tousjours procurer ceste **mesme presence, et memoire de nostre Seigneur,** pour à quoy parvenir feras bien de considerer que **vrayement il est present par tout,** non seulement par puissance, ains par presence, voire et par essence^[459]. Un roy est par tout son royaume par puissance, en son palais par presence: mais par essence il n’est en aucun lieu, que là où est son corps: **là où Dieu est en toutes ces manieres en tout lieu,** ce que on preuve, outre l’effort de la foy, par ceste raison. **Dieu est celui qui donne l’estre, et la vie à toutes choses, et est le commencement, et cause de toutes elles:** or faut-il que la cause soit jointe à son effect, ou d’elle mesme, ou par quelque vertu et influence sienne: s’ensuit donc que **Dieu estant cause de l’estre de toutes choses, qu’il est joint avec icelles toutes,** leur donnant l’estre qu’elles ont [...]: et par ainsi où il y a quelque chose de luy, il y est tout Dieu: **et estant l’estre des**

⁴⁵⁸ Psalm 15:8; 33:3; 118:97.

⁴⁵⁹ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*. V, 2 (PL 32, 707); and Saint Thomas, *Summa theologiae* I q. 8, aa. 3-4.

choses le plus secret et interieur d'elles, s'ensuit que Dieu se tient au plus clos, et profond d'elles, que ne sont elles mesmes. Ainsi quel travail as tu d'avoir tousjours devant les yeux celui qui te porte en ses bras sans cesse? te soustient de ses pieds, te regist par sa providence, et qui est celui par lequel, et auquel tu vis, et as estre? Fais donc estat, que **tousjours il assiste comme createur et gouverneur à ton ame, qu'il la conserve en l'estre qu'elle a**, et non content de luy assister, et la gouverner comme createur, et seigneur, et conservateur, si encor il ne luy assistoit comme justificateur, luy donnant grace, amour, et plusieurs saintes inspirations et desirs, **l'attirans à soy, et à sa gloire bienheureuse**. Que ceste assistance soit le tesmoing de toute ta vie, la compaignie de ta peregrination, donne luy part de tes affaires, recommande toy à elle en tes perils, **parle luy de nuict en dormant, et t'esveille avec Dieu, lors que te leves au matin**. [...] Toy estant assis à table, que la sauce de tes viandes soit le fiel, et vinaigre à luy offerts en croix: et le hanap où tu boiras, soit la fontaine sanglante de son costé precieux. T'allant coucher imagine que le lict est la croix, et le couvre chef la couronne d'espines: et te vistant, ou despoüillant, souviene toy avec quelle ignominie le fils de Dieu fut despoüillé, et vestu en sa passion. [...] **Par tous ces lieux parle luy sans cesse en toute humilité, et amoureusement** [...]. Et quoy que tu sois occupé à quelque exercice et œuvre de tes mains, ou en autre negoce, ne dois laisser cestuy cy, d'autant que Dieu a donné ceste puissance, et force à nostre cœur, **qu'en un moment il peut se tourner à luy, quoy que le corps soit ententif aux œuvres exterieures** [...]. Et non seulement travaillant des mains, ains en parlant ou estudiant, ou negociant, l'homme peut desrober souvent à ce qu'il fait un peu de temps, et **entrer au temple de son cœur, y adorant Dieu**, puis aller la part où ses affaires l'appellent, et soudain s'en retourner vers son Dieu, et seigneur souverain [...]. Et si quelquefois l'homme est tardif, et s'arreste en cest endroit, il doit se plaindre de l'esguillon d'attention et soucy, et tourner les resnes de son cœur à Dieu disant avec le Prophete: Retourne, mon ame, à ton repos, puisque le Seigneur t'a fait tant de grace. Ce soucy susdit est le prouffit inestimable, non tant pour garder le cœur, que pour la conduite et adresse de la vie: car par ce moyen **l'homme a tousjours comme un juge devant luy**, et comme un tesmoing voyant tout ce qu'il fait, et dit: et s'efforce avec une continuelle crainte et soucy de ne faire chose qui offence les yeux de ce seigneur qui tousjours le regarde [...]. Et de là naist **une des principales differences, qui soit entre les parfaits et imparfaits**: d'autant que **les parfaits, comme ils ont le cœur tout recueilly en soy, et assuré, aussi ont ils le corps, et sentimens d'iceluy en repos**: là où **les imparfaits estans secs, et vains au dedans, le sont aussi en l'exterieur**: [...] ainsi que l'ombre suit le corps, et fait tout ce que il fait [...].

(*Le vray chemin*, II, chapitre 2. "Tiltre quatriesme," 226 r°-228 v°)

Coignard's sonnets do, to an extent, put this advice into practice as well: they operate on the premise that it is possible to "be" with God *in this life*, in the "temple" of one's heart, as long as one keeps actively turning it toward God, who, for His part, is always there, present in everything and in every action. Thus Sonnet C expresses the poet's ardent wish to see, praise, and remember only God, so that He may be "en tous lieux" her "soigneux

pensement” (5, 259); but implies that she is not (yet?) capable of such a continuous dedication. The *Sonnets* are *working* on it.

As such, they are a much closer match to what Granada describes next. The fifth recommended practice is “l’usage des prieres **briefves**, qui se doivent faire en tout lieu, et en tout temps” (228 v^o). This strategy is to be used when the practitioner is struggling to remain steadfast in exercising the fourth practice that Granada has just presented.

Stressing brevity and variety, he explains what one should do *at the very least*:

Bienheureux seroit celuy, qui pourroit garder l’enseignement susdit: **en defect dequoy, pour remede il faut user en tout temps et lieu de ces briefves oraisons**, que saint Augustin dit, que faisoient les Peres au desert, au milieu de leurs occupations, **afin de ne laisser refroidir la chaleur de leur devotion**. [...] Et pource bien heureux celuy, qui peut tousjours estre [...] à l’abry du vent de qui se cache de la tempeste: mais celuy qui n’en peut faire ainsi, **qu’aumoins il aille, et vienne souvent vers ce feu divin** pour se deffendre des vents et geles terribles de la tresfroide region de ce monde. **A cecy donc servent ces oraisons briefves**, qu’on appelloit jaculatoires, ou eslancees, à cause qu’elles sont comme des dards et sagettes amoureuses, lancees soudain au cœur de nostre Dieu, **avec lesquelles l’ame s’esveille, et s’enflamme d’avantage en l’amour de son createur**. A cecy servent grandement plusieurs versets des Psalmes de David, que l’homme doit tousjours avoir en main, afin que par eux **il puisse se eslever à Dieu, non tousjours d’une mesme sorte** (afin que mesmes parolles ne luy viennent à contrecœur) **ains avec celle varieté d’affections, que le saint Esprit luy esveillera en l’ame**: d’autant qu’il trouvera **en ces chansons celestes des propos convenables à toutes ses occurrences**. Ainsi quelquefois il peut hausser son cœur à Dieu avec une affection de penitence, et desir avoir pardon de ses pechez, disant ces parolles: Destourne (Seigneur) ta face de mes pechez [...]. Quelquefois avec actions de graces tu pourras dire, Mon ame benis le Seigneur [...]. D’autresfois avec une affection charitable, et desir amoureux tu pourras dire: je t’aimeray (ô Dieu) qui es ma force [...]. Aucunefois poussé d’un desir enflambé de l’éternelle felicité, tu peux dire avec David: Que tes tabernacles sont aimables, Seigneur le Dieu des vertus [...]. Quelquefois en fin avec recognoissance de nostre propre misere, et desir de la grace divine, nous pourrons dire: Encline, Seigneur, ton oreille, et oy mon oraison, car je suis pauvre et disetteux. [...] **Les temps, les lieux, les affaires que traitons, et les choses que oyons et voyons, nous donnent aussi occasion pour lever noz cœurs à Dieu [...]** car celuy qui ayme Dieu vraiment, **il voit Dieu en toutes choses**, et luy semble qu’il n’y a rien qui ne le semonne et convie à l’amour de son Dieu: Car le matin le chant des oyseaux, et la nuit le silence d’icelle nous convient à le louer: lors que mangeons, celle grace qu’il nous fait nous donnant abondance: nous esveillant, le bien qu’il nous a octroyé au repos, nous obligent à le louer. **La beauté du soleil et des estoilles, et celle des champs faut que nous representent la beauté et providence du Createur**: et les miseres et travaux que voyons és autres creatures, faut que nous fassent louer Dieu, qui nous fait tant de faveur que de nous en delivrer [...]. Aussi quand nous entrons en quelque affaire, où nous pensons avoir quelque rencontre ou peril, il faut s’armer premierement des armes de la priere et oraison [...]. Et ainsi **il n’y aura occurrence, qui ne nous serve de motif de**

traiter et discourir tousjours avec Dieu, et de chacune nous tirerons proufit [...]. C'est ce perpetuel exercice, auquel nous convie l'Apostre, quand il dit: Freres, taschez de tousjours deviser en vous mesmes avec Psalmes, Hymnes, et Cantiques spirituels, chantans, et loüans Dieu en voz cœurs [...]. Cest exercice aide grandement **tant à la devotion, comme à la recollection du cœur en soy** [...]. Cecy mesme sert pour **conserver la chaleur de la devotion**, d'où advient que ceux qui marchent avec ce soucy, se retirent mieux lors qu'il faut prier Dieu: **d'autant que desja ils sont à demy chemin de la devotion, et retraite de leur cœur**. [...] **les uns eschauffent, et exercent leur cœur avec ces briefves oraisons: là où les autres le laissent refroidir du tout en l'oubli de Dieu**, et ainsi les uns sont **soudain eschauffez**, et les autres tard, au desir de prier, et de se tout recueillir en Dieu. [...] aussi convient il que travaillent ceux qui aiment la devotion, pour **conserver les cœurs en ceste chaleur divine** [...]. Car **la devotion en noz cœurs, est comme la chaleur en l'eau, ou au fer**, lesquels naturellement sont froids et chauds par accident, et par ainsi les esloignant du feu qui les eschauffe, ils reviennent à leur condition. Et pource celuy qui **voudra avoir tousjours le cœur chaud, faut qu'il le tienne sans cesse en la forge, ou que souvent il l'en approche**, afin de conserver ce moyen en **ceste chaleur accidentale**, et estrangere: et ainsi en faut il **user continuellement** avec nostre cœur.

(*Le vray chemin*, II, chapitre 2. "Tiltre cinquiesme," 228 v°-230 r°)

As we see in that last sentence, continuity also plays a role in this strategy – just as the sonnets, as a whole, present a certain degree of continuity. However, the short poetic form can also accommodate those who encounter interruptions in their ability to keep their eyes on God or to maintain the fullest sense of His presence. Thus individual sonnets perform the tasks that Granada assigns to “prieres briefves” in this passage: Sonnet XCVI shows the poet praising the Creator upon contemplating the “beautez” of Nature; in Sonnet XLV, waking up at midnight, she seizes the opportunity to meditate on the silence of a peaceful night (bathed in radiant moonlight) and recognize that it represents (beyond the “tours continuels” of night as we know it) “Le silence profond du Royaume celeste” (11, 192)⁴⁶⁰. The intermittence that Granada describes in the excerpt quoted above is acknowledged by Sonnet XC, which we already quoted twice:

⁴⁶⁰ This mention of heavenly silence is worth noting, since other poems of Coignard's evoke the singing of Angels. She is unlikely to be alluding to the 30 minutes of silence in Heaven mentioned in Revelation (8:1): the emphasis is on sublime repose rather than on the idea that Heaven will be literally, materially silent. We could also understand this to mean that, in Heaven, music and silence are in fact the same thing; in other words, that celestial music is not of the kind that human ears can hear. On this sonnet's Ronsardian intertext, see André Gendre, “Quête de Dieu et séduction du monde dans les *Sonnets spirituels* de Gabrielle

Seigneur, si quelque fois mon amour diminue,
 Et de ton feu divin mon cœur se refroidit:
L'on ne peut pas tousjours aussi comme l'on dit
Estre en un mesme estat et force continue.

Il n'est rien d'asseuré qui soit dessoubz la nue,
 Mesme l'astre nuictal descroit et s'arrondit,
 Ainsi quand peu à peu mon desir s'attiedit,
 Je sens un vray regret de ma faute connue.
 (1-8, Coignard 248)

We recall that the tercets express the poet's resolve, taking its cue from Nature's endless bounty, to continue praising the Lord, in verse that posterity, too, will keep on reading.

Our Introduction (p. 5) quoted Terence Cave's observation that Coignard's sonnets follow a penitential sequence – “a downward movement into a consideration of the sinner's corruption, of [her] death, and the torments of Hell” (Cave 26) – while the *Vers chrestiens* develop a Passion sequence leading with an upward movement “towards absolution, redemption, and the all-embracing love of God” (*ibid.*). There is, of course, much more to the *Œuvres* than just these two sequences. Some sonnets, likely written in honor of Holy Week, already focus on the Passion; others praise God for the redemption that His grace offers through His son; still others sing – or aspire to do so – of God's love. Conversely, some longer poems – such as the *Combat* – involve the examination of one's sins, articulate thoughts on death, and even provide descriptions of Hell. Cave also makes an additional observation, based on different criteria, distinguishing between “two kinds of devotional poetry,” one focused on sonnets, the other favoring other forms:

[...] in one case the extended form of *stances*, *cantique* or *ode* has encouraged a restless, expansive movement in which the argument is primarily physical or affective; in the other, the use of the sonnet has imposed a closed structure in which a single idea is fully analysed and worked out without necessarily losing its affective impact.
 (Cave 145)

de Coignard.” In *Cité des hommes, cité de Dieu. Travaux sur la littérature de la Renaissance en l'honneur de Daniel Ménager*. Geneva: Droz, 2003, pp. 419-430.

Caëtano, for her part, remarks that the sonnet form may seem a counterintuitive choice to express one's spiritual progress, because it is a fixed form⁴⁶¹, constrained and short (*'Je suis Chrestienne,'* Caëtano 41). Yet she also explains how such a form could serve Coignard's project. First, the discontinuity inherent within a collection could help delineate such steps of one's spiritual path as moments of praise (e.g. Sonnet XCIII), deep despondency (e.g. Sonnet XLIV), or confession – modeled after the Psalms (e.g. Sonnet L). This is not to say that an exact sequence of appropriate steps is mirrored by the order of the original edition; only that the cornucopia of sonnets speaks to the *variety* of steps one might experience. Second, Caëtano (focusing on Sonnet LVI) points out that a sonnet's brevity and density facilitate the labor of analysis, including the examination of conscience. Third (discussing Sonnets I, CXXIII, and XLVII), she argues that Coignard aimed to spiritualize this secular form⁴⁶² by giving it a religious content, taking on this challenge much in the same way that she fought to overcome spiritual tests, framed as a Christian's specific battle between action and contemplation.

From there, Caëtano understands the division of the *Œuvres* as follows:

La concision des sonnets permet une plus grande efficacité et un plus grand impact sur le lecteur, alors que des formes poétiques plus longues, comme les stances ou les discours, vont développer plus en détail les mêmes thèmes et seront peut-être plus propices à la méditation.
(Caëtano 43)

We agree with this assessment. For example, a longer poem like *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle* – divided into 56 quatrains, totaling 224 lines in all – allows for a more

⁴⁶¹ Coignard respects, far more often than not, the demands of this fixed form. On her practice of both the alexandrine and decasyllable and on her respect (or transgression) of various conventions (concerning rhymes, caesuras, *enjambements*, or the “pointe” of the last line), see above, pp. 202-204 and 227-231. The use of *enjambement* is striking in sonnets XIX, LXXVII, CXVIII, and (as noted by Winn) CXXIX.

⁴⁶² Like Marquets before her, and like many of her own contemporaries. That Coignard was not a pioneer does not diminish the challenge: each sonnet, in this sense, is evidence of the hard work of a perseverant intellect engaged in the practice of devotion within a tight, closed structure.

continuous and detailed spiritual process (*i.e.* meditation) to take place. The quantitative difference matters. A “traité” from part III of *Le vray chemin* concerning “aumosne” and “misericorde” insists that “une des principales occasions de la perdition et ruine des hommes depend du deffault qu’ils ont de la cognoissance et consideration des choses divines”⁴⁶³ (*ibid.*). But this “deffault” concerning divine things can only be remedied, and their awesome power unleashed in our hearts, *if* we contemplate them *deeply*. “Si tu eusses cogneu” (Luke 19:42), cried Jesus,

donnant à entendre que la faute de ceste cognoissance estoit la racine des autres miseres, et la raison de cecy est d’autant que les choses de Dieu sont si grandes, si puissantes et de si grande vertu et efficace qu’elles ne peuvent estre sans causer de grands effects et alterations en noz cœurs, **si nous venions à les contempler et considerer profondement.**

(*Le vray chemin*, III. *Troisiesme traité, contenant les fruicts et efficace de l’aumosne et de la misericorde*. “Tiltre premier,” 402 r^o)

Complementing this warning is the assurance that the process of looking at and reflecting on God’s works will both open our eyes⁴⁶⁴ and distance us from harm:

Et loing de cest advis n’estoit le Prophete: lors qu’il disoit. C’est une gent sans conseil, sagesse ny prudence: A la mienne volonté **qu’ils sceussent et qu’ils entendissent et meissent devant leurs yeux, et voulussent discourir sur les œuvres de Dieu**⁴⁶⁵: car cecy **leur ouvreroit les yeux et les esloigneroit des maux que souffrent.**

(*ibid.*, 402 r^o - v^o)

⁴⁶³ Paraphrasing Augustine (*De Trinitate*, IV; cf. Job 19: 25, 27-28; I Timothy 2), Granada writes: “Les hommes font ordinairement grand compte de la science des choses du Ciel et de la terre: mais plus sont à priser ceux qui preferent à ce sçavoir la cognoissance de soy-mesme: et plus loüable est l’ame qui cognoist sa foiblesse, que celuy qui mettant en oubly ceste cognoissance, se travaille à sçavoir le cours et chemin des estoilles, sans entendre la voye pour aller au Ciel” (*Vray chemin*, Part II, ch. 4, “Huictiesme tentation qui est l’excessif desir d’estudier et de sçavoir”; 8, “Des remedes contre ceste tentation,” 301 v^o-302 r^o). Cf. Sonnets CXXIV: “Je ne veux rien sçavoir, pour sçavante paroistre, / Tres-heureux est celuy qui ne cognoist que soy” (1-2, 288); and C: her “entendement” (1) should see God alone (4); also CXI, where her spirit aspires to a higher path only to be reminded that some things are not for her to understand. Cf. Marquets’ *Sonets spirituels*, CCCCIX, for her treatment of the same topic.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Coignard’s Sonnet CVI (blindness from unruly passions); Sonnet CXXVII (God opened her eyes); or *La Mort et Passion de Nostre Seigneur*, ln. 89, p. 525 (weak sight) and the *Sommaire de sept sermons*, lns. 32-36, p. 607. Cf. Psalm 92:5-9 (worshipping God opens our minds) and Mark 8:24 (a blind man; a dullness in our vision). Cf. Marquets, *Sonets spirituels*, Sonnet XC (God opens our eyes).

⁴⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 32:28.

Accordingly, let us now return to the poem most *consistently* dedicated to the contemplation, among “les œuvres de Dieu,” of the “felicité” promised to the elect.

De la gloire et felicité de la vie eternelle: the title and the form

Colette Winn’s ample annotation demonstrates that *De la gloire et felicité de la vie eternelle* is closely inspired by Granada’s “Saturday evening meditation”⁴⁶⁶. In what follows, we will attempt to interpret the poem in the light of this omnipresent source, but also on its own terms. Incidentally, *De la gloire* also confirms that our poet uses the French translation of *Le vray chemin* rather than an edition in the original Castilian⁴⁶⁷: Belleforest translates the word “*bienaventuranza*,” used throughout the meditation for “*El sabado en la noche*”⁴⁶⁸, as “felicité” rather than as “béatitude.” Coignard follows suit in the title of her poem⁴⁶⁹; but a detail reveals that she does not do so passively.

In the French version, the first sentence of the Saturday night meditation reads:

En ce jour le Chrestien pourra s’arrester sur la meditation de **la felicité de celle gloire** qu’auront ceux qui seront sauvez⁴⁷⁰.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, ch. 2, “Pour le samedy au soir,” 152 r°)

⁴⁶⁶ The second chapter of *Le vray chemin*’s “Premiere partie,” entitled “De cinq parties de l’oraison,” is very long (it runs from fol. 19 through fol. 79) and contains two series (morning, then evening) of seven “contemplations,” thus providing two for each day of the week. The evening ones are most important (“bien que soient mises au second lieu, si sont-elles les premieres en l’ordre de l’exercice: d’autant que ceux qui se tournent nouvellement à Dieu, faut que commencent par ceste façon de mediter,” 79 v°); each one of them is followed by a “traité” (itself divided into several “tiltres”) that comments on it. The Saturday evening meditation, followed by the “traité sixiesme,” is therefore next to last.

⁴⁶⁷ We will quote the Castilian text of the *Libro de la Oración y Meditación* from Alvaro Huerga’s critical edition, which is based on the 1579 edition (as explained p. 653) but includes copious variants.

⁴⁶⁸ The Spanish adds: “*de la bienaventuranza del cielo*” (*Libro de la Oración*, Huerga edition, p. 206); the French only has: “Pour le samedy au soir” (152 r°).

⁴⁶⁹ Within the poem, however, we encounter the treasures “De gloire et beatitude” (ln. 192), while “felicité” appears once (ln. 60, where it is not paired with “gloire”). The pair is used in *La descente de nostre Seigneur aux limbes* (“Et le Lazare aussi qui par sa pauvreté, / Fut enrichi **de gloire et de felicité**” (lns. 75-76, p. 574)). As for the word “beatitude” – *Les huict Beatitudes* aside –, we find it notably in the *Discours sur la Passion* (ln. 620, p. 504) and the *Hymne sur la louange de la Charité*, (ln. 18, p. 588).

⁴⁷⁰ In Spanish: “Este día podrás pensar en la **bienaventuranza de la gloria**” (*ibid.*).

The first sentence of the treatise that follows, entitled “sur la meditation de la gloire de Paradis”⁴⁷¹, reads in turn:

Une des choses en laquelle il faut le plus tenir l’œil, est ce val de misere, et **la felicité de la gloire**: d’autant que ceste seule pensee suffit à nous encourager à tous les travaux qu’il faut souffrir pour y parvenir⁴⁷².
(*Le vray chemin*, I, ch. 2, “Traité sixiesme,” 154 v°)

We notice that Coignard’s title, compared to these sentences, inserts the conjunction “et” between “gloire” and “felicité.” This makes the two terms parallel and equivalent, whereas Granada and his translator use one to characterize the other (on which it depends): “*la bienaventuranza de la gloria*”; “la felicité **de** celle gloire”; “la felicité **de** la gloire.” Coignard’s subtle change suggests a deliberate (rather than accidental) use of the figure known as “hendiadys” or “hendiadyn,” which links two words by a coordinating conjunction when one of them is in fact a subordinate, dependent on the other (which it modifies as a complement or epithet: *e.g.*, “furious sound” becomes “sound and fury”⁴⁷³). The main effects are those of emphasis and amplification. In this particular case, however, the two terms (“felicité” and “gloire”) still depend on a third, “vie éternelle”; and the meaning of one of the terms involved ends up having to change as well.

“Gloire,” in the specific sense of that word that Granada was using, refers to the eternal condition of the saved, the “Béatitude céleste des élus de Dieu,” as the

⁴⁷¹ ... “au quel est plus à plain declairé ce qui est compris en la contemplation susdite” (154 v°). In Spanish: “*Tratado sexto: de la consideración de la gloria del paraíso, el en cual se declara más por extenso la meditación pasada*” (210).

⁴⁷² In Spanish: “*Una de las cosas en que más convenía tener siempre puestos los ojos en este valle de lágrimas es la bienaventuranza de la gloria: porque esta sola consideración bastaría para animarnos a todos los trabajos que se han de pasar por ella*” (*Tratado sexto*, 210).

⁴⁷³ A famous example from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. In his *Dictionnaire de poétique et de rhétorique* (Paris: PUF, 1981, s. v. “Hendiadyn,” p. 502), Henri Morier cites “J’ai connu cet homme et sa probité” for “J’ai connu cet homme probe” or “J’ai connu la probité de cet homme,” noting a “dissociation de l’objet et de sa qualité”: “on voit la qualité prendre corps et se substantiver,” thus becoming “une substance bien réelle.”

Dictionnaire du Moyen Français has it⁴⁷⁴. So Granada's phrase "la félicité de la gloire" may feel slightly redundant, but its logic remains clear: eternal "gloire" (= the condition of the saved) is characterized by a supreme "félicité" (= as felt by them). Coignard's decision to coordinate rather than subordinate the terms emphasizes (but does not alter) the meaning of "félicité," now equivalent in dignity to "gloire," which it served to modify in the original. Yet because the two terms together are used to characterize a third one, "la vie éternelle" (which Granada's version named "la gloire"), the meaning of "gloire" is altered: it now refers to a *quality* of "la vie éternelle," instead of designating it as it did in *Le vray chemin*⁴⁷⁵. The *DMF* tells us that "gloire" can also mean "splendeur, perfection de Dieu; éclat des manifestations divines." Coignard's title, therefore, means something like "the felicity and splendor of eternal life." While both "félicité" and "gloire" receive additional emphasis, the meaning of "gloire" is in fact *demoted* from the thing itself (eternal life) to one of its qualities (albeit a splendid one). Coignard was of course aware of the sense of "gloire" used by Granada⁴⁷⁶; she *chose* to displace it in her title, so as to underline the joy and splendor of the celestial condition *and* to name the latter more simply and straightforwardly than Granada had done: "la vie éternelle."

Indeed, the key substitution taking place here is that of "vie" for "gloire." Another sign of this is that Coignard's title emphasizes "vie éternelle" as such where Granada's also gave precedence to its location: "cielo," "paraíso"; "Paradis" for Belleforest. Obviously, eternal life and Paradise are often used as quasi-synonyms of one another; but

⁴⁷⁴ See <http://www2.atilf.fr/dmf/>, s. v. "gloire," section C.

⁴⁷⁵ Where, tellingly, we also find the phrase "gloire éternelle" in this sense: see e.g. 173 v° or 182 r°.

⁴⁷⁶ She uses "gloire" in this sense, alongside "beatitude" and as its synonym, in line 192 of the poem (quoted below): in the phrase "les tresors / **De gloire** et beatitude," "gloire" is what is being characterized (by the treasures it contains), not a characterizing quality (as in "gloire [...] de la vie éternelle"). By contrast, in the image of Heaven as a "palais / Orné **de gloire** excellente" (41-42), "gloire" means splendor. Obviously the two meanings are related and connote one another; but their distinction remains clear.

Coignard's choice again suggests a particular sensibility of hers, a need to call our attention to "vie éternelle" *itself*: "vie" as eternal; an eternal form of living. Our poet may simply be seeking to add variety or elegance to her title; but the result is a focus on "vie" at the expense of other substantives ("gloire" and "Paradis") privileged by her source. The effect is to make the meaning of the whole syntagm more immediate and relatable.

Coignard's use of the preposition "De" for the title of *De la gloire* announces that its subject will be discussed as such, as it would be in a treatise or essay. A treatment of this sort might run against the religious use of poetry's performative dimension – that of a prayer or ritual, as taken on, for example, by Sonnet XXXIX ("Sainte Mere de Dieu, entens à mes clameurs," 185-186), or by such *Vers chrestiens* as *Pour l'Assumption de Nostre Dame* (307-311) and the *Noëls*⁴⁷⁷. "De" can also be used, however, in the title of hymns and other epideictic poems, in which case what it announces is that the object will be praised (as in Coignard's own *Hymne de la vertu de Continence*). In any case, the very form of *De la gloire*, its composition in heptasyllabic quatrains⁴⁷⁸, marks an intention other than didactic: it suggests that this work might be *sung*, metaphorically or even literally, in addition to being learned from or meditated upon⁴⁷⁹.

Marot had used this simple but subtly balanced form – short odd meter, short even stanza – in one of his translations of the Psalms:

A toy, mon Dieu, mon cueur monte,
En toy mon espoir ay mis;
Fais que je ne tombe à honte
Au gré de mes ennemys.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. The third one ("O nuit gracieuse...", Coignard 327-300) especially.

⁴⁷⁸ The other two poems of Coignard's in which the heptasyllable is used are *Stabat Mater* and *Pour la Nuit de Noel*; the latter uses quatrains as well, with the same rhyme scheme as *De la gloire*.

⁴⁷⁹ Coignard may also be aware of the significance of the numbers involved: in the Bible generally, seven is associated with perfection and divine completeness; both four and seven are used symbolically in the book of Revelation's description of the end-times, the New Heaven, and the New Jerusalem.

[...]

Le chemin que tu nous dresses
Fays moy congnoistre, Seigneur,
De tes sentes, et addresses
Vueilles moy estre enseigneur.

Achemine moy au cours
De ta verité patente,
Comme Dieu de mon secours,
Où j'ay chascun jour attente.

[...]

Dieu faict son secret paroistre
A ceulx qui l'ont en honneur,
Et leur monstre, et faict congnoistre
De son contract la teneur.

("Pseaulme vingtcinquesme," 1-4, 9-16, 49-52)⁴⁸⁰

Ronsard, for his part, had imposed the heptasyllable in many of his odes, setting them apart from the more common, even forms of verse: in doing so, the meter was made to suggest the "lyrical" in the strict sense, albeit in a variety of registers. Thus, in the *Quatre premiers livres des Odes* (1550), we find heptasyllables in the solemn "Pindaric" odes ("Au Roi," "A la Roine," "A Madame Marguerite," *etc.*) as well as in some of the more intimate "Horatian" ones ("A la fontaine Bellerie"), or in the frankly sensual "Des baisers de Cassandre," inspired by Jean Second's *Basia*⁴⁸¹. The stanzas involved are usually not mere quatrains (although they often combine them into "huitains"); but those can be found as well, for example in a light-hearted piece addressing the poet's guitar:

⁴⁸⁰ Psalm 25 (24). See *Psaumes de David*, in Marot, *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. Gérard Defaux, Vol. II. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1993, pp. 635-638. Heptasyllabic quatrains are also the form adopted (with a different rhyme scheme, AABB) for "Pseaulme octantesixiesme" (pp. 655-658).

⁴⁸¹ See *Œuvres complètes*, ed. P. Laumonier, vol. I. Paris: STFM, 1973, pp. 61-78, 203-205, 197-199. The meter will keep appearing in high-style epideictic pieces such as the "Hymne triumphal sur le trepas de Marguerite de Valoys Royne de Navarre" and in the "epodes" of great Pindaric poems like the "Ode de la Paix au Roy" or the "Ode à Michel de l'Hospital" (ed. Laumonier, vol. III, Paris: STFM, 1968, pp. 54-78, 3-35, 118-163); as well as in light pieces such as the "Chanson" originally written on behalf of Louis de Condé "en faveur de Mademoiselle de Limeuil" (*Amours*, II, ed. Weber 297-301), on which more below.

Ma Guiterre je te chante,
 Par qui seule je deçoi,
 Je deçoi, je ron, j'enchante,
 Les amours que je reçoï.

[...]

Tu es des dames pensives
 L'instrument approprié,
 Et aus jeunesses lascives
 Consacré et dédié.

(“A sa guiterre,” Livre II, Ode XIX, 1-4 and 45-48)⁴⁸²

See also Ode XVII (the next to last) of Book IV, with its provocative conclusion:

La Muse l'enfer defie,
 Seule nous élève aus cieus,
Seule nous beatifie
 Ennombrés aus reings des Dieus.

(“A René d'Urvoi,” 61-64)⁴⁸³

Between Marot's Biblical inspiration and Ronsard's proudly secular one, Coignard's choice would seem obvious. Yet it is Ronsard, celebrated in the last of her *Sonnets spirituels*, who is most present in *De la gloire*, as Brenda Dunn-Lardeau has shown⁴⁸⁴.

Ronsardian echoes

Coignard's poem is not just a song; in its last section, it is a love song as well, which reprises the language of the Song of Songs (“Appuiez moy de fleurs, environnez moy de pommes, car je languy d'amour,” Les Cantiques des Cantiques de Salomon II.5; Benoist, vol. 2, 89 v^o)⁴⁸⁵:

⁴⁸² In *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, pp. 229 and 231.

⁴⁸³ In *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II (Paris: STFM, 1973), p. 151. After 1567 (see note *ad loc.*), the last two lines show a (prudent?) correction: “**Seule nous donne la vie** / Et nous met aux rangs des Dieux.”

⁴⁸⁴ B. Dunn-Lardeau, “Les Béatitudes comme source d'inspiration” (2012). On Ronsard's influence on Coignard, see also A. Gendre, “Quête de Dieu et séduction du monde.” Both articles are cited above.

⁴⁸⁵ “*Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis: quia amore languero.*” Coignard was likely inspired even more directly by *Le vray chemin*, itself inspired by Saint Bernard. Contemplating the Savior's sacrifice, one will be lifted “en une grande merveille, et amour envers Dieu: de sorte que tu seras aussi estonné, que fut Moïse

Charme moy de tes douceurs,
 Separe mon coeur des hommes,
 Environne moy de fleurs,
 Nourris mon ame de pommes.

Car je veux languir d'amour [...]
 (*De la gloire*, 209-213, Coignard 350)

The reference to “apples” may also bring to mind, and redeem, the image of the forbidden fruit of Genesis, as it does in Sonnet LXXI, which contemplates the wounds endured by Jesus on the Cross:

Playes qui ont produit **les pommes et les fleurs**,
Du celeste jardin de tes douces faveurs,
 Pour ceux de qui ton feu embrase les poitrines.
 (12-14, 226)

Yet the image also awakens, of course, many a reference to Greek culture and mythology, where the act of offering an apple was often an invitation to love⁴⁸⁶. One of Ronsard's sonnets, with which our poet must have been familiar, plays on this symbolism, extended to “pommes d'or” (oranges) in this case⁴⁸⁷:

Quand j'avois l'esprit tout morne et tou pesant,
 Quand je receu du lieu qui me tourmente
 La pomme d'or comme moy jaunissante
 Du mesme mal qui nous est si plaisant.
Les pomes sont de l'Amour le present:
 Tu le scays bien, ô guerriere Atalante,

en la montaigne, lors qu'il veit la figure de ce mistere, et qu'il commença à chanter à haute voix l'immensité de la misericorde divine, qui luy fut là decouverte. **C'estoit celle defaillance, que sentoit l'espouse aux Cantiques, lors qu'elle dit: Soutenez moy avec des fleurs, et me confortez avec des pommes: car je languis d'amour.** Sur lesquels mots dit saint Bernard: L'ame amoureuse voit ici Salomon avec la couronne, de laquelle sa mere l'a couronné: voit le fils unique du pere portant sur soy la croix: voit fouëté, et couronné d'espines le Seigneur de toute majesté: voit l'auteur de vie et de gloire transpercé de cloux, et oultré d'un coup de lance, et assailli par parolles mocqueuses et injurieuses: voit en fin comme il expose sa sainte vie pour ses amis: elle voit ceci, et le voyant, elle est feruë d'un glaive d'amour et pource elle dit, **sustentez avec des fleurs, et me confortez avec des pommes, car je languis d'amour**” (*Vray chemin*, I, chapitre 11, “Tiltre quatriesme,” “De la grandeur de la bonté divine, qui reluit en sa passion,” 206 r^o-v^o).

⁴⁸⁶ “L'offrande d'une pomme était une invitation amoureuse, cf. *Anth. Grecque*, V, 290 et 291 et Catulle, *Carm.* LXV, 19” (note to the Weber edition of Ronsard's *Amours*, p. 687). Its negative is the apple sent by Discord and attributed to Venus by the “Judgment of Paris,” which led to bitter conflict and war.

⁴⁸⁷ In the 1584-87 editions, “La pomme d'or” is changed to “L'orenges d'or” (ed. Weber 316).

Et Cydipé qui encor se lamente
 D'elle et d'Aconce et d'Amour si nuisant.
Les pomes sont de l'Amour le vray signe:
 Heureux celuy qui de tel bien est digne,
 Bien qui fait vivre heureusement les homes.
 Venus a plein de pomes tout le sein
 Ses deux enfans en ont pleine la main,
 Et bref **l'Amour n'est qu'un beau jeu de pomes.**
 (Sonnet IV, *Le Septiesme Livre des Poèmes*, 1569,
 [À Cassandre], ed. Weber 316-317)⁴⁸⁸

Although inspired by Scripture, Coignard's evocation of the fruit may even bring to mind a still more erotic image, found in many a love poem, but in particular in the (heterometric) "Chanson" that Ronsard wrote "en faveur de Mademoiselle de Limeuil" and published in the *Recueil des Nouvelles Poësies* (1564), then incorporated (without its dedication) in the *Second Livre des Amours*:

Quand je voy dans un jardin
 Au matin
 S'éclorre une fleur nouvelle,
 J'accompare le bouton
 Au teton
 De son beau sein qui pommelle^[489].
 ("Chanson," Ins. 79-84, in *Les Amours*, II, ed. Weber 299)

While it imports most of its imagery from Granada, Coignard's poem also incorporates (and "christianizes") some Ronsardian images too (which, for their part, may well owe

⁴⁸⁸ See Weber's other notes *ad loc.*: "1. *La pomme d'or*: l'orange. Belleau précise: "Toute sorte de pommes et principalement les oranges sont dédiées à la Volupté, aux Grâces et à l'Amour. [...] 3. [...] cf. Ovide, *Héroïdes*, XX. Acontius écrit sur une pomme qu'il jeta dans le temple de Diane ces mots: "Je jure par Dieu de n'être qu'à toi". Cydippe ramasse le fruit et lit le serment à haute voix. Promise à un autre par son père, elle était prise d'une fièvre violente chaque fois que le jour du mariage arrivait. Elle finit par épouser Acontius.. [...] 6. Dans l'édition de 1571 le commentateur écrit: "Tout ce qui est de plus délicat en amour tire sur la forme ronde, la teste, les yeux, les joues vermeilles... les tetins, l'enflure du ventre, les genoux, le rond des cuisses et autres belles parties de la femme". Une estampe de la Bibliothèque nationale représente l'Amour jouant avec des pommes" (ed. Weber 687).

⁴⁸⁹ The verb "pommeler" means "s'arrondir" (ed. Weber 841).

something to the Song of Songs)⁴⁹⁰. Brenda Dunn-Lardeau noted key similarities between *De la gloire* and the “Chanson” first dedicated to Isabeau de Limeuil:

[...] il y a [...] d’indéniables inflexions ronsardiennes dans l’heptasyllabe ‘Quant je voy parmy les champs’ [ln. 1 of *De la gloire*], qui fait écho à la Chanson ‘Quand ce beau printemps je voys’ [ln. 1 of the “Chanson”] tirée des *Amours de Marie* et dans laquelle quatre strophes débutent par autant d’heptasyllabes avec la reprise anaphorique “Quand je vois tant de couleurs” [ln. 49], “Quand je vois les grands rameaux” [ln. 55], “Quand je vois en quelque endroit” [ln. 73] et “Quand je vois dans un jardin” [ln. 79]. Outre cette similitude du choix de termes, de la syntaxe et de la métrique, le propos de ces poèmes peut également être rapproché, bien que les finalités soient différentes. Alors que Ronsard célèbre **le plaisir esthétique engendré par les beautés de la nature, qui annoncent celles de l’aimée et servent de prélude à l’amour charnel**, Gabrielle de Coignard y voit **les éléments précurseurs de la vision béatifique de l’autre vie**.

(Dunn-Lardeau 171)

We concur with Dunn-Lardeau’s analysis and will offer a few additional observations.

Let us begin with the erotic rush conveyed at the end of Ronsard’s poem:

Ne laissons passer en vain
Si soudain
Les ans de nostre jeunesse.
 (“Chanson,” 142-144, ed. Weber 301)

This common wish is displaced by Coignard when she describes “ce monde passager / Qui se coule d’un pas vitte” (37-38, 339): while the *carpe diem* motif invites the secular poet to ask for immediate satisfaction, the religious poet is expected to reject the latter and focus on something more durable. In this case, however, the contrast is subtler, since Coignard, as we will see, *also* celebrates the beauty of the natural world, and only mentions its ephemereal nature to build an *a fortiori* argument: if God granted such beauty to a dwelling that does not last, what must Heaven look like? Yet the poet is far from having joined the latter, and the final lines of her own poem convey a desire that time fly even faster, so as to hasten her death and allow her to finally contemplate “Le

⁴⁹⁰ See Chapter II of Clément’s *Une poétique de crise*, entitled “La rupture avec la Pléiade,” for an illuminating discussion concerning the shifting status of “l’image” in French poetry after 1580 (to which we return below, p. 334, n. 499).

bien qui nous glorifie” (ln. 222). Moreover, Ronsard’s all too earthly concern is nullified in the heavenly realm, since “La jeunesse y fleurira” (ln. 85) in perpetuity.

Second, whatever Ronsard’s “je lyrique”⁴⁹¹ sees, hears, or feels in Nature suggests the presence of his beloved. In line 52 for example (“Je pense voir...”), the color of her face is manifested to the lover by flowers adorning a coastline. In the next stanza (“Je pense estre pris,” ln. 58), he imagines that she is holding him in her arms, when all he sees are the branches of ivy-wrapped elm trees. In the next stanza likewise,

D’elle je pense jouir
Et oyr
Sa douce voix qui m’enchante.
(“Chanson,” 64-66, 299)

upon hearing the voice of a nightingale. He knows he is being fooled, or rather, fools himself (“Je me laisse decevoir,” ln. 76) when flowers in a meadow have him smell (“Quand je sens parmy les prez,” ln. 91) the “douceur” of his beloved’s breath. In two other instances, however, he deliberately uses elements of Nature to make an explicit comparison. One, involving a bud and the lady’s breast, is quoted above; the other accounts for his entire behavior (and poetic endeavor):

Bref je fais comparaison
Par raison
Du Printemps et de ma mie:
Il donne aux fleurs la vigueur,
Et mon cueur
D’elle prend vigueur et vie.
(“Chanson,” 97-102, 300)

A justified comparison does not necessarily involve the kind of sensorial illusion described in other passages; but love poetry often ignores this difference; to “make comparison” is another way of conveying an impression, and vice versa. By contrast,

⁴⁹¹ Who, in this case (originally at least), is not Ronsard’s own amorous persona, but that of Isabeau de Limeuil’s lover, Louis de Condé, on whose behalf the poet wrote this piece.

Coignard's "Quand je voy" implies no such distortion. What she sees, she sees; and it allows her to draw a rational conclusion about what she does not see:

Quant je voy parmy les champs
 Une forest verdoyante,
 Un amiable printemps,
 Une fontaine ondoyante,

Un pré bigarré de fleurs,
 Une montaigne pierreuse,
 Le ciel de mille couleurs,
 Et la saison gracieuse;

La jaunissante moisson
 Qui ondoye par la plaine,
 [...]

Les gros coustaux tous couverts
 D'une fructueuse vigne,
 Descouvrants leurs sillons vers
 De ceps plantez à la ligne;

Et les murmurantz ruisseaux
 Qui s'esloignent de leur source,
 Et entremeslent leurs eaux
 Pour faire une plus grand course;

[...]

Je dis parlant à mon coeur,
 Et à mon ame assoupie,
 Que de gloire et de bon-heur
 Nous^[492] aurons à l'autre vie:

Puis qu'au monde assujety
 Soubs les hommes miserables,
 Le Seigneur a desparty
 Tant de choses admirables.

(*De la gloire*, 1-36, Coignard 338-339)

⁴⁹² This pronoun could refer to the poet's heart and soul *as well as* all of the elect, who are one: "[Tous les habitants] s'ayment tellement entre eux, que **tous sont un coeur, et une ame**: et vivent en telle paix et concorde, que la cité pour ce est nommee Hierusalem, qui signifie *Vision de paix*" (Granada, 156 v°).

The *a fortiori* argument⁴⁹³ summarized by these last two quatrains (since God gave such a beautiful setting to our mortal lives, how much more should we expect from the place reserved for us in “l’autre vie”) comes from Granada:

car si en ce vallon de miseres, et lieu de bannissement, Dieu a creé des choses tant admirables, et de telle beauté, qu’est-ce qu’il aura fait au lieu, qui est le siege de sa gloire, le throsne de sa grandeur, le palais de sa majesté, la maison de ses esleuz, et le paradis de tous aises et delices?

(*Le vray chemin*, I, “Pour le samedi au soir,” 152 v°-153 r°)

While this transfigured beauty “ne peut estre declairée par parolles,” there is no dearth of “parolles” to declare it; such as the words above, traveling from images of royal power to the notion (most tempting yet hardest to imagine) of all delights assembled.

The spectacle of Nature makes Ronsard (in his lovesick persona) feel that he is seeing, hearing, smelling, touching the very body of his beloved. Coignard, for her part, sees and hears (no other senses are involved in her first description) the *reality* of the natural world, whose beauty has her recognize (and alert her own soul⁴⁹⁴ to) the existence

⁴⁹³ To be precise, the kind of *a fortiori* inference that we will focus on in this chapter is not *a majore ad minus*, from greater to smaller (if a cart is strong enough to carry three people, then it is strong enough to carry two); but *a minore ad majus*, from smaller to greater (if the cart cannot carry two people, it cannot carry three). In such examples, however, inference requires no extrapolation beyond what is observed and posited; but in the argument “if this imperfect world is beautiful, then God’s perfect world is even more beautiful,” extrapolation is required (it is the whole point) and needs additional premises to be sustained: in this case, dogmas about God’s existence and perfection. To be fair, Granada’s *a fortiori* arguments are not employed in strict logical fashion (they are not asked to carry any proof), but are meant to speak to our imagination, and need in any case to be validated by faith.

⁴⁹⁴ Which is said to be “assoupie” (30). This epithet can be translated as “dozing” or “numb” (which may have different spiritual implications). The key idea is one of passivity and lack of understanding. See Granada’s rhetoric addressing his own soul, which also needs goading: “**Regarde à present en hault (ô mon ame)** laissant ici bas tous les soucis terrestres: et **va en esprit** en celle noble terre de promission, et voy la longueur de son eternité, la largeur de sa felicité, et la grandeur des ses richesses, avec le reste qui est en elle,” 154 v°; “**sus donc mon ame, monte avec luy en esprit** en ceste excellente cité, pour y contempler la sagesse de ce roy le plus grand de tous,” 155 r°. The related problem of laziness is a recurring theme throughout both parts of Coignard’s *Œuvres chrestiennes*. In Sonnet LXVIII, she criticizes mankind for being too lazy to learn from Nature’s many lessons. Sonnet LXXV contrasts the act of contemplation with “Le somme paresseux” (4, 230). Sonnet LXXXII confesses that God’s words do not excite the poet’s lazy spirit as they once did (see also Winn’s note 2, p. 239, on the sin of *acidia*). The first tercet of Sonnet XCVI piles on the synonyms of laziness and dullness: “**Ô esprit engourdis qui vous assoupissez / A l’esbat paresseux des logis tapissez,** / Ayant de molz plaisirs l’ame toute enyvrée” (9-11, 255). In *Combat de plusieurs ennemis qui nous assaillent*, Coignard candidly (or topically, since laziness is

of *another* reality: an eternal one, which will prove even more beautiful, infinitely so, and promises infinitely more happiness than is available where we currently live⁴⁹⁵. This other place the poet cannot (yet) see, and has to imagine, on the basis of the same *a fortiori* reasoning: if the perishable world surrounding us is so splendid, then

Quel doit estre ce palais,
Orné de gloire excellente,
Habitation de paix,
Seure joye permanente,

Où le Roy de verité,
Qui commande sur les nues,
Triomphe en eternité
Dessus les troupes esleues,

Donnant à ses serviteurs
Ceste glorieuse entrée,
Les comblant de ses faveurs
En ceste heureuse contrée.

(41-52, Coignard 340)

If the two worlds are connected – and remain comparable through this kind of reasoning –, it is because Heaven will *not* be spiritual only, but fully incarnated⁴⁹⁶:

supposed to be a feminine vice) reveals: “**La paresse me tient dans le lict otieux**, / Voulant bien reposer d’un somme gratieux. / S’on me vient esveiller plustost que de coustume, / Je dis incontinent qu’il me fait mal au rheume. / L’oraison me travaille et ne puis m’arrester / Aux heures que je dis sans point m’y delecter” (45-50, 361). Later on: “Toute distraction, **paresse, oysiveté**, / Me font à la vertu trouver difficulté” (81-82, 363); she describes her body as “paresseux et debile,” which conveniently rhymes with “sexe fragile” in the following plea: “O vainqueur eternal, je prens de toy ma force, / Je ne suis, ô mon Dieu, rien qu’une fresle escorce, / Une paille, un festu, je ne suis rien du tout, / Je n’ay qu’un pauvre esprit qui est encor debout / Dans un corps terrassé, **paresseux** et debile, / Ayes compassion de mon sexe fragile, / Sur les plus souffreteux tu peux mieux faire veoir / Les liberalitez de ton large pouvoir” (99-106, 364-365). In *Sommaire de sept sermons*, laziness is mentioned in the *only* section of this long poem in which we find a first-person singular pronoun (“me,” ln. 163); “nous” is otherwise used throughout. This anomaly makes us wonder if Coignard felt laziness to be her own greatest enemy (or that of spiritual poetry), assuming this “me” is not inherited from “Monsieur Eimond.”

⁴⁹⁵ The emotional hinge of the *a fortiori* argument is less beauty than the felicity of which beauty is a vector and a symbol. The premise is: it is out of His love for us that God has made both worlds beautiful.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. Granada: “ce juste juge, et pere liberal, ne sera content de seulement glorifier les ames, s’il n’estend encor sa magnificence pour l’honneur d’icelles à glorifier les corps, et donner lieu aux bestes en son palais royal. [...] Aussi ce bon seigneur veut, que celui qui a aidé à porter les charges, entre aussi au departement et heritage de la gloire: et que tout ainsi que l’ame, pour s’estre conformee à la volonté de Dieu en ce monde, vient à participer depuis à la gloire de Dieu, que le corps aussi (contre son naturel) soy conformant à la volonté de l’ame, soit participant de la gloire d’icelle. Et ainsi les justes seront glorieux en corps et

Encor le Dieu eternel,
 Pour nostre gloire plus grande,
 Mettra nostre chair au ciel,
 Parmy sa celeste bande.
 (137-140, 345)

Indeed,

[...] ce corps assubjecty
 Aux terriennes miseres,
 Sera richement party
 De quatre excellents doueres.

Tous les sens exterieurs,
 Qui chasserent loin les vices,
 Seront comblez de douceurs
 En leurs eternels delices.
 (149-156, 346-347)

This transfiguration of the senses will apply to “les yeux” (Ins. 157-160), “les oreilles” (161-164), and “le goust” (165-168). There is an interesting anomaly here. The “doueres” (gifts from God to the “corps glorieux”) that Coignard is alluding to are four general qualities that, according to theologians, will distinguish our transfigured bodies from their earthly avatars: “subtilité, legereté, impassibilité, et clarté” (Granada, “Pour le samedy au soir,” 153 v^o-154 r^o). All four will apply to each of the senses, enabling each to receive “sa gloire particuliere, et son propre object, auquel il puisse prendre son aise et son plaisir” (*ibid.*, 153 v^o). Yet, when he describes “la gloire des sens” (“Quatriesme joye de l’ame,” 161 v^o), Granada names “les yeux,” “les oreilles,” “l’odorat,” “le goust” (161 v^o-162 r^o⁴⁹⁷), but omits the sense of touch, considered the most sensual of all (and also the principal vector of physical pain): it is not clear whether (and what) glorious bodies may

ame: et (comme dit le Prophete) possederont doubles biens en leur terre [*cf.* Esaie 61:7], à sçavoir à ta gloire des corps et des ames” (“De la quatriesme joye de l’ame, qu’elle recevra avec celle du corps. Tiltre quatriesme,” 161 v^o). See also 1 Cor. 15:35-58 about the resurrection of the body.

⁴⁹⁷ The passage is quoted in full by Winn (p. 347, n. 12).

be able to touch in Heaven. Coignard, however, omits the sense of *smell* as well⁴⁹⁸. Deliberate or not, this oversight suggests that she is being more guarded and “conservative” than her model; did Ronsard’s own heavy emphasis, in the “Chanson” that our poet has in mind, on the beloved’s fragrance (along with the illusion of touching her) trigger this reticence?

Be this as it may, the fact that the heavenly experience will speak to the senses is what allows us to compare it with our present sensations; *i.e.*, to imagine it *from* our sensations, without forgetting that their celestial counterparts will exceed them infinitely. The poet’s imagination must respect certain limits; and those are significantly stricter for Coignard than they were for Granada. The latter recommends to use imagination abundantly – it is even a spiritual imperative⁴⁹⁹ –, but never to the point of believing that an imagined thing is the real one⁵⁰⁰. One must proceed with moderation, under the guidance of text and faith. Imagining enlivens contemplation, intensifies feelings, and encourages one’s soul to labor; but too much of it could result in the soul becoming, *à la Ronsard*, a willing victim of its own deceit:

⁴⁹⁸ The final mention of “fleurs” and “pommes” might somewhat compensate for this, in that it implicitly suggests the satisfaction of both “odorat” and “goust.”

⁴⁹⁹ Hence the change in the status of poetic images diagnosed by Michèle Clément: “nous ne sommes plus dans le même contexte après 1580: la théorie néo-platonicienne, sans être vraiment obsolète, se double de théories religieuses de l’image. C’est-à-dire que l’image a toujours rapport au divin mais cette fois, elle est le support de la méditation comme dans les Exercices ignatiens par exemple. Elle n’est plus ce qui éloigne du réel matériel pour renvoyer à des idées; au contraire elle s’ancre dans le réel, dans une vision sensible pour mieux permettre l’appréhension du divin” (*Une poétique de crise*, p. 63).

⁵⁰⁰ Clément again, on the effect of this imperative on poetry: “L’image alors n’est plus réductible à un ornement du discours, elle n’est pas non plus l’objet de la rivalité entre poésie et peinture comme la définissait encore Jacques Peletier. L’image en poésie implique une visualisation grâce à l’imagination mais elle n’a pas pour but, chez les baroques, de fixer le lecteur au stade de la représentation imaginée; elle ouvre sur un autre voir où l’image paradoxalement s’éclipse” (*Une poétique de crise*, pp. 64-65). The extent to which Coignard seems to distrust this process (at least as far as representations of “vie éternelle” are concerned) suggests that she is not a fully realized “baroque” poet of this sort, even though her rejection of “Pagan” imagery and poetic references flaunted for their own sake (see above, p. 123, n. 232) clearly pertains to the baroque (as opposed to Renaissance) sensibility that Clément describes.

La meditation faut que suyve soudain la lecture: surquoy est à noter, que **ceste meditation se fait quelquefois des choses qui se peuvent figurer en l'imagination**, ainsi que sont tous les passages de la vie et passion de nostre sauveur Jesuchrist: y a d'autres choses qui appartiennent plus à l'esprit, qu'à l'imagination, comme lors que pensons és benefices de Dieu, ou en sa bonté et misericorde, ou en quelque autre de ses perfections: **et telle maniere de meditation s'appelle intellectuelle, et l'autre imaginaire**: de l'une et de l'autre nous usons en ces exercices, **suivant que la matiere des choses le requiert**. A ceste cause, lors que le mistere, auquel avons à penser est de la vie, et passion de Jesuchrist, ou **d'autres choses qui se peuvent figurer avec l'imagination, ainsi que** le dernier jugement, **le paradis**, ou l'enfer: nous devons aussi nous figurer **chacune de ces choses en l'imagination**, de la mesme sorte qu'elle est, ou, comme elle peut estre, et qu'elle passera: et supposer qu'en ce mesme lieu où nous sommes, et en nostre presence se sont toutes les choses imaginees: **afin qu'avec telle representation nous ayons plus vive la consideration, et plus fort le sentiment d'icelle**. Il y en a d'aucuns qui imaginent en leur cœur s'y passer et effectuer quelque cas de ce qu'ils imaginent: car puis qu'en leur imaginative peuvent bien les desirs des citez, et des royaumes, il n'est pas difficile que la representation de ces misteres n'y puisse aussi bien avoir son lieu, et y pouvoir tenir place. **Et ceci aide beaucoup encor pour attirer l'ame recueillie en soy, et ententive à labourer**, tout ainsi que l'abeille en sa ruche, faisant son pain de miel. De ces deux manieres de meditation pouvons nous user en ceste sorte: d'autant que aller avec la pensee en Hierusalem, pour y mediter les lieux propres où ces choses se passerent, c'est fascher le cerveau, et affoiblir l'entendement. Et pour ceste mesme occasion **l'homme ne doit aussi occuper trop son imagination és choses qu'il pense: car oultre qu'il se rompt la teste en ce faisant, il pourroit se tromper et choir en quelque danger par la vehemence de ceste apprehension, luy semblant advis de voir reellement ce que par ceste force il imagine**.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, chapitre 7, "De la meditation," 180 v°-181 r°)

Efforts of this sort must progress toward their objective without losing sight of the infinite distance that separates them from it, which only God can bridge:

Car **si tu sçais considerer** chacune de [c]es choses [= the splendors of the celestial Jerusalem], peut estre que ton esprit **s'eslevera sur soy**, et verras qu'on ne t'a pas declairé **la moindre partie** de la gloire qui est en icelle. Mais **pour cognoistre cecy tu as besoing d'une lumiere speciale de Dieu**.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, chapitre 2, "Traité sixiesme," 155 r°)

Coignard remembers this too. It is far more bluntly that she states:

Il n'est possible aux mortels
D'exprimer **la moindre chose**,^[501]

⁵⁰¹ Even to understand the smallest of these things, one must rely on God's grace: "Donne à tes chers enfans conseil et sapience, / [...] / Entendement et foy pour tes dons estimer" (*Poesie spirituelle*, lns. 33 and 35, Coignard 306). See also Marquets' "Sonet 37," entitled: "Que la pluspart preferent les biens transitoires aux perdurables": "Il n'est esprit, tant soit il grand, qui puisse / **Imaginer la moindre part des biens** / Que Dieu promet aux fidelles Chrestiens, / Observateurs de Vertu et Justice: / Et toutesfois (ô grand malheur et vice!) / Les hommes vains n'ont plus soucy de riens, / Que d'amasser à force biens terriens, / Faisants leur Dieu de fraude et avarice. / He pauvre gens! où avez vous les yeux, / De preferer un bien si peu durable, / A

Qui est aux lieux eternels
 Où toute joye repose.
 (*De la gloire*, 53-56, 340-341)

Yet “exprimer” she will, and over many stanzas even; but in a concise, controlled manner that we will discuss below. It goes without saying that the effort of imagination in *De la gloire* refuses to follow Ronsard’s model; but to an extent, it resists Granada’s too.

After imagining the celestial residence and celebrating its beauty on this restrained basis, Coignard will also express her desire to join it: there, she would enjoy the unmediated (*i.e.*, clear, direct, non-imagined) vision of her beloved. In Ronsard’s “Chanson,” the ultimate goal is a summum of imagination, a hyperbolic fantasy:

Je voudrois pour la tenir
 Devenir
 Dieu de ces forests desertes,
 La baisant autant de fois
 Qu’en un bois
 Il y a de feuilles vertes.
 (“Chanson,” 109-114, 300)

A devout poet like Coignard may find such flights of erotic fancy shocking, but she is not squeamish when articulating her own desire in opposition to them:

Car je veux languir d’amour,
Non de ceste amour facheuse,
 Qui nous prive du sejour
 De ta **presence** amoureuse.
 (*De la gloire*, 213-216, 350)

She has to remain aware, however, that to want such a thing means having to deserve and “climb” toward it, which in turn does not depend on one’s volition alone:

Je ne veux plus habiter
 En ceste machine basse,
 Je desire haut monter
Par l’eschelle de ta grace.
 (213-220, 350-351)

ce thresor tant rare et precieux, / Que Dieu vous offre en gloire perdurable? / Et doit on pas celuy malheureux dire, / Qui pour sa part choisit et prend le pire ?” (*Divines poësies*, Marquets 77).

Since it is clear that Coignard has read Ronsard's "Chanson" and writes her own poem (in part) to refute it, could we conclude that "amour facheuse" refers directly to the belligerent, oppressive "Amour" described there?

Et Amour armé de traiz,
Et d'atraiz,
Dans nos cueurs nous fait la guerre.

Il respand de toutes pars
Feux et dards,
Et dompte soubs sa puissance
Hommes, Bestes et Oyseaux,
Et les eaux
Lui rendent obeissance.
(“Chanson,” 10-18, 297)

Ronsard's desire makes incessant requests. Here are some of them:

Hà maitresse mon soucy
Vien icy
Vien contempler la verdure:
Les fleurs, de mon amitié
Ont pitié,
Et seule tu n'en as cure.

Au moins **leve un peu tes yeux**
Gracieux,
Et **voy ces deux collombelles**,
Qui font naturellement
Doucement
L'amour du bec et des aisles.

[...]

Toutefois **ne perdons pas**
Nos esbats
Pour ces loix tant rigoreuses,
Mais si tu m'en crois, **vivons**,
Et suivons
Les collombes amoureuses.

Pour effacer mon esmoy
Baise moy,
Rebaise moy ma Déesse,
Ne laissons passer en vain
Si soudain

Les ans de nostre jeunesse.
 ("Chanson," 115-144, 300-301)

Coignard's own request separates itself from other kinds, which must be rejected:

Ne me donne rien de bon
 En ceste mortelle course,
 Mais **reserve moy** ce don
 Dans ton eternelle bourse.

Ne mignarde point ce corps
 Qui est plain d'ingratitude,
 Mais **garde** luy les tresors
 De gloire et beatitude.
 (*De la gloire*, 185-192, 349)

This again echoes, in simpler language, a similar wish from Granada:

Ne me donne (ô Dieu) soulas, repos, ny richesses en ce monde, ains **me garde tout cela** pour
 la vie à venir.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, ch. 2, "Traité sixiesme," "De la cinquiesme joye, qui est la
 duree de l'eternité. Tiltre cinquiesme," 162 v°)

The very fact that there will be a body in Heaven must incite us to *postpone* physical enjoyment (the verb "mignarder" evokes a Ronsardian universe, and can be read as a concentrate of poetic sensuality). Yet it is on the basis of this distinction between present and future pleasures that the poet allows herself to appropriate sensual language from the Song of Songs (and maybe, as we have seen, from Ronsard as well):

Charme moy de tes douceurs,
 Separe mon cœur des hommes,
 Environne moy de fleurs,
 Nourris mon ame de pommes.
 (*De la gloire*, 205-212, 350)

At this point there should be no risk that such "douces faveurs" (as Sonnet LXXI has it) be mistaken for earthly ones. Or is there? Coignard still feels compelled to reiterate, among her wishes of fulfillment, that of separating her heart from human desires in the next stanza (lns. 213-216).

We should not leave Ronsard without quoting another famous poem of his, this time from the original *Amours* (1552-1553):

Ciel, air, et **vents**, **plains** et **montz** decouvers,
 Tertres fourchuz, et **forestz verdoyantes**,
 Rivages tortz, et **sources ondoyantes**,
 Taillis razez, et vous bocages verds,
 Antres moussus à demyfront ouvers,
Prez, boutons, **fleurs**, et herbes rousoyantes,
Coustaux vineux, et plages blondoyantes,
 Gastine, Loyr, et vous mes tristes vers:
 Puis qu'au partir, rongé de soing et d'ire,
 A ce bel œil, l'Adieu je n'ay sceu dire,
 Qui pres et loing me detient en esmoy:
 Je vous soupply, **Ciel**, air, **ventz**, **montz et plaines**,
 Tailliz, **forestz**, rivages et **fontaines**,
 Antres, **prez**, **fleurs**, dictes le luy pour moy.
 (Sonnet LXVII, *Les Amours*, ed. Weber 43)

We have highlighted the words – admittedly more than common in Renaissance descriptions of Nature, and Ronsard's in particular – that Coignard's poem also uses. Whether or not this sonnet is yet another source (which may be impossible to prove), it is clear that our poet's evocation of a nature serves a very different purpose. In this case Ronsard's lover does not imagine his beloved in or *as* Nature, but orders Nature to say "adieu" to his beloved: the features mentioned are "real" in this sense, even though the task required of them is fantastic. By contrast, Coignard does not address the aspects of Nature that she names: instead, she simply contemplates them – or, rather, *explains* what she does when she contemplates them (in this sense the description is indirect, and rationalized or intellectualized rather than sensorial): namely, she addresses her own soul, urging it to seize this opportunity to imagine higher, even more beautiful things.

More generally, Coignard departs from the themes and functions of pastoral (“bucolic,” “rustic”)⁵⁰² poetry, here summarized by Claude-Gilbert Dubois:

Les idylles et les églogues [...] célèbrent l'accord des hommes, détachés des contraintes sociales, à une nature qui se fait confidente ou complice de leurs plaintes et de leurs aveux. C'est là une manière pour l'aristocratie de cour de trouver un subterfuge à ses obligations de paraître et d'exprimer la nostalgie d'un âge d'or, caractérisé par une naïveté raffinée et une rusticité de bon ton. [...] Sannazar a placé en Arcadie [...], région idéalisée par son harmonie et sa rupture avec le reste du monde, le déroulement de la narration. Un jeune héros arrive en ce lieu pour chercher une consolation à ses amours contrariés; il participe aux travaux des champs, exhale ses plaintes aux rochers et aux bois solitaires. L'œuvre associe le lyrisme descriptif à l'élégie amoureuse. [...] En France, l'inspiration pastorale, si elle fait l'objet de recueils spécifiques, se trouve également répandue dans l'ensemble de la production poétique: on peut distinguer un usage arcadien, qui consiste à idéaliser et à édulcorer entre bergers fictifs des relations sociales qui tournent à la féerie; un usage élégiaque, qui consiste à exhiler ses plaintes au milieu d'un paysage sauvage [...]; enfin un usage naturaliste qui consiste à évoquer les activités paysannes et les travaux des champs, essentiellement comme symbole de naïveté et d'innocence primitive.

(Dubois, Claude-Gilbert. *La poésie du XVI^e siècle en toutes lettres*. Paris: Bordas, 1989, pp. 63-64)

Coignard expresses no nostalgia for a golden age, nor does she use the countryside as a consoling place or echo chamber for her own emotions. While she does idealize Nature's harmony (which she opposes to the vanity of cities) and considers it a proper “launching” site for spiritual contemplation, that does not transform Nature into a symbol of lost innocence, to be recovered by taking refuge in its preserved beauty. In short, Nature does not serve to stage a dramatic “rupture with the rest of the world,” but encourages the soul to consider leaving this world altogether for a higher dwelling.

Within and beyond Nature: two visions

Granada invites his readers to meditate on natural images and phenomena, using them as springboards for contemplating higher things, through various imaginative or

⁵⁰² See also Winn's note on this subject (p. 255, n. 2).

logical paths. The first and least we can do is remember, with the Psalmist (Ps. 7), the purpose of Creation:

Toutes les creatures qui sont au monde [...] servent à ceste fin: de sorte que le ciel est tien, tiens sont la terre, le soleil, la lune, les estoiles, la mer, les poissons, les arbres, les oiseaux, les bestes, et en somme toutes choses, puis que toutes sont dediees à ton service.
(*Le vray chemin*, I, "Traité septiesme," "Tiltre second," 168 v^o)⁵⁰³

Beyond this basic truth, the great beauty of Nature can be used as a point of reference to envision God's far greater goodness (amplifying a statement from Rom. 3:5):

Notre malice (dict saint Paul) fait de tant plus reluire la bonté de Dieu: car à dire verité, ny au ciel, ny en la terre, ny és oiseaux, ny és poissons, ny en la varieté des fleurs resplendit tant la beauté et noblesse des entrailles, et cœur de Dieu, comme lors qu'il souffre vivre les pecheurs, et plus quand il leur pardonne leurs offences.
(II, chapitre 3, "Tiltre 2," 250 r^o)

And the beauty of Nature can also be used to describe a landscape that is beyond Nature:

Là est le lieu ample, beau, resplendissant, et seur: la compagnie bonne et agreable, le temps sans changement, et tousjours en un estat: non divisé au soir et matin, ains continué en une lumiere eternelle. Là aura un printemps sans cesse, lequel avec la frescheur, et air du saint Esprit florira perpetuellement.
(I, "Pour le samedi au soir," 154 r^o-v^o)

For Coignard too, these are Nature's main uses⁵⁰⁴. The sonnets have taught us what Nature can and cannot do according to our poet. Sonnet XXII explains that "une verte forest" (ln. 4) and "une riant valée" (4) provide a "gracieux plaisir" (3), yet remain far from the higher pleasure to be sought in the Cross alone (7). Sonnet XL, that the beauties of Nature not only cannot relieve the poet's sorrow about her sin, but make it

⁵⁰³ The "toy" being addressed here is the human, not God (who gave these elements of Nature to humankind, Creation's steward). Coignard echoes this idea in Sonnet XCI (lns. 12-13) and in *Noel pour la nativité de Jesus Christ*, where Jesus is described as the one "Qui a fait et formé ce monde spacieux / Pour la race mortelle" (lns. 20-21, p. 321).

⁵⁰⁴ For Marquets' own use of these *topoi*, see the "chanson spirituelle" "Pour confesser..." (p. 41) as well as "Sonet 4" (Nature is beautiful, "ce grand bien" infinitely more so) in her 1569 collection (*Divines poësies*); and *Sonets spirituels* CCCLXIX (natural beauty as image of a spiritual concept), CCCLXXXV (the Promise Land), CCCCIII (field, tree, and vine relieve hunger and thirst and point to the pleasures of Christ and communion), CCCCXXVII (Nature in Heaven), and CCCCLVII (Heaven's garden entails beauty, flowers, fruit, a perpetual spring). Additionally, see Petrarch's sonnets 10, 154, 162, 192, 208. Of these, the first and last illustrate a biblical attitude turned secular.

more intense because they are part of the “ouvrage admirable / De ce grand Dieu” (11-12). On the other hand, Nature could lead her to admire God’s works *if* she could leave her parental duties behind and retreat to solitude (S. XI). Nature also represents aspects of Heaven and God to us, and incites us to praise Him (S. XLV). In Sonnet LVII, the poet is amazed by God’s care, generosity, and wisdom as displayed by Nature; but seeing baby Jesus, “le saint excès de la redemption” (10) made human flesh, actually ravishes her heart in even higher admiration (9). The doctrine of *theologia naturalis* is summarized in Sonnet LXVIII: the universe incessantly works to teach and serve us, but finds us lazy, negligent, ungrateful or apathetic. In Sonnet XC, the poet uses aspects of Nature to illustrate both her inconstancy and the praise that she vows to never stop offering to God. The various aspects of Nature mentioned in Sonnet XCI serve as “râres tableaux” (7) that can give us “une douce esperance” (8), representing the care and generosity that God extends even to those who break His laws. With these temporary things, He meets our needs here on earth; but He is keeping “des places immuables” (14) for us in Heaven.

Interestingly, Sonnet XCII does not connect the natural world with the spiritual domain, but opposes a simple lifestyle to the corruption of human cities⁵⁰⁵. In Sonnet XCIII, by contrast, the poet invites the entire cosmos (“Large et vaste univers qui rondement nous ceint,” (6)) – the “clair soleil” but also every element under it (“terre, peds, bois et fleurs, / Rosées, eaux et vents, froidures et chaleurs,” (9-10)), in other

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Granada: “De la huitiesme chose servant à la devotion, qui est la solitude. Tiltre huitiesme.” Here one will find advice such as “Encor pour brider les sens, et le cœur, aide beaucoup la solitude exterieure” (233 v°), “Fuy les lieux publics” (234 r°), and, borrowing from Saint Bernard, “Seul seras-tu, pourveu que sois sans penser vains et communs: si tu ne desires les biens presents, si mesprises les choses desquelles le mond s’esmerveille, et si tu desdaignes tes desirs: si t’esloigne de tout debat et querelle, si ne te soucie des pertes temporelles” (234 v°). If this treatise is indeed the source of inspiration for Coignard’s Sonnet XCII (along with S. XCI and XCIII), readers may appreciate the extent to which the poet diverges from Granada’s text and stylizes her poem’s content.

words the very “oeuvres” that show the “divin pouvoir” at work in the first place – to join humanity (living and saved alike) in blessing, exalting, adoring, praising, and admiring “l’Eternel” (12). Sonnet XCVI, likewise, beautifully shows how Nature brings the poet to consider “De ce Dieu eternel les graces souveraines” (8). Sonnet CXXV develops a double simile (a meadow full of flowers, the evening light) to describe God’s gifts, “les rayons de ses graces parfaites” (5-6) upon the blessed. In Sonnet CXXVI, the poet declares to her God her pleasure at seeing “sur l’herbe paistre / La frisée brebis portant son aignelet” (5-6). In the same sonnet, she evokes her senses and their enjoyment of various aspects of Nature. Yet, once again, these sensations drive her to sing out, in the last line of the poem: “Loué soit l’Eternel qui tous ces biens nous donne” (14). Like Sonnet XCI, the *Hymne sur la louange de la Charité* describes rain and the sun as effects of eternal love on us here on earth (4-5, 587). The same is true again of the cosmos as a whole: air, sky, sea, earth, sun, animals, moon, stars, seasons (123-142, 594-595).

De la gloire is both similar and different. We saw that it reprises Granada’s *a fortiori* argument about the “choses tant admirables” created by God for our use in this passing life, infinitely dwarfed by what He has in store for us in Heaven. Yet the aspects of Nature mentioned in the Saturday meditation (see also our third quote above) are, for the most part, *not* ones that Coignard appropriates in her poem; she “picks and chooses” to personalize her meditation⁵⁰⁶, seeking, above all, to keep it as brisk and concise as she can. It begins with a rich description of Nature; but then, after pivoting from it to contemplate something infinitely greater, largely *omits* natural references from the

⁵⁰⁶ Would Granada mind? He does not prohibit selection. He acknowledges that his readers may only choose “deux ou trois” objects to meditate upon at a given time (I, 19 v°). His reason for providing a plethora of them is the need to cater to a larger public: not every soul will be roused by the same things.

ensuing description: the two that stand out are a mention of “fontaines divines” (compared, after Ps. 42:2, to the “eaux chrystalines” sought by a weary doe, lns. 197-200, 350); and of course the reference to “fleurs” and “pommes” borrowed (via *Le vray chemin*) from the Song of Songs. Before evaluating what Coignard “leaves out” from her harvesting of Granada’s text, let us assess the internal dynamic of her own poem: is it really the case that her vision of Heaven has to leave Nature behind, and (conversely) that her initial description of Nature is prevented from anticipating that of Heaven?

This disjunction is real; but it is not absolute, in that both of the worlds created by God *are* beautiful, if unevenly so: the mind cannot pivot from one to the other without registering this fact, which allows one to observe a few “correspondences” between the two levels. The opening words, “Quant je voy,” establish an emphasis on sight that will be maintained throughout as the privileged mode of “taking in” all this beauty, even though heavenly glory will, at the same time, call for a *different* mode of vision (more on this in a moment). Thus the inaugural image of “Un amiable printemps” (ln. 3) foreshadows Heaven’s eternal youth (ln. 85)⁵⁰⁷, “Une fontaine ondoyante” (4) the “fontaines divines” (200), and “Un pré bigarré de fleurs” (5) the final “Environne moy de fleurs” (211). Typically, of course, the second indication supersedes or “converts” the first. The “montaigne pierreuse” of ln. 6 is eclipsed by the urge to “haut monter” on a spiritual “eschelle” (219-220)⁵⁰⁸; and to the very Ronsardian⁵⁰⁹ “murmurantz ruisseaux” –

⁵⁰⁷ Coignard also writes of the eternal springtime in *Hymne sur la louange de la Charité* (ln. 104, p. 593).

⁵⁰⁸ In addition to the image of Jacob’s ladder (Gen. 28), one may think of Sonnet CXXIX, where it is said that Ronsard’s soul has “völlé plus haut que le mont de Parnasse” (ln. 11, 295).

⁵⁰⁹ See *Hymne de la Mort*, lns. 24-26: “Je m’en vois decouvrir **quelque source sacrée / D’un ruisseau non touché, qui murmurant s’enfuit** / Dedans un beau vergier, loing de gens et de bruit” (*Les Hymnes* (1555), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. P. Laumonier, vol. VIII, Paris: STFM, 1973, p. 163). Also, e.g., Sonnet XXVII in *Continuation des Amours* (1555 again): “E, que me sert, Paschal, ceste belle verdure / Qui rit parmi les prés, et d’ouir les oiseaux, / D’ouir par le pendant des colines les eaus, / Et des vents du printemps le

which, on this earth (*pace* Ronsard) “s’esloignent de leur source” (18-19) and continue mixing their waters to become ever larger – must succeed the aforementioned “fontaines divines,” near which the devout poet dreams of staying put,

Desirant boire à plaisir
De la source claire et vive,
Arrestant tout mon desir
Au bort de sa belle rive.
(*De la gloire*, 201-204, 350)

Likewise, over it all, the natural “ciel” (7) will be replaced by the Heavenly one, which “se resjouira / En sa belle architecture” (87-88), and where the poet hopes to be transported after her death (224).

Some natural images, on the other hand, are already endowed with spiritual symbolism, in that they involve human work as well. Such is the case of the “jaunissante moisson” (9), which – adds Coignard in an explicit signal – “guerdonne nostre peyne” (see, among countless other examples, the parable of the sower⁵¹⁰). Such is also the case of the “fructueuse vigne” (14; see Jesus’ “I am the true vine” in John 15:1-8), whose “ceps” may announce the Cross (103) on which the Redeemer was crucified so that spiritual fruit may grow and we may be saved⁵¹¹. Yet even in the immediate, material sense, as such images also indicate, it is a fact (to be gratefully acknowledged) that our present world is full of the “commoditez” (25) provided by God, who *already* caters to our “necessitez” (27). In this sense, the fulfillment experienced in Heaven (“palais

gracius murmure” (lns. 1-4, *Les Amours*, ed. Weber, p. 188). This imagery was inherited to be sure from Horace and pastoral poetry, but appropriated to great effect by the Vendômois.

⁵¹⁰ Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15. See also Genesis 26:12, where Isaac’s sowing yields “cent pour un au temps de la moisson” (Granada, *Le vray chemin*, IV, “Troisiesme traicté contenant les fruits et efficace de l’aumosne,” 412 r°).

⁵¹¹ The Cross is compared to a winepress (not a vine) in *Discours sur la Passion de nostre Sauveur Jesus Christ* (ln. 234, p. 477) and *La Mort et Passion de nostre Seigneur sur le Mont de Calvaire* (ln. 71, p. 524); cf. Revelation 14:19-20 and 19:15, which refers to the “winepress” of God’s wrath.

d'abondance"⁵¹², 124), where the senses are "comblez de douceurs" (155), where taste "sera contenté, / Non pour y manger et boire, / Mais par la satieté, / Le comblant de toute gloire," 165-168) will *accomplish*, rather than contradict, the contentment we may experience on earth *if* we thank God in turn and do not allow our appetites to run away from us. It is in this limited but very real sense that we may understand (and say) something of the "biens incompréhensibles" mentioned in line 208.

Hopefully, correspondences such as these (between the material and the spiritual) are enough to start us on the right path: such is the poet's hope for herself and her readers. It is no less true, however – and the poet would be remiss to conceal it – that the relation of the two worlds is also one of pure antithesis: on this earth we are "pauvres creatures" (28) and "hommes misérables" (34), while our celestial counterparts are the "troupes esleues" (48) and God's "ceste bande" (140). This contrast hinges, above all, on the question of time (and death): responding to "ce monde passager," which drifts away like a light wind, will be the "Seure joy permanente" (44) experienced in Heaven, where "la perdurable vie" (66) will consist of "Un jour eternal" (89), and where

La volonté jouyra
Du seul bien où elle aspire,
Jamais ne s'esloignera
De l'amour qu'elle desire.
(117-120, 344)

As the poet deploys it, however, this very opposition becomes painful to behold:

Helas! quel contentement

⁵¹² Abundance is not excess; or, rather, there is good and bad excess (for the latter, see the "trop saoullez / [...] comblez de grandeurs, pasetemps et delices," *Hymne sur la louange de la charité*, lns. 75-77, p. 592). Sonnet CIX is built on the contrast of limitless divine love versus "desirs des richesses pollues." Granada warns against literal drunkenness (270 r^o-v^o), but one, of course, rightly hopes to be "enyvré" by the "sainct et vray Nectar" of Christ's blood (S. LIV), or by the wine of eternal life (*Complainte de la Vierge Marie*, ln. 84). Again, we may appreciate the following epithet Coignard uses in reference to the baby Jesus: "le saint excès de la redemption" (S. LVII, ln. 10, p. 207).

Ont ces ames fortunées,
 Vivant éternellement
 Par les siècles des années.
 (177-180, 349)

Let us now focus on what Coignard omits even as she reprises arguments and images from Granada. The latter wants us to imagine “la grandeur et excellence” of Heaven by focusing, in this world, on “l’infinie multitude des estoiles, et tant d’espaces vuides,” which should astonish us far more than it does (152 v°). Our poet pointedly refuses to do this; she looks at a very earthly place instead. Her gaze does go up and down, in and out, but on a familiar scale: up from the fields, forest, fountain, and prairie (Ins. 1-5) to the mountain and the sky (6-7); down and onward to the harvests on the plain, the vineyards (13-14), the streams (17-18). “Poissons escaillez” (21) and “oiseaux esmaillez” (23), abstracted from their surroundings, are about as far as this cosmic representation is willing to go: the panorama does widen substantially, but not to the point of forgetting the intimate “Quant je voy” that organizes it, transposed, as we have seen, from Ronsard’s erotic landscape: a fundamentally friendly “lieu,” albeit one that contains a variety⁵¹³ of natural phenomena.

The movement of this human eye is pleasant, but (overall) does not convey a sense of repose⁵¹⁴: to us it evokes, as it were, a soft roller-coaster ride. This incessantly moving gaze is a reflection of – yet no match for – the movement of Nature itself in time, which, for its part, we *cannot* see, as we live

⁵¹³ Certain pleasures fade with repetition, so poetry’s variety reminds us not to settle for them. This is different from the certain and everlasting pleasure one will enjoy with God.

⁵¹⁴ This is very different from what happens in Sonnet XLV, with its striking evocation of the night (“Le silence est par tout, la lune est belle et claire, / Le ciel calme et serain, la mer retient ses flots,” 5-6, 192). There, the meditation focuses on a natural phenomenon and a human experience of it that share, almost directly, the quality (“majesté et grace singulière,” 8) of heavenly silence (see above, pp. 316, n. 460). *De la gloire* avoids this “fusion” effect, and refrains altogether from contemplating the sun, the moon or the stars, as Granada suggests doing when he shows them admiring and praising God’s beauty (153 v°).

En ce monde passager
 Qui se coule d'un pas vitte,
 Ainsi que le vent leger,
Sans que l'on voye sa fuite.
 (37-40, 339-340)

What we see of Nature is set against the unseen backdrop of a disappearing act. In eternal life, by contrast, the gaze will move far less and focus on fewer objects. The first mention of something “seen” in Heaven goes as follows:

[...] en toute sainte part
 Où le bien-heureux advise,
 Dieu oppose à son regard
 La felicité promise.

Le voyant en sa beauté,
 En sa gloire nompareille,
 En sa sainte royauté,
 Pleine de douce merveille[,]^[515]

C'est la consommation
 De la perdurable vie:
 Car par ceste vision,
 Toute ame sera ravie.
 (57-64, 341)

No matter where the blessed look in Heaven, God places one thing in front of their eyes: “La felicité promise” (60), which consists of *seeing* God, in His glory and royalty, supreme power but also “douceur.” The choice of the verb “oppose” suggests that the gaze of the elect seeks to travel everywhere (“en toute sainte part”) but is literally blocked by the beatific vision. It will, in fact, expand and consider other objects in the “lieux eternels” (55), the “palais d’abondance” (124); but it will do so (it is supposed) without ever losing sight of the One that matters, without moving in the manner of the eye’s initial worldly wandering.

⁵¹⁵ The editions (including Winn’s) have a period here; in the original most quatrains close with one, irrespective of syntax (Winn often substitutes a semi-colon). The comma we propose is a conjecture.

This – along with the rest of poem – suggests that, while Coignard’s vision of Heaven and conception of the pleasures to be enjoyed therein entail activity (of a very alert sort; there is nothing passive or inert to seeing or singing), it does not entail movement, at least not as we commonly understand it. Movement (incited by God’s grace) is of course what it takes to get there (“mon coeur soit poussé,” ln. 199); but once there, the permanent fulfillment of one’s highest desires implies staying put, a kind of *arrêt*, as mentioned in line 203⁵¹⁶. The “repos eternal” of Sonnet XXXVIII (ln. 2), the “places immuables” of Sonnet XCI (ln. 14) should be understood in the most literal sense; but the “silence profond” evoked by Sonnet XLV, meditating on our experience of a serene night, is perhaps, all told, the best emblem of God’s “grandeur manifeste” as Coignard sees it, even though no night (“aucune nuit,” *De la gloire*, ln. 91) ever dims the light of Heaven. The poet’s prayer in her *Complainte de la Vierge Marie* (though closely inspired by Granada) is also revealing in this respect:

Qu’en ce plaisant rubys^[517] mon ame s’esjouisse,
Et s’endorme dedans en oubliant son vice,
 Et du monde trompeur le plaisir mensonger,
Sans jamais de ce lieu et place deloger,
 Chantant allegrement avecque le Prophete:
 C’est icy **mon logis** et ma seure retraicte,
Je prens pour mon repos ceste habitation,
 Puis que c’est le vray lieu de ma redemption.
 (85-92, 545-546)⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ Cf. our Introduction (pp. 48-49, summarizing Langer’s *Penser les formes du plaisir*) on the manner in which Aristotle refines his own understanding of pleasure, first as movement (of return to one’s natural state), then as activity, to finally emphasize the latter’s “completion,” which itself comes to be seen as an endlessly-satisfying “surplus.”

⁵¹⁷ That of the “precieux vin” of God’s love – which is also the water of the “ruisseau divin” (*Complainte de la Vierge Marie*, lns. 83-84, p. 545).

⁵¹⁸ Compare Granada: “Que mon ame **s’endorme** en ceste sacree poitrine, y oubliant tous les soucis du monde, qu’elle y mange, et y **repose**, y chante doucement avec le Prophete, disant. C’est icy **ma demeure** à jamais, j’habiteray icy à cause que j’ay choiy ceste habitation” (*Le vray chemin*, I, “Pour le samedi au matin,” “Tiltre 1,” 66 r°). Coignard’s version manages to put more emphasis on “repos.” The “Prophete” is the Psalmist: see Ps. 132 (131):14.

While the charm of “repos” thus imagined is inevitably enhanced by the troubled human perspective that envisions it (*i.e.* by contrast with “tribulation”: movement, suffering, death), the idea goes deeper: it exceeds compensation to characterize, in and of itself, the state of those enjoying God’s presence – eternally. That is why we find little actual movement among the variety and abundance of *De la gloire*’s Heaven.

In our Introduction, we quoted from Pascale Chiron’s analysis of skeptical attitudes towards Heaven as represented in works such as *Aucassin et Nicolette* and *Pantagruel*. Chiron argues that representations of heavenly “repos” evolve from the Middle Ages through the Baroque period. At the end of the former, thought tended to follow the scholastic tradition (inherited from Aristotle) concerning the notion of movement, seeing it as a sign of imperfection. Consequently, textual and pictorial representations of the life of the elect showed a stationary life. Chiron then describes the two possible meanings that could be ascribed to the resulting notion of heavenly repose. The first was physical, involving the end of movement in the literal sense. The second was moral, involving the end of one’s torments; an appeasement or contentment, and an end to the internal movements of the spirit. Since the movement of the soul was considered a sign of imperfection and unsatisfied desire, the immobile soul in Heaven was believed to be physically stationary and no longer a slave to instability, no longer suffering the imperfection that desire implies. Chiron observes this conceptual framework at play in the ways in which writers use verbs of state (*e.g.*, to be), or verbs that indicate a static position and stability (Chiron 593). The frequent use of temporal terms such as “immortelle,” “tousjours,” and “à jamais” to accompany the verb “estre” alludes, as much as human language can, to the end of the corrupting power of time (594).

According to Chiron, Rabelais and the anonymous author of *Aucassin et Nicolette* show us how this static notion of heavenly repose came to be misinterpreted (from a comical or satirical standpoint) as boring idleness (595). Rather than involving the absence of action, this “repos” was meant to be understood as the very action that consists of the beatific vision. That is, it is a unique and eternal act (as Aquinas describes it), and it is a vision that fills the elect to the point that all other desire is erased and all that remains is one, specific desire – for God (*ibid.*); which implies a change in the very nature of desire, so that it no longer involves lacking nor frustration (596). In this sense, the soul will be permanently desiring while also being entirely satisfied at the same time. This new, paradoxical type of desire, Chiron explains, is not entirely without movement: it involves one that is inherent in pleasure itself rather than one born of frustration and attempts to obtain it⁵¹⁹. The staple image representing this phenomenon is that of flowers and fruit growing on the same tree: writers and artists use it to signify a “waiting” that is always satisfied, and implies no idleness (597), but a movement-in-immobility that is, by definition, perfectly contained, always “just right,” never excessive.

Chiron sees two potential explanations to the shift in representations that seems to affect this notion of heavenly repose in the Renaissance. The first is pedagogical: the “immobile movement” is a complex concept that may have been insufficient to inspire desire for paradise, and was prone to being misinterpreted by the faithful, relying, to understand it, on their own sense of the connection of pleasure and movement. The second reason is philosophical: perhaps movement as such was no longer perceived as a

⁵¹⁹ Coignard alludes to this type of desire when she declares to her beloved “Car je veux languir d’amour, / Non de ceste amour facheuse, / Qui nous prive du sejour / De ta presence amoureuse” (*De la gloire*, 213-216, 350), with the verb “languir” suggesting a longing that is no longer frustrating.

sure sign of imperfection. One could appreciate a moderate and ordered form of it even in Heaven. Thus we begin to find representations of a light and harmonious celestial movement in literature or paintings: writers emphasize the assembling of the elect, or depict Heaven as consisting of two spaces (a garden below, and the Angels, Mary, and the Trinity reigning above) between which the elect are able to come and go (599-600).

In the end, however, this new tendency of associating movement with Heaven proved short-lived, even though it did not disappear entirely (601). By the Baroque period, says Chiron, the image of the dance of the elect carefully mixes the stability of theocentric vision with the notion of a cosmic round. God is at the center and the elect are moving, in moderation, around Him only, in a circle. They are still moving but also looking at Him. In this way, the notion of an “immobile movement” prevails again, with the elect finding repose *in* movement itself.

This tension between allowing and restraining movement in the representation of celestial bliss is quite perceptible to anyone comparing what Granada and Coignard write on the subject. The former’s Saturday evening meditation allows itself a fair deal of movement and energy in its portrayal of Heaven. Not only are the “cieux” and “astres” moving, but so are the elect, shown in the process of coming and going, meeting, kneeling, *etc.*, in scenes explicitly reminiscent of a royal court. For Coignard, on the other hand, most activity and movement is depicted as necessarily taking place on earth. In the *Noël pour la nativité de Jesus Christ*, for example, the newborn is described as calling sinners to run to the manger and adore Him (51-52, 323). Even more dramatic is the “running” evoked in the following exhortation:

Courons d’un coeur ardent à ce but proposé,
Que nostre Redempteur nous a si bien posé.

Ne nous arrestons point en ces terrestres lices,
(Hymne sur la louange de la Charité, 337-339, 604)

The movement in Heaven, however, is depicted differently, and far more moderate.

We perceive it when the earth, sky, men, and angels are described as tirelessly singing praises to Christ⁵²⁰. The Virgin Mary is described as “marchant sur l’astre de la nuit”⁵²¹, which does involve more activity than is conveyed in the verse on which this image is based: “une femme environnée du Soleil, sous les pieds de laquelle estoit la Lune”⁵²². In *De la gloire*, we are led to imagine movement as a kind of inherent flourishing or filling rather than a dynamic displacement of heavenly beings moving from one space to another⁵²³. What movement there is, hinted at most delicately, is that of love itself, expressed in angelic song (lns. 105-108) but above all felt within, as a permanent infusion of the good and removal of the bad:

Il nous remplira le coeur
 De tout plaisir et liesse,
 Esloignant de nous la peur,
 L’amertume et la tristesse.

[..]

Et la douce charité,
 Qui est imparfaicte au monde,
 Recevra l’extrémité
 De dilection profonde.
(73-76 and 129-132, 342 and 345)

All movement seems to have stopped, but this particular “filling” never does.

⁵²⁰ *La descente de nostre Seigneur aux limbes*, lns. 234-236, p. 584.

⁵²¹ In *Pour l’Assumption de Nostre Dame*, ln. 33, p. 309.

⁵²² *L’Apocalypse, ou Revelation de saint Jean l’Apostre* XII. 2, Benoist 176 v°. Winn also refers to a 14th-century psalm that conveys this imagery as well (Coignard 309, n. 9).

⁵²³ See e. g. “La jeunesse y fleurira” (85); and, later: “Environne moy de fleurs” (211). See also terms like “comblant” (51 and 168), “remplira” (73), “[p]lains” (108), “profonde” (136 and 158), “comblez” (155), “satiété” (167), “boire à plaisir” (201) and “[n]ourris” (212). A most striking indication of movement is one that suggests its own end, an ever-tightening immobilization: “Nous serons joints et serrez / D’un lien d’amour estroite” (lns. 169-170, p. 348).

Thus will the soul be “ravie,” through its vision of the One; and lest we lose sight of the nature of this vision, the poem reminds us, in a language that echoes Is. 64:4⁵²⁴ and 1 Cor. 2:9⁵²⁵, that

L’œil n’a jamais regardé,
Ny l’oreille peu entendre
Le bien qui nous est gardé,
Si nous desirons le prendre.
(93-96, 343)

Notice how the two biblical texts refer to unseen, unheard of, and unimaginable “choses” in the plural; whereas, just like she used the singular “la félicité” in line 60, Coignard uses it again to refer to “le bien” (though she mentions “Des biens incompréhensibles”⁵²⁶ later on, in line 208, asserting with faith that the “desréglées amours” of this perishable earth will not prevent them from flowing her way). A sharp reminder of the chasm that separates what we see from what we *will* see (and cannot pretend to “see” until then) emphasizes this abstraction, an ultimate entity (and concept) to which everything else can

⁵²⁴ “**Ilz n’ont point ouï dés le siecle, ne entendu des oreilles. L’œil n’a point veu, o Dieu sans toy, les choses que tu as préparé à ceux qui t’attendent.**” (Le Livre de Isaie le prophete, LXIII.4; Benoist, vol. 2, 160 v°). The gloss explains: “Saint Paul allegue ce lieu. I. Cor. 2. 9. en s’esmerveillant de la grandeur des benefices de Dieu envers les hommes, et ce par la predication de l’Evangile, qui est le plus grand et le plus excellent que les hommes puissent avoir. En cela il ensuit Esaie, q[ui] declaire les excellens benefices de Dieu faicts à son peuple par grande admiration” (*ibid.*).

⁵²⁵ “5 A fin que vostre foy ne soit point en sapience des hommes, mais en la puissance de Dieu. 6 Or nous annonçons sapience envers les parfaicts: sapience, di-je, non point de ce monde, ne des princes de ce monde, qui viennent à neant: 7 Mais nous annonçons la sapience de Dieu, qui est en mystere, qui est cachee: laquelle Dieu avoit ja devant tous temps determinee à nostre gloire. 8 Laquelle nul des princes de ce monde a cognue: car s’ils l’eussent cognue, jamais n’eussent crucifié le Seigneur de gloire. 9 Mais c’est comme il est escrit, **Les choses qu’œil n’a point veuës, ni oreille ouïes, et qui ne sont point montees en cœur d’homme, sont celles que Dieu a preparees à ceux qui l’aiment.** 10 Mais Dieu les nous a revelees par son Esprit: car l’Esprit fonde toutes choses, voire mesmes les choses profondes de Dieu” (Premiere epistre de saint Paul apostre aux Corinthiens II.5-10; Benoist, vol. 3, 89 v°). The gloss to “Les choses” in v. 9 explains: “Le don des graces de Dieu passe le sens, et l’intelligence des hommes” (*ibid.*).

⁵²⁶ Sonnet CXX mentions some of the goods enjoyed by those in Heaven: *e.g.*, “repos” (1), “victoire” (2), “gloire” (3), “chaires ordonnées” (9). However, the sonnet closes with the very clear reminder that they are possessors of God’s “biens” (14). In other words, any of the goods they enjoy are not their own, they are from (and, in a sense, still belong to) Him.

be assimilated. For there *are* other legitimate objects in Heaven, starting of course with the Mother of God⁵²⁷:

Quel contentement de veoir
La Vierge, nostre maistresse,
Qui par le divin vouloir,
Est des Anges la Princesse.

Ce n'est plus la station
Au pres de la croix sanglante,
C'est son exaltation
En la gloire triomphante.
(97-104, 343)

So the gaze of the Blessed will *not* be stuck in only one place; but, of course, it is to God alone that Mary owes this glorious position; only God illuminates her for all others to see.

From there, however, many more characters could be likewise mentioned or described. Thus, to illustrate what Heaven must be like, Granada speaks at length (and *a fortiori*, of course) of its inhabitants, who are so many that it is impossible to count them:

Et si chacun des Anges (fust ce le moindre d'entre eux) est plus beau que tout le monde visible: **que seroit ce de voir** un si grand nombre d'Anges si beaux, voir leurs perfections et offices, que chacun d'eux a en celle souveraine cité de paradis? Là courent les Anges, servent les Archanges, triomphent les Principautez, s'esjouyssent les Puissances, commandent les Dominations, resplendissent les Vertus, esclairent les Throsnes, luisent les Cherubins, bruslent les Seraphins, et tous ensemble chantent à Dieu louanges. Que si la compaignie et communication des bons est si amiable et douce, **quel plaisir sera ce** d'accointer là les bons, parler avec les Apostres, converser parmy les Prophetes, communiquer avec les Martyrs, et ensemble accoster tous les esleuz? Et si la gloire de jouyr de la compaignie des bons est si grand chose, **que sera ce** de jouyr de la presence de celui que les estoiles du matin louënt? de la beauté duquel le soleil et la lune s'esbahissent?^[528] devant lequel s'agenouillent les Anges, et de la presence duquel les hommes se glorifient?

(*Le vray chemin*, I, "Pour le samedi au soir," 153 r^o- v^o)

Granada wants "contemplation" to go over this entire hierarchized crowd while ascending toward the One. Coignard, by contrast, simply notes:

Les Anges luisants et beaux,

⁵²⁷ Coignard focuses only on Mary and her love for her Son, instead of taking this opportunity to reflect more generally on a mother's love for her children, as Granada does (157 v^o).

⁵²⁸ Cf. Job 38:7.

Chantent en voix argentines
Des cantiques tous nouveaux,^[529]
Plains de louanges divines.
(105-108, 343)

To which she adds later on, about our transfigured second sense (hearing):

Les oreilles ouyront
La melodie des Anges,
Qui sans cesse chanteront
Du Redempteur les louanges.
(161-164, 348)

One line is enough to say, about Heaven, that “Les justes y resplendissent” (90, 343). As for the Apostles, Prophets, or Martyrs, there is no mention of them⁵³⁰. With the exception of God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, singing Angels, and the “troupes eleuz” (48) or God’s “celeste bande” (140) in general, Coignard does not once refer to any of the celestial figures that her mentor takes such care to enumerate⁵³¹. It is not that Heaven is empty, but that any attempt to account for its immense population would destroy (or, at least, detract from) her poem’s simplicity⁵³². On the other hand, she uses a small set of epithets to vary her references to the few figures she does concentrate on⁵³³: “Dieu,” named five times⁵³⁴,

⁵²⁹ Cf. the new song described in Rev. 5:9 and 14:3.

⁵³⁰ Coignard does evoke these entities in other poems: sonnets XXXVII (Gabriel); XXXVIII (Saint Jerome); XLVI (Saint Peter); XLIX (Mary Magdalene); LX (Saint Stephen); LXI (Saint John the Evangelist); LXXXIV (Day of the Dead, Saint Michael); XCIX (All Saints); CI (Saint Thomas), CIV (Apostles); CVI (Saint Radegonde (of Poitiers); CXX (Apostles, Virgins, Martyrs, Prophets, and Confessors (this is likely another sonnet for all Saints’ Day); built on antitheses); *Hymne sur la louange de la Charité* (Princes and Monarchs (ln. 107, p. 593). Cf. Marquets’ treatment of this subject in Sonnet CCCCXXVIII (*Sonets spirituels*, p. 339); CXXV (Saint Martin). For additional poems referring to the Virgin Mary, see Coignard’s sonnets XXIII, XXXIX, CX (the Assumption of Our Lady), and CXIV, as well as the *Complainte* of course; also the *Hymne de la vertu de Continence*, lns. 41-46, pp. 618-619.

⁵³¹ Yet it is the subject on which he wrote the most in this particular meditation: in the French translation, and excluding the 6 introductory pages, Granada dedicates approximately 5.5 pages to contemplating the inhabitants of Heaven, versus 4 pages to the place itself (with a few long quotes from Revelation), 2.5 pages to the vision of God’s face, 2 pages to the glorification of the body, and 1.5 pages to the contemplation of eternity.

⁵³² Which, in this sense, does make one think of certain Psalms (Ps. 25 in particular) and of their translation by Marot, the poet of simplicity *par excellence*.

⁵³³ Du Bellay had recommended the frequent use “la figure antonomasie,” notably the kind that “designe le nom de quelque chose par ce qui lui est propre, comme le Pere foudroyant pour Jupiter,” as well as that of

is also referred to as the “donnateur” (126) of divine virtues; Mary is called, as we have seen, “La Vierge, nostre maistresse” and “des Anges la Princesse”; the name “Jesus” is avoided in favor of “Seigneur” (35), “Roy de verité” (45)⁵³⁵, and “Redempteur” (164). Such are the modest “divine names”⁵³⁶ allowed in *De la gloire*.

Granada also operates analogically, which allows him to use human personnel as well: the Queen of Sheba visiting King Solomon, for example, gives us a sense of our future visit to the *other* “souverain Salomon” (153 v°), which will not fail to be infinitely more rewarding. Likewise, he invites us to visualize Solomon’s temple (introduction to the “Traité sixiesme,” 155 r°) as a springboard for imagining the infinitely more beautiful architecture of Heaven. From there the entire celestial city can be imagined, around

la sagesse de ce roy le plus grand de tous, la beauté de ce temple, les services de sa table, l’ordre et equipage de ceux qui le servent, les livrees de ses serviteurs et domestiques, et la gloire et la police, qui en ceste cité est observee. (*ibid.*)

Following an extensive quote from Revelation (21:9-27 and 22:1-5), Granada feels the need to warn us against the misuse of such concrete images:

Attens (mon frere) et voy la beauté de ceste cité, **non qu’il faille penser que ces choses y soient ainsi materielles que porte la lettre**, ains afin que croyez qu’il y a des choses, et plus spirituelles, et plus excellentes, **figurees par icelles**.
 (“Traité sixiesme,” “De la beaute, et excellence du lieu. Tiltre premier,” 156 r°)⁵³⁷

well-chosen “epithetes” that add something to the meaning (*Deffence et Illustration de la langue Françoise*, II, ch. IX, ed. Monferran, pp. 160-161).

⁵³⁴ “Dieu” (Ins. 26 and 59), “haut Dieu” (71), “seul Dieu” (111), and “Dieu eternel” (137).

⁵³⁵ Appellation borrowed from Granada (159 v°).

⁵³⁶ If we may allow this allusion to the treatise of that title, by the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

⁵³⁷ Granada continues: “L’assiete de ceste cité est sur tous les cieux, la grandeur et largeur d’icelle surpasse toute mesure: car si (comme avons dit) chacune estoile est si grande que dit est: quel sera ce ciel qui comprend toutes les estoiles, et tous les cieux? Il n’y a grandeur au monde, que je puisse comparer à ceste cy: d’autant que (comme dit un saint) dès les limites occidentaux des Espaignes, jusqu’aux termes orientaux des Indes un navire court (ayant vent en poupe) en peu de jours: mais la region du ciel a des estoiles plus legeres que rayons, avec lesquelles on chemine plusieurs annees. Que si tu demandes quels sont les ouvrages, et massonnerie de ces edifices, **il n’y a langue qui le puisse declairer**: car si ce qui paroist aux yeux exterieurement est si beau, que sera ce de ce qui est regardé par les yeux immortels? Et si nous voyons que par les mains des hommes sont faites des choses si belles et excellentes, qui estonnent les yeux des regardans: que sera ce de ce qui est elabouré de la main de Dieu en celle royale maison et palais

This type of figuration must not be confused with the complex vision process that will allow the elect to see God *and* everything else at the same time. Granada borrows this explanation (which, ironically, requires... a simile) from “saint Fulgence”⁵³⁸:

comme celui qui tient un miroir devant soy, voit et le miroir, et soyemesme, et toutes les choses estans à l’object du miroir, tout ainsi quand nous aurons present ce miroir sans nulle tache de la majesté de Dieu, nous le verrons luy, et verrons nous mesmes, et tout ce qui sera hors de luy, selon la plus grande ou moindre cognoissance qu’aurons de luy.

(“De la troisieme joye, que l’ame recevra en la claire vision de Dieu.

Tiltre troisieme,” 160 v°)

Again Coignard appears to have consciously left out such elaborate constructions and references. She makes no room for man-made edifices or cities, merely referring to Heaven’s “architecture” (ln. 88), the celestial “cité,” and its “palais.” Also left out is the topic of nobility, which, Granada pointed out, “rend illustres les citez”: what could then be said of the celestial city, where everyone is noble, “tous les habitans [...] sont gentilshommes, [...] tous estans enfans de Dieu” (156 v°)⁵³⁹? In sum, the celestial scene is drastically pared down, to fit the poem’s short lines and stanzas: we are far from the lavish contemplative descriptions of Coignard’s long pieces in *alexandrins*, such as *La Mort et Passion de Nostre Seigneur sur le Mont de Calvaire*. Terence Cave (quoted in our Introduction; see pp. 10-11), noted that “the silent dialogue between Christ and Mary” (in the *Complainte de la Vierge Marie*, lns. 257-330) is “far more extensive” than in Granada’s text (Cave 255). When she tackles that type of scene, Coignard does not

sacré, en celle loge de soulas, qu’il a basti pour la gloire de ses esleuz? O que tes tabernacles (dit le Prophete) sont aymables, ô Seigneur Dieu des vertus!” (*ibid.*).

⁵³⁸ Book 1 of *Ad Monimum libri iii: De duplici praedestinatione Dei: una bonorum ad gloriam, altera malorum ad poenam* (PL 65, 153-178).

⁵³⁹ Coignard makes no reference to family relations, nor to offices; cf. Granada (159 v°). Also rejected are images of jewelry used as metaphors for spiritual things; again, compare Granada (158 v°). However, in *Complainte de la Vierge Marie*, Coignard seems to borrow Granada’s image of the “ruby de prix inestimable” (66 v°) as she writes: “Qu’en ce plaisant rubys mon ame s’esjouisse” (84, 545), referring to Christ’s blood. Christ is also described as giving the Cross his “riches joyaux” (*La Mort et Passion*, 132, 528). See also Marquets’ use of jewelry imagery in S. CCCCXXVII, *Sonets spirituels*, pp. 338-339.

hesitate to amplify. Yet she refuses to do so in *De la gloire*, as though “la gloire” (as in, splendor or perfection) and “la felicité éternelle,” as subjects, did not allow her to indulge in the material details that her spiritual model wants her to “contemplate”; she refrains from demultiplying a vision whose defining trait remains that it is *not* truly one.

For the gaze that will *actually* perform and enjoy this “veoir” is *not* hers (yet). No longer ordinary like the one that tempts her (and us), it will be transfigured as well:

Les yeux seront esclairez
D'une lumiere profonde,
Ne s'estant point esgarez
Aux vanitez de ce monde.
(157-160, 347)

This is the opposite of what the poet's (and our own) eyes could be accused of doing in this world, including in the first stanzas of the poem, if they had not used the various views that delight them to recognize, by way of a different operation (a mental one: the *a fortiori* reasoning), God's goodness and their own “deffault.” The poet does not exactly see (nor show) what the elect see: she “sees” that they will see it, thus allowing her mind to envision, indirectly, that which transcends her sight, as the “deep light” proceeding from God allows the gaze to move around without wandering.

It is not until the final stanza of the poem that vision is evoked one last time:

Quand contempleray-je, hélas,
Le bien qui nous glorifie,
Bien-heureux est le trespas
Qui au ciel nous vivifie.
(221-224, 351)

Here is the abstract singular again, evoking a single, generic object – “Le bien” – presently detached from any actual celestial sight she might have in this life, as well as from any form of contemplation performed by the mind's eye. In fact, the latter will be

assimilated to the former, since the verb “contempler” refers strictly, in line 221, to the gaze of the elect⁵⁴⁰, which would only be granted to the poet after death⁵⁴¹: she has no access to it for now, in fact never did, and is reduced to acknowledging and deploring this deficiency. Coignard does not merely limit, in this last stanza, her expression of what one will see in Heaven; she puts an end to it, reminding us that what we just read is not the actual experience to which it makes reference. It is likely that our devout Catholic author imposes this boundary, in part, out of fear of imagining (and letting her readers imagine) too much. Yet this inevitable “shutdown” also authorizes, retroactively, the relative liberty that she took in her long poem. One should not imagine too much, but one *is* free to imagine something, on two conditions. The first was set by Granada: do not cross the line that separates the two kinds of vision, the imagined from the real. The second seems set by Coignard herself, as the most appropriate way to honor the first: keep it simple.

Enjoyment, suffering, and the “souverain bien”

The majority of Coignard’s poems that focus on heavenly pleasures do so for the purpose of inciting love for God, but also of sustaining, in the midst of labor and pain, faith in and hope for one’s ultimate union with the Creator. We saw this at work in Sonnets XXXII, XXXVIII, LXXVI, and CVII among others; a similar intent is, of course, animating *De la gloire*. The rhetoric we encounter in the latter is most similar to that of Sonnet LXXVI: “Mais le loyer qu’apporte la vertu, / **Faict adoucir** l’aigreur de

⁵⁴⁰ See also line 129 (p. 345), which states that the faith (“foy”) of the elect “**contempera**” God “en sa gloire decouverte” (ln. 130; *i.e.*, will get to see what it had believed without seeing). Again “contempler” means seeing, in Heaven, what mortal eyes cannot see. Interestingly, while our poem is inspired by a treatise which recommends the “contemplation” of spiritual objects as a *mental activity* to be performed *in this life*, it restricts its own use of the term to the *actual vision* enjoyed by the elect *in the next one*.

⁵⁴¹ This reference to her own human death may also allude to that of Christ: one does not preclude the other (*cf. La Mort et Passion*, lns. 309-314, pp. 537-538).

ces offrandes” (7-8, 232). This argument goes a step beyond that of Sonnet XXXII, where the poet merely denies the intensity of various types of suffering (enumerated in lines 1-8 and 14) by asserting “**Ce n’est rien d’endurer** en la vie mortelle” (12). In *De la gloire*, Coignard goes further still: like Granada before her, she transforms the nature of such suffering by suggesting that it ought be *delightful* to Christians, as a result of their belief that there is an infinitely greater “bien” to be enjoyed, awaiting them in Heaven.

As explained above, the “bien” in question is imagined by the poet admiring the beauties of Nature and “parlant à [s]on coeur / Et à [s]on ame assoupie” (29-30) to persuade them with the *a fortiori* argument that she borrows from Granada: of the next world, nothing can be said yet; but the poem manages to say something, via the controlled images that we just discussed, and via a series of oppositions (in whatever sense our present experience proves wanting, our celestial experience *will not*) to which we will return in the last section of this chapter. It is after the (restrained) description of Heaven that the paradoxical argument about suffering appears. It is summarized in one quatrain and developed by four more (we have already met the last two):

Donc pour jouyr de ce bien,
 Quel travail insupportable,
 Et quel mespris terrien
 Ne nous sera delectable?

Helas! quel contentement
 Ont ces ames fortunées,
 Vivant eternellement
 Par les siecles des années.

O travail, ô douce mort,
 O peines bien employées,
 Qui menez à ce saint port
 Les personnes desvoyées:

Ne me donne rien de bon
 En ceste mortelle course,

Mais reserve moy ce don
Dans ton eternelle bourse.

Ne mignarde point ce corps
Qui est plain d'ingratitude,
Mais garde luy les tresors
De gloire et beatitude.

(173-192, 348-349)

As mentioned earlier, Granada introduces his Saturday evening meditation in those terms, explaining through yet another *a fortiori* argument how it will transform one's suffering:

le Chrestien pourra s'arrester sur la meditation de **la felicité de celle gloire** qu'auront ceux qui seront sauvez: ceste consideration est si precieuse, et proufitable, que si elle estoit secourue de la lumiere de la foy vive, elle suffiroit pour **adoucir tous les travaux et amertumes que nous souffrons pour obtenir le bien de ceste gloire**. Car si l'amour et desir des richesses **fait trouver doux les travaux** qu'on prend pour icelles: et si l'amour et desir d'avoir enfans **fait souhaiter à la femme les douleurs** de l'enfantement, **que doit faire ce bien souverain**⁵⁴², à l'esgard duquel nul bien ne peut porter un tel, et si honorable tiltre?

(*Le vray chemin*, I, "Pour le samedi au soir," 152 r^o-v^o)⁵⁴³

Coignard's debt is obvious, but several differences, as well as convergences, must be noted nevertheless.

First, Granada's open-ended question "que doit faire ce bien souverain [...]?" is not yet meant to articulate what this "bien" might consist of: the meditation and above all the "traité" that follows will do that. For now, Granada simply posits the axiomatic truth that the "bien" of eternal life is indeed "souverain" (no one in their right mind could dispute that); from this self-evident premise follows his *a fortiori* argument, via two analogies (which are not spiritual in nature, and so are attractive to the lay person). Since

⁵⁴² Granada describes the sovereign good (and our love for it) as the site in which all of our felicity exists, and of which it consists: "l'amour du souverain bien, auquel gist, et consiste toute nostre felicité" (*Le vray chemin*, III. "Contenant en soy trois petits, et briefs traitez, un de l'oraison, le second du jeusne, et le troisieme de l'aumosne." "Tiltre quatriesme," 358 v^o).

⁵⁴³ In Spanish, this passage reads as follows: "Esta consideración es tan provechosa que, si fuese ayudada con lumbré de viva fe, bastaría para **hacernos dulces** todos los trabajos y amarguras que pasásemos por este bien. Porque si el amor de la hacienda **hace dulces** los trabajos que se pasan por ella, y el amor de los hijos hace **desear** a la mujer los dolores del parto, ¿qué haría el amor de este soberano bien, en cuya comparación todos los otros no son bienes?" (ed. Huerga, p. 207).

our love for riches “fait trouver doux les travaux qu’on prend pour icelles,” and since their love of children makes women wish to go through the pain of giving birth⁵⁴⁴, it is also evident that no suffering would be too high a price to pay to enjoy the highest of all goods, or (conversely) that the perspective of the highest good would “sweeten” any suffering. The argument thus constructed is irrefutable, and therefore *should* suffice, but does not, because we are weak: only the “light of faith” makes it convincing.

We know that the *a fortiori* argument is the key logical device of Granada’s meditation on “la felicité de la gloire”; and we will see that its application to the problem of suffering returns at the end. While Coignard, for her part, used this type of argument (borrowed from Granada also) at the beginning of her poem to extrapolate the beauty of Heaven from that of the natural world, here she condenses her mentor’s reasoning so much that its *a fortiori* structure becomes implicit. Let us read the result again:

Donc pour jouyr de ce bien,
Quel travail insupportable,
Et quel mespris terrien
Ne nous sera delectable?
(173-176, 348)

Having spent 33 stanzas sketching out the delights of “vie éternelle,” she merely concludes (“Donc”), with a rhetorical question⁵⁴⁵, that our earthly pain *will be* (“sera,” also in the future tense) made delectable by this perspective. She does not need to remind

⁵⁴⁴ From Genesis on, there is no lack of biblical references for this: “Quand la femme enfante, elle a douleur, pour ce que son heure est venue. [M]ais apres qu’elle a faict un petit enfant, il ne lui souvient plus de l’angoisse, pour la joye qu’elle a qu’un homme est né au monde” (Saint Jean XVI.21; Benoist vol. 3, 74 v°).

⁵⁴⁵ Coignard’s quatrain is the only one in her poem that is punctuated by a question mark (in both the 1594 and 1595 editions). She does ask other questions, however (but they are *not* rhetorical). Wondering “quel contentement” is enjoyed by the souls of the saved or “Quel doit estre ce palais” where they live (41, 340) is as much an exclamation (see also “Quel contentement de veoir / La Vierge,” 97-98, 343) as an interrogation (without clear response). This very ambiguity allows for both possibilities to work upon our imagination at the same time. Different still, and most acute, is the question that opens the poem’s last stanza: “Quand contempleray-je, hélas, / Le bien qui nous glorifie” (221-222, 351). It has only a partial answer: upon my death at a minimum (but I know not when I will die, nor whether I will be saved).

us of the travails of wealth or birth to make this point. The future form “sera” (instead of “serait”) seems strange, however, since no suffering “will be” part of our delight. It only makes sense retrospectively, for the elect: their *past* suffering will be another source of joy to them. So the poet’s reasoning concerns what things will be then, rather than what they ought to be now. Hence her regret (“Helas!”): Coignard makes no claim about the present. She is not pretending that her pain *is* (or could be) delectable to her in this life: there remains a difference between the vision of the beatitude deployed by the poem and what it would be were the poet illuminated by the “light of faith.” Still: the power of her imagined beatific vision is at least strong enough to make her pray – following Granada’s model again – that nothing good be granted to her now, the better to enjoy it in Heaven.

Let us review three other examples of Granada’s *a fortiori* device, two of which make the same point about suffering. The very opening paragraph of the “Traité sixiesme”⁵⁴⁶, which may also have inspired Coignard’s quatrain on our “travail” made “delectable,” underlines the power of contrast:

Une des choses en laquelle il faut le plus tenir l’oeil, est ce val de misere, et la felicité de la gloire: d’autant que ceste seule pensee **suffit à nous encourager à tous les travaux qu’il faut souffrir** pour y parvenir.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, “Traité sixiesme, sur la meditation de la gloire de Paradis,” 154 v°)

The second instance occurs mid-way through the treatise, and does announce Coignard’s own initial reasoning about the natural world: if we are delighted by any experience of “douceur” and “repos,” how much more should we be in the presence of God?

Et sur tout ceci, que sera ce de **voir clairement celle face divine**, en laquelle gist la gloire essencielle de tous les saints? **Grands effects de gloire sont ceux qu’avons escrits jusqu’à present, mais c’est peu à comparaison de cestuy**. Il est dit que Izachar veit que le repos

⁵⁴⁶ The treatise, Granada explains, is where “est plus à plain declairé ce qui est compris en la contemplation susdite” (154 v°). In other words, it is an amplified version of the meditation preceding it.

estoit bon, et la terre fertile, et **pource mit ses espauls au travail**, et s’y rendit tributaire^[547]. **Le repos, et la gloire des saints sont bons, mais la terre donnant ce repos est souverainement bonne: car c’est elle qui est la face de Dieu**, et sa beauté, de la veüe de laquelle procedent la gloire, la joye, et repos des saints. **Seule est elle, qui suffit à donner parfait soulas à voz ames**: d’autant que toute douceur et souëfveté des creatures peut bien donner quelque plaisir au coeur, mais non pas le **rassasier parfaitement**. Que si tous ces biens susdits **delectent tant**, combien **donnera d’aise** ce bien, qui tient en soy la perfection et comble parfait de tous autres biens et felicitez?

(“Traité sixiesme,” “Tiltre troisieme” (“De la troisieme joye...”), 160 r^o-v^o)

Here Granada argues analogically: Issakar worked hard because the earth was fertile and rest after work would be all the better. Resting is indeed good to those who have worked and suffered, but the earth that allows both work and rest is a superior good, “souverainement bonne,” in that it is the very face of God.

This can be understood at two levels. At the higher end of the analogy, the resting of the saints who are with God is a great good, but the “face” (*i.e.*, presence) of God, from which their resting proceeds, is of course a greater one. Yet the lower end of the analogy suggests an important argument as well: the earth that God created too is, in a sense, His “face,” and as such reminds us that our highest conceivable pleasures *in this life* are not limited to our experience of them on our own human terms. Like our future bliss, they have their origin in God: in the beauty granted to His Creation, in which we take delight in turn. It is for this reason that some earthly pleasures are more appropriate than others as images of the supreme good, even though the latter, by definition, infinitely surpasses “*tous ces biens susdits*,” both on earth *and* in Heaven.

This is the logic of some of the Beatitudes, where future bliss is anticipated by something similar experienced now (rather than contrasted with a present torment, as

⁵⁴⁷ See Gen. 49:14. Issakar, sixth of his sons to be blessed by Jacob before his death, is a “donkey” who performs the hard work of a slave (portage) and enjoys “repos” all the more.

happens with others in the series). It also governs Sonnet LXXVII, where Coignard describes a state to which we (some of us) may already aspire in our lifetime:

Toute felicité que l'homme peut cognoistre,
Et desire jouir au monde passager,
Consiste à saintement sa volonté ranger,
Unissant son vouloir à celui de son maistre.

L'air, la terre et le ciel, et tout ce qui a estre,
Suit comme son troupeau ce haut et grand berger,
Tout ce qui doit ça bas nostre exil soulager,
C'est ce bien de le suivre et de le recognoistre.

Bien-heureux sont ceux-là qui voyent clairement
Ce que nostre bon Dieu nous monstre incessamment,
Nous dirons à jamais: heureuses les oreilles

Qui escoutent parler l'esprit de verité,
Bien-heureux sont les cœurs en toute eternité,
Adorans, plains d'amour, ses bontez nompareilles.
(S. LXXVII, Coignard 233-234)

As suggested in the passage from Granada quoted above, there is a form of “felicité” that is specific to this world, in that it was made by God and meant to follow Him. It is not possible to see God (face to face) “clairement,” yet it is possible to recognize Him and to see clearly what He wants to show us about Himself in/through this world (*e.g.*, that He is the high and great shepherd whom we should follow and recognize; that we ought to listen to the words of the spirit of truth). This vision may be limited in scope but it is “incessamment” shown. The tercets even show some slippage between the two forms or stages of clear vision, from the “felicité” available in this world to that which will be enjoyed “en toute eternité” by the elect: the blessed already *are* enjoying it, not because they are *there* already, but because they will be; one will lead to the other. This piece alone is proof enough that the *Sonnets spirituels* are occasionally as capable of moving

“upwards” as any *Vers chrestiens*⁵⁴⁸; and of doing so without mobilizing a personal “je,” contrary to what *De la gloire* does.

A third instance of *a fortiori* reasoning occurs in the next-to-final portion of the sixth treatise. There, the friar comes full-circle, back to the point made in the opening paragraph of the Saturday evening meditation; arguing again that an eternity of future bliss is more than enough to *wish* for a deluge of labor and pain; as much as necessary to procure such felicity. First comes the end of “Tiltre quatriesme”:

Que sentira donc l'ame du bienheureux, puis que pour avoir mortifiez ses sens un peu de temps, elle se verra comme noyee encest abisme de gloire, sans y voir ny fonds ny rive, donnant fin à ces allegresses? Ah bien fortunez travaux! ah services bien guerdonnez! ah chose non propre à estre dite, ains à sentir et desirer, et à chercher, au pris de mille vies, si les avions, pour les donner en eschange de telle felicité.

(“Traité sixiesme,” “De la quatriesme joye de l'ame, qu'elle recevra avec celle du corps. Tiltre quatriesme,” 162 r°)

Not only does the author sweeten “travaux” and “services” with the oxymoronic modifiers “bien fortunez” and “bien guerdonnez,” he also injects accents of desire and delight, exclaiming “ah” at the beginning of each phrase. Next comes the beginning of “Tiltre cinquiesme”:

Mais voyons à present pourquoy un si grand espace est octroyé pour une si grande felicité: car cecy seul devroit suffire pour nous faire escrier, et appeller tous les travaux du monde, afin qu'ils pleussent sur nous: et que par eux nous vinssions à servir Dieu, et le mercier des grandes graces, et mercis qu'il nous veut faire.

(“De la cinquiesme joye, qui est la duree de l'eternité. Tiltre cinquiesme”; *ibid.*; quoted by Winn, p. 348, n. 13)

Now pushing our imagination beyond the verbal and intellectual into the ineffable, he reiterates that the perspective of “telle felicité” (as enjoyed eternally) *should be* enough not only to make us wish for ailments today, but that they rain down on us. The

⁵⁴⁸ See of course the *Huict Beatitudes* that inaugurate the latter. Closest are number 3 (“Bien-heureux les benings dont l'ame ne tendant / Qu'à la paix et l'amour, a toutes ses pensées / Dedans la paix du ciel hautement eslancées,” lns. 9-12, 301) and number 6 (“Bien-heureux sont les coeurs nets et purifiez, / Que le saint feu d'amour purge de toute ordure, / Car ceux-là verront Dieu et sa gloire future,” lns. 21-24, 302).

stipulation remains, though, that these “travaux” themselves must of course be used as means to serve and give thanks to God; which *should be* obvious to us, but is not.

We have seen how Coignard summarizes this concept, then literally cries out (thrice using the exclamation “ô”: “O travail, ô douce mort, / O peines bien employées”), invoking the “peines” in question, not to ask that they rain down on her but, rather, to salute their ability to lead the souls of sinners to a safe harbor. The next pivot is so sudden that the reader may be confused, if not “desvoy[é],” by the fact that what follows (after a colon) is not addressed to “travail” or “mort”: the poet instantly turns to an unnamed entity (“Ne me donne rien de bon,” ln. 185), using the second-person singular of the prayer mode in four verbes: “donne” (185), “reserve” (187), “mignarde” (189), and “garde” (191). If there were any doubt about who this entity might be, Granada’s prose suffices to dissipate it. At the end of the “Traité sixiesme,” as already noted, we find this:

Ne me donne (ô Dieu) soulas, repos, ny richesses en ce monde, ains me garde tout cela pour la vie à venir.
 (“Traité sixiesme,” “Tiltre cinquiesme,” 162 v°)

Whether intended by Coignard or not, this unannounced shift delivers a taste of the jarring effect inherent in thinking of our current “travail” and “peines” (or inevitable death) through the looking glass of our future bliss. Such a change of perspective is needed if our imagination is to be *properly* carried off by the seductive notion of “les tresors / De gloire et beatitude” (lns. 191-192).

Which leads us to another key difference between Granada’s prose and Coignard’s poetry on the subject of “félicité”: commenting at length on his own meditation on the “joyes” of salvation, Granada insists throughout the “Traité” on its inner logic and profitable nature, thus avoiding any distracting guess-work or mental

straying on the part of the reader. By contrast, *De la gloire*'s very effort to evoke eternal bliss alludes to various ordeals that we endure in this lifetime⁵⁴⁹, but it is not until lines 173-176 that the point – why and how we should welcome them – is finally made explicit. Unlike Granada, whose prose is serving as a spiritual guide for “tous ‘rudes et petits’ dans le chemin de la dévotion” (“Advertissement au lecteur, sur la traduction du present livre,” § 1, n. p.), Coignard is suggesting and demonstrating – rather than didactically explicating –, as rapidly shifting facets of her own mind and soul, the stages that her mentor is systematically obligated to distinguish and number (“Premiere joye,” “Deuxiesme joye,” *etc.*). She enjoys the liberty of allusiveness, at times leaving her readers in the dark or in doubt while they get lured into her narrative and meditation by the rapid pace of the short meter and short stanzas that she selected; but she eventually reins in this liberty and clarifies the paradoxical effect that the “bien” upon which she has been meditating ought to have on those who desire it. This approach would likely have been acceptable in the eyes of Granada since, we may recall, the meditations he provides in *Le vray chemin* are merely intended as an exhaustive resource to a public that may be

⁵⁴⁹ The opening description of Nature already contains an allusion to “nostre peyne” (ln. 12), followed by one to the “necessitez” endured by “pauvres creatures” yet met “à toutes heures” by the “commoditez” provided by their “benin” maker (lns. 25-28). Once the poet starts speaking to her own heart and soul, the “gloire” and “bon-heur” (31) of “l’autre vie” (32) become her focus, which still involves a recurring *contrast* between unthinkable bliss and the familiar problems faced by “les hommes miserables” (34), but destined to be left behind, *no longer* felt, after salvation: the fleeting nature of the world (37-38); mortality (53); fear in general (75); fear of hidden temptations (79-80); of the “effort / D’une giefve maladie” (81-82); of death (83); bitterness, sorrow, and sin (76-77): “la croix sanglante” (102), opposed to its own “gloire triomphante.” The contrasting of “ceste dolente vie” (144) with “eternels delices” (156) so as to emphasize the latter continues until the quatrains quoted above; after which the final prayer they initiate goes on to articulate its own contrast, between the true love sought by the poet and the “desreglées amours” (205) of this life. As we know, the very end of the poem is bound to remain bittersweet, since the poet (“helas,” 221) does not know whether and when she will get to enjoy all this.

lacking in spiritual materials⁵⁵⁰; and, to those who desire to practice the meditations in a different order, he gives permission to do so should the Spirit so lead them⁵⁵¹.

The last difference that we would like to emphasize is perhaps the most important: as illustrated by his mention of the “bien souverain” in the passage quoted above (another such mention is coming), Granada – like Marquets – uses this expression more liberally than Coignard does⁵⁵². In the opening paragraph of the Saturday evening meditation, the “bien souverain” to which he alludes is “la felicité de celle gloire qu’auront ceux qui seront sauvez” (152 r^o), which he then seems to equate with the love that man shall experience “à l’infinie beauté, et au mariage eternel” (152 v^o). Right after this passage, Granada invites us to consider “cinq choses, entre autres, qui sont **en ce bien de la gloire**” (152 v^o), “pour comprendre quelque cas de ceci.” They are:

l’excellence du lieu, la jouyssance de la compagnie, la vision de Dieu, la glorification de noz corps, et en somme la perfection, et accomplissement de tous biens, qui sont en la gloire.
(*Le vray chemin*, I, “Pour le samedi au soir,” 152 v^o)

It is clear, from Granada’s entire argument here, that he uses the expression “bien souverain” to refer to “la felicité de la gloire” rather than to God Himself.

Yet we must recall his own statement, also quoted above, that “Le repos, et la gloire des saints sont bons, mais la terre donnant ce repos est **souverainement bonne**:

⁵⁵⁰ “[I]l y a deux obstacles, qui s’opposent à ceux qui s’adonnent à l’exercice de l’oraison interieure: l’un est, **faute de matiere**, en laquelle il puisse occuper son pensement au temps de l’oraison: et l’autre, defaut de devotion, et assauts de divers pensemens, lesquels lors plus que jamais ont de coustume de molester ceux qui sont en priere. Pour remedier au premier, sert, et aide beaucoup tout ce qui a esté dit au traité precedent, où est faite mention des meditations et declarations de ce qui se doit faire pour tous les jours de la sepmaine: et y ont esté marquees ces cinq parties de l’oraison, desquelles a esté parlé, **afin qu’en une si grande varieté, on n’aye defaut de chose qui serve pour la meditation**” (*Le vray chemin*, II, chapitre 1, “Qu’est-ce que devotion,” 211 v^o-212 r^o).

⁵⁵¹ See our Chapter III, p. 162, where we quote Granada on this point (*Le vray chemin*, II, chapitre 5, titre 18, 330 r^o-v^o).

⁵⁵² Although we do not discuss them here, two other passages worthy of note in which Granada refers to the “bien souverain” can be found in the “Onziesme moyen; du temps, du lieu, et des autres circonstances convenables pour bien prier” (Part II, 241 r^o) and in Part III (341 v^o), about mankind’s end.

car c'est elle qui est la face de Dieu, et sa beauté" ("De la troisieme joye," 160 r^o-v^o) in order to more accurately grasp his meaning here as well. That from which a good comes, in which it originates, is "souverainement bon"⁵⁵³ compared to this good as experienced; as we have seen, this is already true of some earthly pleasures. It will be all the more true, in turn, of heavenly ones; and even there, where a variety of pleasures will be afforded, all are derived from and surpassed by the supreme joy of seeing the One, the giver of all felicity and glory. Does it follow that this joy *is* the supreme good, which would suggest that God Himself ultimately remains our means to an end? The implication is, on the contrary, that the source of the ultimate joy *contains it too* (like everything else). Not only does He remain the one and only "souverain," but the joy of seeing Him as such cannot "use" Him in the Augustinian sense, it is *prevented* from doing so (which is what makes this joy so unthinkable to us, because we are tempted by any pleasure to "use" and instrumentalize whatever it is that gives it). Hence the end-point of the long, enumerative argument that we quoted above:

⁵⁵³ Throughout the meditation, the adjective "souverain" characterizes the supremacy of God as well as (by derivation) that of His dwelling place in Heaven, and even, as we have seen, that of the "terre" He created. The repetition of the epithet serves to amplify and diversify those instances in which the expression "bien souverain" is used. For example: "Et que ne reste il tout estonné et hors de soy, considerant l'immensité de ce lieu, **et plus encore de ce souverain maistre qui en a esté le createur?**" (152 v^o). Soon thereafter: "Et si chacun des Anges (fust ce le moindre d'entre eux) est plus beau que tout le monde visible: que seroit ce de voir un si grand nombre d'Anges si beaux, voir leurs perfections et offices, que chacun d'eux a en **celle souveraine cité de paradis?**" (153 r^o). Or again: "Là tous s'esjouyront, tous chanteront, et **tous louëront tousjours ce souverain eslargisseur de toutes choses:** par la largesse et liberalité duquel **toutes choses vivent, et regnent en sa gloire**" (154 r^o-v^o). The Queen of Sheba had to visit King Solomon upon hearing of his "merveilles": "Or puis que le bruit de la Hierusalem celeste n'est pas moindre, ny du **roy souverain** qui la gouverne," my soul will be all the more incited to rally "ceste excellente cité, pour y contempler **la sagesse de ce roy le plus grand de tous,** la beauté de ce temple, les services de sa table, l'ordre et equipage de ceux qui le servent," *etc.* (155 r^o; note how the succession of pleasures goes up and then down the same scale). Granada further commands his soul (that of the reader being implied as well) as follows: "Monte encore plus hault sur tous les chœurs des Anges, et trouveras une autre gloire singuliere, laquelle esjouyt à merveille **toute celle cour souveraine,** et enivre avec une douceur admirable toute la cité de Dieu" (p. 159 r^o). It is clear from such statements that the very word "souverain," designed in a sense to "crown" and put an end to all variations and derivations, is itself subject to them.

Et si la gloire de jouyr de la compaignie des bons est si grand chose, que sera ce de jouyr de la presence de celuy [...] de la presence duquel les hommes se glorifient? Que sera ce de **voir ce bien universel** comprenant tous autres biens? et ce monde plus grand qui contient tous les mondes? et celuy le quel estant un, est toutes choses?

(“Pour le samedy au soir,” 153 v°)

The same point is then reiterated multiple times throughout the remainder of the meditation and the “traité” that comments on it: we have already seen that it is God’s face (understood analogically or directly) “en laquelle gist la gloire essentielle de tous les saints” (160 r°)⁵⁵⁴, that His face is “souverainement bonne” (*ibid.*), and “ce bien, qui tient en soy la perfection et comble parfait de tous autres biens et felicitez” (160 v°). We also read that, from the vision of “la face de Dieu, et sa beauté” (160 r°-v°) “procedent la gloire, la joye, et repos des saints” (160 v°); and that the face of God is “**ce bien universel, qui comprend tous biens**, et hors lequel il n’y a rien dequoy on puisse jouyr” (160 v°). Said another way, it is only thanks to God’s permanent presence that anything can be experienced as enjoyable by all other beings in Heaven⁵⁵⁵.

In the segment describing the Virgin Mary, who is now “la royne du ciel” (“Tiltre second,” 159 r°) and who “sera exaltée sur tous ceux qui nasquierent ou furent creiez oncques” (159 v°), we read that she will be “jouyssant pour jamais de **ce bien souverain**, et disant: J’ay trouvé celuy que mon ame cherit et ayme, je le tiens, et n’ay garde de l’abandonner^[556]” (*ibid.*). Readers might be *tempted* to attribute the “bien souverain” to the “jouissance,” the enjoyment of it; to interpret this good as referring to the Virgin’s

⁵⁵⁴ The verb “gist” (from the infinitive “gesir”) means “se trouve,” “réside,” “demeure” here.

⁵⁵⁵ In *La Mort et Passion de nostre Seigneur*, Coignard asks that Christ’s blood be what makes her able to enjoy the eternal joy: “Que ton sang pretieux me lave et me nettoye, / Et me fasse jouyr de l’eternelle joye” (Ins. 313-314, Coignard 537-538).

⁵⁵⁶ The reference is the Song of Songs: “Quand je les eus un peu passez, je trouvay celuy que mon ame ayme: je l’ay prins, et ne le laisseray pas aller, jusques à ce que je le mene dedans ma maison de ma mere, et en la chambre de celle qui m’a engendree. Je vous adjure filles de Jerusalem, par les chevreux, et les cerfs des champs, que vous n’esveillez, ne faictes esveiller la bien aymée, jusques à ce qu’elle le vueille” (Le Cantique des Cantiques de Salomon III.4-5; Benoist, vol. 2, 80 r°).

experience of having finally, and after much suffering, found her beloved Son. However, certain clues are meant to prevent us from forgetting that the “bien souverain” is actually Jesus Himself. For example, the passage above comes directly after Granada puts the following words (which are actually those of King David) into the mouth of Mary “sous l’arbre sanglant de la croix”: “Qui fera que je meure pour toy Absalon, mon fils, mon fils Absalon?” (159 v^o)⁵⁵⁷: the grieving mother wishes that she had taken her son’s place; she would rather have Jesus continue to live at her own expense, thus giving preference to His own life over her experience of it. The idea is that the joy of being with Him in Heaven fully “compensates” for the terrible grief of having lost Him, yet cannot possibly erase what remains obvious to the mother, *a fortiori* to the Holy Mother of God: it would not occur to her (and be self-contradictory) to value her enjoyment of His presence, however supremely sweet, over the existence whose presence she is enjoying.

As we have seen, the very notion of an *eternity* of bliss completes and crowns it, so much so that contemplating this final aspect should incite us to call all the torments of this world on ourselves for now, making us all the more thankful for the “grandes graces” that will follow, and ready to enjoy them. The concept of eternity itself is another one that is hard to grasp; hence the use of hyperbolic approximations (as many hundreds of

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. “Parquoy le Roy tout triste monta en la sale de la porte, et pleura. Et parloit ainsi en allant: O mon fils Absalon! ô Absalon mon fils! **Qui est-ce qui me donnera que je meure pour toy?** ô Absalon mon fils! ô mon fils Absalon!” (Le second livre des Rois, autrement de Samuël XVIII.33, p. 224; *n.b.* This translation of v. 33 is not provided in Benoist’s Latin-French edition that we have been using but, rather, in *La Sainte Bible, contenant le Vieil et Nouveau Testament. Traduite en François par les Theologiens de l’Université de Louvain. Avec les Concordances des lieux et passages controversez de l’Ecriture Sainte. Fidelement reveuë, corrigée, et enrichie de Figures en Taille Douce. À Paris, De l’Imprimerie de Pierre Variquet, Chez Gabriel Quinet, au Palais, à l’entrée de la Galer[ie] des Prisonniers, à l’Ange-Gardien. M. DC. LXXXIII. Avec Privilege du Roy, et Approbation des Docteurs.* Paris: G. Quinet, 1683. We are therefore led to believe that Belleforest was working with a Bible translation other than Benoist’s Latin-French edition. The latter translates v. 33 in the following manner: “Parquoy le roy tout triste monta à la chambre haute de la porte, et plora. Et parloit ainsi en allant: O mon fils Absalom, ô Absalom mon fils. A la mienne volonté que je fusse mort pour toy, ô Absalom mon fils, ô mon fils Absalom!” (Le second livre des Roys, autrement de Samuel XVIII.33; Benoist, vol. 1, 220 r^o)).

thousands of years as raindrops ever “tombees sur terre, et beaucoup davantage,” 162 v°) and Scriptural references: Exodus 15:18 (“Le Seigneur regnera pour tousjours, et à jamais”) and Psalm 145:13 (“Ton regne est le regne de tous les siecles, et ta seigneurie de lignee en lignee”)⁵⁵⁸. Then comes the peroration of the entire “sixth treatise,” in the form of a final prayer that reiterates what the opening of the Saturday night meditation had already suggested concerning the highest good:

Donc, ô pere de misericorde, et Dieu de toute consolation, je te supplie par les entrailles de ta pitié, que je ne sois point privé de **ce bien souverain**. Seigneur mon Dieu, qui as trouvé bon de me creer et former à ta semblance, et me faire capable de toy, emplis ce sein que tu as créé, puis que pour toy tu l’as mis en estre: que Dieu soit mon lot, et portion en la terre de vivans⁵⁵⁹. Ne me donne (ô Dieu) soulas, repos, ny richesses en ce monde, ains me garde tout cela pour la vie à venir. Je ne veux avoir avec les enfans de Ruben la terre de Galaad pour mon heritage, et ainsi perdre le droit que je pretens en la terre de promission. Une seule chose requiers je au seigneur mon Dieu, et luy demanderay toute ma vie, que je meure, et aye pour jamais ma demeure en la maison du Seigneur.

(“De la cinquiesme joye,” 162 v°)

“**Ce bien souverain**”: the demonstrative encompasses all that has been detailed in the review (entirely led by *a fortiori* logic) of five successive “joyes.” The final sentence is again a quote, from Psalm 26:5⁵⁶⁰. When read through the lens that Granada has set up earlier in the meditation, the “seule chose” (which, in fact, consists of two things: dying, then having) that the speaker asks of his Lord completes his earlier requests. He has previously asked that God be (already) “his part” in this life; and refrain from giving him

⁵⁵⁸ 144 for Benoist: “Ton royaume est royaume de tous siecles: et ta domination est en toutes generations.” (Pseaume CXLIII:13; vol. 2, 54 v°; “*Regnum tuum, regnum omnium seculorum: et dominatio tua in omni generatione et generationem*”). The annotation also refers to Ps. 146:10, 145 for Benoist: “Le Seigneur regnera eternellement, ô Sion ton Dieu, de generation en generation” (Pseaume CXLV:10, 54 v°; “*Regnabit dominus in secula, deus tuus Sion in generatione et generationem*”).

⁵⁵⁹ Another quote, from Ps. 141:6: “Seigneur, j’ay crié vers toy, j’ay dict: Tu es mon espoir, et **ma portion en la Terre des vivantz**” (Benoist 53 v°). “Portion” (Vulgate: “*pars mea*”) is glossed as follows: “Mon bien et mon heritage, auquel je me tiens en ce monde vivant” (*ibid.*). In the Spanish edition, this sentence simply reads: “Mi parte sea, Dios mio, en la tierra de los vivientes” (ed. Hueraga, p. 220). So Belleforest is adding “mon lot,” perhaps on his own initiative.

⁵⁶⁰ “J’ay demandé une chose au Seigneur, je la requerray, c’est que je habite en la maison du Seigneur tous les jours de ma vie. A fin que je voye la volonté du Seigneur, et que je visite son temple” (*Livre des Pseaumes de David XXVI:5*; Benoist, vol. 2, 10 v°).

any other good in this world, thus reserving them all “pour la vie à venir.” The last sentence, however, takes us further away from the idea of “soulas, repos, [et] richesses” to make us focus on the sole “maison du Seigneur”: the emphasis is on the Lord of the house, not on the pleasures I will find therein; which reduces the risk of appreciating (or appearing to appreciate) God as a means to some other end consisting of such goods.

This is another passage, therefore, that may have fed into Coignard’s decisive quatrain (“Donc pour jouyr de **ce bien**, / Quel travail,” *etc.*). Let us again note the concision of this rare mention. As we know, our author uses the expression “souverain bien” only once (in Sonnet XXV) in her entire poetry. Yet if there is a poem of hers that should allow her to do so freely, it is *De la gloire*, which is a 224-line effort to represent this very *summum bonum* (even though it cannot be represented); all the more so as it is shaped by Granada’s meditation, which for its part, as we have just seen, does not hesitate to name “ce bien souverain” several times, nor to play with the *range* of goods it contains, nor to pray to God that it be granted to the meditator. It appears that poetry, for Coignard, consists of evoking “ce bien” without naming it as such – even and perhaps *especially* when it constitutes a poem’s very subject: then the elision of its most common (and solemn) appellation becomes another sign of the discipline that the *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle*, its title notwithstanding⁵⁶¹, seems determined to keep.

⁵⁶¹ Which, as we have seen, seems to announce a didactic intent, and is as long and cumbersome as the poem itself is light-footed. Perhaps we should read it, paradoxically, as another sign of humility: while the poem is certainly not a treatise, it does not take the higher stance of a “Hymne,” adopted by Coignard to offer “la louange de la charité” or celebrate “la vertu de Contenance”; both in *alexandrins*.

The art of limiting expression

By now it is clear that the challenge of describing something that is “certain” (like God and the glory and felicity of eternal life) even though beyond comprehension is addressed somewhat differently by Granada’s meditation and Coignard’s poem. We recall how the latter uses a clear and frank statement that anyone can understand (“Il n’est possible aux mortels / D’exprimer la moindre chose,” *etc.*) to remind us that the “lieux éternels” defy human understanding; and how, while the description is well underway, Coignard uses equally simple language to emphasize that our eyes cannot see, nor our ears hear, “le bien qui nous est gardé.” The logic of certain Beatitudes (or that of Sonnet LXXVII) this is not: “La félicité promise” (ln. 60, 341) lies infinitely *beyond* anything we may be experiencing now. Having thus humbly reduced what she is about to express to something smaller than “the smallest thing,” the poet is ready to launch her description, which turns out to be quite long in absolute terms, but also comparatively short, thanks to the poem’s meter and format. The acknowledgment of the indicible is more than a mere preterition, because it remains valid: we *must* remember that nothing we read comes close to “nailing” the real thing on the head. This, incidentally, is a major reason why a longer poem in a shorter meter works better for this purpose – *i.e.*, conveys this irony or paradox better – than either a sonnet or a long piece in *alexandrins* would: rather than a vast, pathos-driven “tableau” or the tight, intricate argument that a sonnet typically contains, the poet offers a succession of small touches to somehow bring before our eyes what they cannot see, what is truly accessible only to the elect who have obtained “perdurable vie.”

One way to deal with this difficulty, as we have already suggested, is to keep acknowledging it. Coignard does so explicitly; but implicitly as well, every time she

focuses on what our heavenly condition will *not* consist of. It is easier (and more honest in a sense) to announce the end of the negative, even though we cannot quite imagine it, than to imagine the positive directly:

Nous ne craindrons point l'effort
 D'une griefve maladie,
 Ny les effrois de la mort,
 Qui devore nostre vie.
 (81-84, 342)

Furthermore, the formulation of the positive often *includes* a reference to its negative counterpart, which is one way of acknowledging, again with great simplicity, what *will be* different from where we stand (and cannot help but standing) now, without pretending to formulate it on its own terms:

Tous les sens exterieurs,
Qui chasserent loin les vices,
 Seront comblez de douceurs
 En leurs eternels delices.

 Les yeux seront esclairez
 D'une lumiere profonde,
Ne s'estant point esgarez
 Aux vanitez de ce monde.
 (153-160, 347)

Or again:

Nous serons jointz et serrez
 D'un lien d'amour estroite,
N'estant jamais separez
 De ceste union parfaicte.
 (169-172, 348)

This is another way of saying, in the descriptive or declarative mode (and in the future tense, which gives it a firm prophetic accent), what the last section of the poem will fall back to saying in the optative mode (that of prayer), which acknowledges the distance

between the poet's present condition and what she wants and hopes to enjoy one day, upon leaving "ceste machine basse" (ln. 218). We have already read this:

Car je veux languir d'amour,
Non de ceste amour fascheuse,
Qui nous prive du sejour
 De ta presence amoureuse.
 (213-216, 350)

Most striking are the passages where the poet applies this principle to the description of what our faculties and qualities "seront" in Heaven. We have seen examples of this about the senses and about one the three theological virtues (which come from God): charity. All will be more perfect in us than they are now; their current imperfection is the "baseline" from which to think about their unthinkable perfection. The same goes for the intellectual faculties that perform this thinking, which Coignard, echoing Granada, reviews before taking on the virtues (the senses will be next):

Nous aurons en ce saint lieu,
 Le repos de nos pensées,
 Et de la main du seul Dieu,
 Les vertus recompensées.

Nostre large **entendement**
 Qui jamais ne se repose,
 Aura son contentement
 Sans concevoir autre chose.

La **volonté** jouyra
 Du seul bien où elle aspire,
 Jamais ne s'esloignera
 De l'amour qu'elle desire.

La **memoire** qui s'espart
 De sa longue souvenance,
 N'ira plus en autre part
 Qu'en ce palais d'abondance.

Les **trois vertus** qui ont fait
 A leur donateur service,
 Auront le guerdon parfait
 De sa majesté propice.

La **foy** le contempera
 En sa gloire descouverte,
 L'**esperance** le tiendra
 Sans jamais craindre sa perte.

Et la douce **charité**,
 Qui est imparfaicte au monde,
 Recevra l'extremité
 De dilection profonde.
 (109-136, 344-345)

Let us compare this passage to its source:

Là prendra repos l'appetit de nostre **entendement**, et ne desirera de rien plus sçavoir, ayant devant luy ce [qu'il ne] peust, ny deust sçavoir. Là sera contente nostre **volonté**, aymant ce bien universel, qui comprend tous biens, et hors lequel il n'y a rien dequoy on puisse jouyr. Et avec le goust de ceste joye souveraine se contentera nostre desir de telle sorte, emplissant la bouche de nostre cœur, qu'il ne luy restera rien plus à desirer. Là seront parfaitement salariees ces **trois vertus**, avec lesquelles Dieu est ici honoré, à sçavoir foy, charité, et esperance, la **foy** ayant pour salaire, la claire vision de Dieu: l'**esperance**, jouyssant de la possession d'icelle: et la **charité** imparfaite, se voyant accomplie en toute sa perfection.

(*Le vray chemin*, I, "Traité sixiesme," "Tiltre troisesme" ("De la troisesme joye..."), 160 v°-161 r°)

Interestingly, Granada's anaphoric "là" is not reproduced by Coignard, whose poetic style here is more "matter of fact" than the prose of her model: the stanzas suffice to distribute the material clearly and make it "sing" at the same time. While her model is firmly focused on the future, our poet offers a sort of dance between the future and the present, with (roughly) the same number of lines dedicated to each: a fairly elaborate *chassé croisé* in a text that seems so straightforward at first. Thus the quatrain about "entendement" includes a reference to its present negative state ("Qui jamais ne se repose," ln. 114) implied by, yet absent from, Granada's description. About "volonté," Coignard's language puts more emphasis on love, and on never having to leave, than the friar did. She also, once again, simplifies his reference to "ce bien universel" to highlight our desire for it, implying that it is presently active if not already exclusive ("Du seul

bien”). Where Granada insists rather heavily on satiety, Coignard manages to suggest two contradictory ideas at once: future satisfaction and present longing.

Furthermore, she removes her mentor’s amplification about “le goust de ceste joye souveraine” and replaces it with a mention of memory, which Granada had omitted, whereas he had described at length how much this particular faculty (along with imagination) will torture the damned, when they remember their “felicité passee” and “l’abondance en laquelle ils ont vecu”: “quel sera le crevecœur et tourment, qu’ils recevront de ceste memoire et souvenance?” (“Traité cinquiesme,” “Tiltre second,” 146 v°). Coignard’s addition raises the question of what the elect will remember from their past life. Her response could be understood in two ways: 1) memory *will* separate from its own “longue souvenance,” from itself as it were, to take exclusive residence in the “palais d’abondance”: in other words, it will *lose* something (like the souls of the ancient world in the waters of the Lethe) instead of becoming a fuller version of itself, as “entendement” and “volonté” will; 2) memory *currently* suffers from its “longue souvenance” (by separating from it or by getting lost into it, or both), and will be restored to a glorious state, like the other two intellectual faculties: it will no longer drift “en autre part,” as we now do. It is not just that we will remember everything without suffering from bad memories; but that memory, while fully active, will remain forever present to its new dwelling. Either way, this is another great example of the manner in which Coignard weaves our present and future states in four short lines.

Finally, about the “trois vertus,” is emphasized the fact that they come from God and return to Him as their own “guerdon.” Each virtue is considered in terms of the state of the individual soul that it will actively inhabit. Regarding faith, the idea of

contemplation is substituted to that of “claire vision.” Regarding hope, mention is made of the fear that currently corrupts it: a negative is once again brought in to “frame” a positive that we have a hard time imagining, precisely because we cannot shake the fear in question. Regarding charity, however, Granada was *already* doing this, contrasting “imparfaite” and “perfection.” Instead of reprising his words, our poet adds a different one: “dilection,” a synonym of “love” (of charity itself) that emphasizes its rational and willed nature (as opposed to that of an appetite or passion)⁵⁶². It is with this image, contained in just two words, of the deep love that unites God and the elect that we conclude this analysis of Coignard’s art, in *De la gloire*, of saying less in order to suggest more of what cannot be said.

⁵⁶² See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia-IIae, q. 26, a. 3.

CONCLUSION

The main question that we set out to answer in this dissertation is: can Gabrielle de Coignard's outlook, as perceived through her *Œuvres chrestiennes*, be described as hedonistic and, if so, to what extent? We asked this question, on the one hand, because it did not appear to us that Coignard's implied ethical system demanded entirely disinterested moral behavior (*i.e.*, the disinterested performance of good works); and on the other hand, because it was evident that pleasure, in its various forms, plays many roles throughout the form and content of her poetry – one of them being to incite affection for God, another to motivate and drive the devout Catholic poet upward on her own spiritual path. So we wondered if a close examination of Coignard's poetry would suggest that her ultimate motive – the one most informing and driving the actions, words, and thoughts revealed by the poet – might be the desire to attain, along with salvation, the greatest sum of pleasure and the least amount of pain.

In order to answer this question, it was necessary to identify what can be meant by the word “plaisir”; so we first set out to review the various definitions that have been applied to the hypernym. We also needed a clearer understanding of what hedonism is, since the term encompasses rather different ethical perspectives as well. Finally, a survey of philosophical and religious (Christian) traditions regarding the matter of pleasure helped us better ascertain what makes certain approaches hedonistic. It also helped us define specific areas of inquiry and provided us with multiple models to work from in order to better apprehend our central problem: that of the relation of pleasure – as

understood and experienced in this life – with what is posited as the highest (or “sovereign”) good, when the latter is not an abstraction or an ethical principle, but God Himself and, as a correlate, the concrete *fact* of being with God. The latter distinction is equally important: like Augustine and Aquinas before her, Coignard distinguishes between the sovereign good as such and heavenly beatitude (*eudaimonia* / felicity / supreme happiness). As we saw, she borrows a great deal from Luis de Granada in order to write about beatitude in *De la gloire et félicité de la vie éternelle*. Both authors are quick to remind us that the source and essential cause of eternal “glory” and felicity is God, with special emphasis on the *moment* of reunion, when the elect see their Creator clearly and experience, flowing from His goodness, a variety of pleasures in their purest form. Inevitably, from the perspective of mortal life (as opposed to that of eternity), this first moment carries special weight and offers, in and of itself, a powerful incentive.

The supreme joy (or “beatitude”) of living in God’s presence being, by definition, beyond our reach in this life, it is impossible *not* to envision its promise through our own experience of pleasure. This entails a double risk: 1) the trivialization of beatitude (its reduction to our own sense and sources of pleasure); and 2) its instrumentalization (and that of God Himself), if we end up pursuing the highest good (*i.e.* God) *because* He will make us happiest: treating Him as the means to that end, which becomes, in effect, the highest good in turn. The response of Christian hedonism to the second risk is simply that it will take care of itself, as long as we pursue the right kind of happiness (*i.e.*, do our honest best to address the first risk): for ultimately – in beatitude – the very distinction of means and ends dissolves; the happiness of those living in God’s presence is so complete that it does not occur to them to “use” God in order to be happy. In this life, however,

such a thought is bound to occur as we hope for “felicity,” and the question is what to make of it. We have studied the manner in which one late 16th-century Catholic poet wrestles with this issue, in writings that connect (explicitly or implicitly, in one way or another) the three notions of pleasure, beatitude, and the sovereign good.

Our conclusion can be stated simply: contrary to our initial surmise, we are now convinced that Coignard’s implied ethical system *cannot* be described as hedonistic. This is the case not only because Coignard, in Sonnet XXV, explicitly names God the “seul bien souverain” and does so by *isolating* the concept in its own category, making sure to prevent any reduction of it to pleasure (or any of the other goods listed in the sonnet); but also because the rest of her œuvre upholds that same position, albeit often implicitly. The fact that Coignard, compared to her predecessor Anne de Marquets or her mentor Luis de Granada, *refrains* from mentioning the “souverain bien” in her poems suggests that she is reluctant to contaminate it with other notions or images. She knows that a poem purporting to describe celestial bliss might both reduce it to ordinary human pleasures *and* make those a goal to be coveted under the guise of beatitude. That is why, when she dedicates an entire poem to the topic of “félicité,” she does not give herself full expressive license to treat this subject.

Scholars have characterized Coignard’s writing as quite chaste, conservative, often intimate and subdued or restrained in comparison to the secular and religious poets of her time. We join in this consensus specifically with respect to her representation of the sovereign good, beatitude, and pleasure. While those tendencies of her style may not cater to every reader’s aesthetic tastes, many will appreciate the skill that Coignard exhibits, not in copying the great poets of the Pléiade but, rather, in bending and

repurposing their literary devices (anaphora, adynaton, hyperbole, the very language of love, and a variety of *topoi*, starting with that of poetic immortality) in the service of her firmly Catholic doctrine. Even more importantly, we were able to show that Coignard applies a similar discipline – at least as far as the issue of “vie éternelle” is concerned – to her religious models, be they Marquet’s poetry, which likely influenced her, or Granada’s rhetoric (with its *a fortiori* arguments), which was her direct source. We saw that our poet may allow herself to use lavish images when she contemplates the suffering of Christ on the Cross, or that of His mother; but when she contemplates Heaven instead, her consistent choice is that of discretion and simplicity.

Even though she is not a hedonist, Coignard does write about pleasure – quite frequently, as we hope to have shown as well. What follows starts with a recapitulation of her various uses of this notion, and of the term “plaisir” specifically; after which we will step back and summarize, one last time, what our poet has to say about the supreme form of pleasure called beatitude, in relation to the “sovereign good.”

Forms and roles of pleasure

Coignard’s poetry does tend to associate different aspects or meanings of pleasure; her poems evoke the merging of an agreeable physical sensation and the correlated agreeable affective state, which results in an even greater, more intense experience of pleasure for her – one that invariably fulfills a longstanding desire (as opposed to pleasure of the spontaneous, unexpected, “surplus” sort). At the same time (and unsurprisingly), however, we do not see Coignard exploiting at any point the

potential ambiguities of the hypernym “plaisir” as a means of transgressing cultural or religious norms.

– *Earthly pleasures as means to an end – and their limits*

While Coignard gives preference to mental pleasures such as anticipation (especially of union with God, an issue to which we will return) and remembrance (especially “remembering” Christ on the Cross) over material or physical pleasures, the latter also have their place. Of course the poet writes of false, vain, empty, illusory, and deceitful pleasures which, we are warned, are to be firmly avoided. But pleasing sensations can be acceptable if they help move or direct the soul’s “eyes” and affections in the right direction; if they invite and inspire the individual to pursue eternal union with God. The pleasure of the senses that the poet experiences, for example, when she is out in Nature, causes her to look beyond it (for it is God’s handiwork) and contemplate the Creator Himself. This we have witnessed in many sonnets as well as in *De la gloire*. Moreover (in Sonnet XCVIII notably), the pleasure she experiences in Nature is sometimes described as the very *manifestation* of God Himself (the “Beauté”) present here on earth: Nature’s pleasures do not merely reflect God, they also mark His presence *if* His grace provides us with the ability to sense that. In both cases, we must remember that by curing our spiritual blindness and awakening our *entendement* as much as is possible in this life, we will only see what God wishes to show us – but not further.

Unlike Granada, Coignard does not insist that we need to look aggressively and methodically for the hidden utility of natural pleasures, by trying to identify how they make systematic reference to God. She certainly agrees that the goods in nature are

intended to teach us about Him, but she keeps the teaching light, as though natural pleasure pointed her – naturally indeed – in the right direction. Then again, she is willing to give up all of these pleasures here on earth if it ensures that she will be one of God’s elect. Nevertheless, since God has not (yet) asked her for this sacrifice, she feels that she must show Him gratitude by enjoying them and thanking Him for them rather than looking on them with indifference or even contempt. Seen in the right light, natural pleasures may in fact constitute an *action de grâce*.

A good example of this, we recall, is Sonnet XCVI, which shows the poet “aux champs loing des tourbes mondaines” (1, 254), enjoying “le fleury printemps” (2), “le doux bruit des coulantes fontaines, / Et des doux oyseletz les differents accords” (3-4), all “beautez” that allow her to contemplate God’s “graces souveraines” (8). In this case the spiritual consideration goes hand in hand with a more worldly or social one, as the poet condemns the “esprits engourdis” (9, 255) who make themselves drowsy with the “esbat paresseux des logis tapissez” (10), and whose soul is “de molz plaisirs [...] toute enyvree” (11). What drives them is not even those lowly pleasures as such, but “orgueil” (12), to which the poet opposes this lesson:

[...] il n’est rien si plaisant
Que mener en repos la vie d’un paysant,
Ayant l’affection du monde delivrée.
(12-14, 255)

Here the pleasure of “repos” is envisioned as a matter of lifestyle rather than salvation, although we may infer that the former could facilitate the latter. The “paysant” may not be free of all sins, but he is free of the sins that come from too much attachment to the world of wealth, luxury, and ambition.

Singing of Nature's charms and purported innocence is one of the main functions of poetry as Ronsard practiced it, and Coignard certainly remembers the Vendômois' lesson when she celebrates them in turn. But this subject also gives her a chance to turn toward God, which, simultaneously, redeems the pleasure provided by poetry itself – its images, its sounds and rhythms, its arguments. In a city famous for its *Jeux Floraux*, and in the wake of new efforts by the Catholic Church to renew devotional fervor among its constituents, Coignard embraces the opportunity to compose poems that are full of personal sentiment and openly exercise the imagination (along with “entendement” and “volonté”) so as to contemplate the (often ineffable) mysteries of her faith. While Calvinism had long condemned the worldly, carnal, “Pagan” seduction of poetry and promoted a sober “poésie pour ainsi dire antipoétique” instead, as Véronique Ferrer has shown⁵⁶³, the devotional poets at century's end (on the Catholic side in particular) are far less hesitant to embrace the pleasing effects of the art, in order to repurpose them toward a sacred end. While Coignard is careful and subdued in her descriptions of Heaven, her descriptions of Nature feel less reticent (thereby showing her enduring debt to Ronsard), insofar as they tie in with the mission to honor, praise, and please (or appease) God, as well as to incite readers to do the same.

Yet these earthly delights – be they rooted in nature or in art – do have their perils and limits. While they may be innocent in and of themselves, sin is bound to try perverting our use of them. Thus the pleasures of Nature are embraced by Coignard – the “paysant's” lifestyle notwithstanding, which is not hers to partake in anyway – only insofar as they invite and inspire her to perceive and praise the presence of God; but then

⁵⁶³ See Véronique Ferrer, “Pour une poétique réformée...,” quoted in our Introduction (p. 4, n. 11).

her own sin causes those same pleasures to awaken an ulterior and different passion, which leads to humiliation and pain instead. As Sonnet CXI (“J’avois un grand plaisir au plus chaut de l’esté”) illustrates vividly, if one aims to raise above this immediate pleasure and “fendre le ciel vouté” (8) in an effort to see and understand more than God allows, this “vol d’Icare” (12) will be punished, and the offending “esprit” will be drenched by a deluge of rain. Likewise, as we have seen, however holy the intent to write Christian poetry may be, an undeniable literary ambition still looms. Sometimes it imposes itself so mightily that the author is compelled to confess it in writing and even threatens to abandon the project altogether.

We also know, thanks to Cave’s analysis, that Coignard exhibits a personal “inclination towards pathetic emotion” (Cave 255) but also a taste for *mignardise* (Ronsard’s influence again), allowing some of her poems to indulge in highly decorative language and “style doux-coulant.” This led Cave to conclude that the subjects of such poems are not merely contemplated “for moral or theological profit” but also “for the sake of the emotional indulgence, and indeed the delight, of the reader” (Cave 256-257). It is not by chance that a poem like *De la gloire* denies itself this “indulgence.” Literary pleasures may be unleashed to the point of excess and ambiguity when the subject is Christ’s or Mary’s suffering; but they have to be kept under control – with the kind of poetic restraint exhibited by many Psalms and by their translation at the hands of Marot – when the subject is beatitude, the highest delight of all.

– *Perfect pleasure on earth*

Earthly pleasures can become vectors of sin; conversely, there is a form of pleasure, in this life, which consists of recovering from sin – or, more precisely, of being forgiven (for this recovery is not in our hands). Sonnet LI (derived from Psalms 50/51⁵⁶⁴ and 36/37) speaks of the “plaisir parfait” that King David, “ce bon Roy penitent” (3), having grievously sinned and deeply repented, desires just as deeply: nothing more and nothing less than “la remission de son grave forfait” (10). This is the “douce faveur” that he is spiritually and physically aching for: while it will console and heal his soul (8), “ses os humiliez” (7) too are desiring it, “ses os courbez de penitence” (11) too will rejoice in it. Body and soul will partake in the joy of having left this one sin behind; and we can imagine the King singing and dancing in relief. The sonnet concludes as follows:

Les pecheurs penitents n’ont jamais tel plaisir,
Qu’alors qu’ils sont espris de quelque bon desir,
Qui monstre ses effects dedans leur conscience.
(12-14, 201)

Thus, David’s example is generalized: the “perfect pleasure” he was hoping for will be felt by any sinner upon being afforded redemption. This is a Christianized version of the notion of pleasure as repair or replenishment: the highest delight we can have in this life soars from the cleansing of a sin. The key lies in the pain that sin causes to our conscience (if we have one): we can think of nothing else, which, in turn, makes our “bon desir” for redemption exclusive and overwhelming. It even seems that the “desir” that

⁵⁶⁴ The title of this sonnet is “Sur le verset, *Audi tui meo dabis gaudium*.” These words are the beginning of Psalm 50/51:10. Winn provides the full verse in its French translation: “Tu donneras joye et liesse à mon ouye: et les os humiliez s’en esjouiront” (Coignard 200, n. 1). Notice how “joye et liesse” are replaced, in Coignard’s poem, by the expression “plaisir parfait.” On another note, we wonder if either the poet, her daughters, or the publishers intentionally made this sonnet LI since the verse it concerns comes from Psalm 51 in the Latin portion (which is Psalm 50 in the French portion) of Benoist’s Bible (see vol. 2, fol. 19 r°). Winn does not discuss this possibility.

drives the conscience almost anticipates the unparalleled pleasure that redemption will bring. It is interesting to note, however, that the generalizing conclusion of the sonnet replaces the striking image of a desire felt by the King in his very bones with the tamer image of its effects in one's conscience: Coignard refrains from appropriating the concrete language of the Bible to apply it to the case of ordinary sinners; she "translates" it, for our common use, into the generic vocabulary of penitence.

The terms become more personal when Coignard reiterates this concept in her imitation (amplification) of the *Stabat Mater*. The original hymn reads as follows:

*Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.*
(Ins. 13-15)⁵⁶⁵

In Coignard's version, we read:

Que parmy ces grands alarmes,
Je me fonde toute en larmes,
Oubliant tous les soucis
De ce monde populaire;
Que rien ne me puisse plaire
Que l'amour du Crucifis.
(*Stabat Mater*, 37-42, 314-315)

The idea developed by Sonnet LI is now expressed in the form of a desire "Que rien ne me puisse plaire / Que l'amour du Crucifis." The (perfect) pleasure that Coignard prays for, whose "pechez" are mentioned in the previous stanza (33), is rooted in the "amour du Crucifis" (42), which carries with it not just the idea but the act of remission⁵⁶⁶. Yet the

⁵⁶⁵ *Missale Romanum*. Cincinnati: Benziger Brothers, 1956.

⁵⁶⁶ When comparing Coignard's *Stabat Mater* with La Ceppède's *Imitation du Stabat Mater*, Michel Coyssard's *Paraphrase du Stabat Mater, tirant sur le mesme chant du Latin*, and César de Nostredame's *Les Larmes de la sainte Vierge*, we noticed that Coignard's poem is the only one that makes this request in explicit terms of "plaisir." The closest match comes from Nostredame: "Veuille qu'avec tes yeux mes prunelles demeurent / Sur ce tronc precieux, ou repose mon bien: / aussi Mere d'amour je ne desire rien, / Sinon qu'avec les tiens tous mes delices meurent" (*Les Larmes de la sainte Vierge*, lns. 53-56, Nostredame 48). In fact, the language and imagery from Nostredame's stanza "Acheve Sainte Mere

poet's focus on pleasure does not stop there; she then draws an opposition between the effect of redemption and the impure pleasures that must be crushed:

Que dans son sang je me plonge,
Et le fiel de ceste esponge
Mortifie mes plaisirs
(Ins. 43-45, p. 315)

The exclusive language ("...jamais...ne...") returns to suggest that the pleasure afforded by redemption should replace all others, and likewise put all other desires to rest:

Que jamais mon coeur ne pense
Qu'au pertuis de ceste lance,
Le repos de mes desirs.
(46-48, *ibid.*)⁵⁶⁷

Here, though, conscience does not suffice to initiate the task of repentance and penitence and open the perspective of "repos": this differs from Sonnet LI, which focuses on David's remorse and redeeming. The poet's soul is "frozen" in her sins (33): the assistance of the Crucified's image, contemplated in great detail (the nails, the sponge, the hole in Jesus' side, *etc.*), is needed to thaw and warm it. The ulterior pleasure of remission is only hoped for; the poet first has to pray the Virgin Mary for *pain*:

accomplir cest ouvrage, / Que je soy de ce Fils si doucement jaloux, / Qu'ayant emprains au cœur sa couronne et ses cloux, / Sa honte soit ma gloire, et mon los son outrage" (Ins. 41-44, p. 47) reminds us of the closing tercets of Coignard's Sonnet I. The latter could only have been influenced by the former if Nostredame's poem had circulated much earlier than its official publication in 1606 suggests. The reverse (Coignard influencing Nostre Dame) seems unlikely; another conjecture is that the two poets were inspired by a third source. *Les Larmes de la sainte Vierge* appears in: Nostredame, César de. *Les Perles, ou les Larmes de la sainte Magdeleine. Avec quelques Rymes saintes dédiées à Madame la Contesse de Carces. Par Cesar de Nostradame Gentilhomme Provençal. A Tolose. De l'Imprimerie dès Colomiez. 1606.* Toulouse: Colomiez, 1606. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623322n>>.)

⁵⁶⁷ In *Complainte de la Vierge Marie*, Coignard prays that the blood flowing from Christ on the Cross be the very site where her "ame s'esjouisse" (85), "s'endorme" (86), and forget its vice and worldly pleasure (86). She also asks that her soul never "de ce lieu et place deloger" (88) but that it remain there singing "allegrement avecque le Prophete: / C'est icy mon logis et ma seure retraicte, / **Je prens pour mon repos ceste habitation, / Puis que c'est le vray lieu de ma redemption**" (89-92, 545-546). Notice, too, how, among numerous other changes, Coignard replaces Granada's expression "chante **doucement** avec le Prophete" (67 r°) with "Chantant **allegrement** avecque le Prophete" (ln. 89). Also notice how both Granada and Coignard allude to the proactive choice made by the will to embrace this holy "habitation" that is Christ's blood: Granada writes "**j'ay choisi** ceste habitation" (67 r°) and Coignard writes "**Je prens** pour mon repos ceste habitation" (ln. 91). In the same vein, the female poet fervently declares to her God: "C'est toy Dieu tout puissant, que je prens pour espoux" (*La Mort et Passion*, ln. 128, p. 528).

Que mon ame soit attaincte,
 Et sente profondement
 La douleur de son offence
 (56-58, 315)

Hence the focus on the Redeemer's suffering, which incites her to share it. Coignard's poetry can celebrate the delight that stems from forgiveness, but does not take it for granted; often drawing, instead, on the Passion's narrative to practice a sort of mental flagellation. Nor should the pleasure of being forgiven be anticipated too much in prayer. But with this prayer comes a commitment, and the "bon desir" ensues:

Rien que mon Redempteur Crucifié pour moy,
 Je ne veux escouter, rien je ne veux cognoistre.

Venez doncques, Seigneur, posseder tous mes sens,
 Attirez mes esprits, ha! desja je me sens
 Plaine d'un **chaut desir** de vous louer sans cesse.

Je n'ay rien de ma part que ce foible vouloir,
 Armez moy s'il vous plaist d'un asseuré pouvoir,
 Et pour sauver mon ame animez ma foiblesse.
 (CXXIV, 7-14, 289-290)

Behind lines 7-8 are the twin notions of the remission of her sins and the love that was expressed for her and all of humanity through Christ's death on the cross. As we saw earlier, the sonnet begins with the poet's refusal to be "savante" about anything else, and Coignard's daughters attest to this desire as well in their dedication: "elle disoit que c'estoit savoir tout que n'ignorer point les moyens de son salut. C'estoit là sa science" ("Aux dames devotieuses," Coignard 130)⁵⁶⁸. Such a "philosophy," if we may call it that, is the logical culmination of what we have seen: if God is the sovereign good and union with Him is the ultimate beatitude, then a "perfect pleasure" on this side of Heaven

⁵⁶⁸ Their description continues as follows: "ses preceptes et maximes [étaient] les commandemens de Dieu; sa theorique, cognoistre et contempler la boné, sagesse et puissance divine; sa pratique, les oeuvres de misericorde; ses propos et ses escrits, les louanges de Dieu" (130).

consists perhaps less in the sheer anticipation of the latter than in the experience of forgiveness and of the relief it brings; which, in turn, is both expressed and enacted by Jesus dying. This may also be thought of as anticipating the Last Judgment, through which the ultimate forgiving will place the elect in Heaven: again the focus, inevitably, is on the beginning, the threshold, rather than on eternity itself.

For Coignard, the greatest pleasure (experienced in this life, imagined for the next one) is a “repos” in which one’s desires are freed from the grip of the world. Penitence and devotion before the Crucifix, which make redemption palpable, accomplish this in a specific way, purifying (albeit temporarily) one’s conscience from the effects of this world, even when still living in it. Other forces do not fail to pull at the strings of our poet’s heart and distract it from its one true aim, however: Coignard has to confess that she does not deserve the eternal “repos” for which she so desperately longs:

Plaise toy donc, Seigneur, par ta grace infinie,
Me donner le repos de l’éternelle vie.
Pardonne, s’il te plaist, ma grand’ temerité
De vouloir un tel bien sans l’avoir mérité.
(*Hymne de la vertu de Contenance*, 193-196, 626)

– *Meditating on heavenly pleasures*

Between earthly pleasures and their heavenly counterparts⁵⁶⁹ lies a form of delight that comes from anticipating and contemplating the latter. As we have seen, earthly pleasures are mostly a vector that may be used to direct us to God, but can also lead us

⁵⁶⁹ We recall that Heaven is described as the “lieu de toute joye” (ln. 224, p. 616). This may bring to mind Sonnet CVII, in which the poet celebrates the “joye assurée” (4) for which the Pénitents bleus separate their hearts from all worldly pleasures. Mary, now in Heaven, is described as “Abondante en delices” (ln. 13, p. 308). Just a few of the many other pleasures that the poet associates with Heaven are identified in her version of the *Beatitudes* (pp. 301-307): riches inherited (4), consolation (8), the peace of one’s thoughts (11), a certain “loyer” and the end of thirst and hunger (15-16), grace and pity from God (19-20), our sight of God in His future glory (23), being considered children of God and being forgiven of our sins (26-27).

astray; they must be constantly mobilized, scrutinized, and discarded. In contrast, the heavenly pleasures are expected to remain and coexist with our focus on God, since our beatified mind will no longer be at risk of prioritizing them over God Himself⁵⁷⁰. We will, somehow, be able to constantly see and contemplate God while enjoying those pleasures (and, conversely, enjoy them by virtue of God's presence illuminating them, since they all proceed from Him). However, the pleasing idea of those heavenly pleasures as we presently conceive of them and allow them to motivate us must be handled in the same way as the pleasures of the world. That is, they may (in fact, they *must*) be "used" and contemplated, but they must also eventually be discarded, so that our main focus and ultimate drive remain directed toward God for His own sake.

Granada's *Vray chemin* exhorts the devout to imagine and contemplate divine things: refusing to do so may prevent them from attaining eternal beatitude. Coignard certainly believed that the divine is not only ineffable but also unimaginable: to imagine it irresponsibly is to run the risk of mental fatigue, self-deception, and dishonoring God. Of course, sin is bound to tempt the mind to "use" that which ought to be "enjoyed" and "enjoy" that which should only be "used." One of the great challenges for the author of devotional poetry, as Coignard understands it, is to write about the sovereign good, beatitude, and pleasure in a manner that respects their hierarchical ordering. She must achieve this in a manner that is both appropriately vague and sufficiently attractive. But how does one avoid the dangers of diverting from the truth or diluting it too much?

⁵⁷⁰ See for example the *Hymne de la vertu de Contenance*. After invoking God's help to provide her and her words with the appropriate virtues, she promises to sing, not only of God and of His glory (ln. 9, p. 617), but also to communicate "le plaisir et le contentement, / Que tu donnes à ceux qui t'ayment loyaument" (11-12). Soon thereafter, she asserts that, if the God-given gifts of pleasure, contentment, virtue, and forgiveness of sins "sont enclos dedans l'ame, / Ils monstrent tousjours quelque divine flamme, / Dont celui qui les a, peut parler à souhait, / Comm'ayant dans le coeur un fondement parfait" (17-20).

At times, we do find ambiguity or slippage in Coignard's representation of these three elements. This is what paves the way for us to be tempted, in turn, to interpret celestial goods, rewards, or pleasures, rather than God Himself, as that which most compels the author to desire Heaven. Yet, even though not every poem of hers makes clear the distinction between the sovereign good and the variety of promised goods or pleasant experiences to which she frequently makes reference, we hope to have shown how Sonnet XXV and *De la gloire* are particularly helpful in drawing those lines for us. In the latter, the eyes of our imagination are constantly being turned back to focus on God and His actions after almost every (partial, and often abstract if not "negative") representation the poet makes of pleasures and goods that flow from the beatific vision.

This is what allows us to conclude that Coignard does not represent heavenly pleasures as possessing value in and of themselves; they need something else to cause them to be good and pleasing. God, of course, is that only cause – albeit one that cannot be apprehended as such. Hence the focus on intercession figures like Mary; hence the mediating role of the Passion, nourishing the poet's hope and making it more concrete: she prays that Christ's blood be the agent that gives access to her ultimate enjoyment: "Que ton sang pretieux me lave et me nettoye, / Et me fasse jouyr de l'eternelle joye" (*La Mort et Passion*, 313-314, 537-538). Here the promise of eternal bliss merges with an image that is at once carnal and pure.

Virtue, beatitude, and love

At the most basic level, in terms of Coignard's outlook among the traditions that we discussed in Chapter I, we conclude from the survey summarized above that no trace

of “folk hedonism” can be found in her work; nor do we see substantial evidence of any strand of philosophical hedonism⁵⁷¹. Again, this is because she considers the sovereign good and beatitude – let alone the sovereign good and our current, imperfect representation of our future beatitude – to be two different things: hence her need to emphasize that God, not the pleasure of being with God, is the highest good. Nevertheless, she allows herself to think that the kind of pleasure that God will provide *can* be characterized in some ways: such representations may be imperfect, but that does not make them false, as long as one remains aware of their imperfection. Part of what attracts Coignard to the type of celestial pleasure that she calls “repos,” for example (even though she recognizes that any words used to describe it will not come anywhere close to the reality), is that it involves freedom from pain and worry; the focus, as we just saw, is on the moment when the burden is lifted from our shoulders.

This idea, necessarily expressed in human terms, happens to be analogous to the type of pleasure the Epicureans valued most; which is what allowed Christian writers like Valla or Erasmus to play (within limits) with the idea that Christians are the “true” Epicureans, even though their ultimate sense of what is at stake could not be more different. Coignard does not go as far. But she visibly enjoys the notion of heavenly pleasure as “repos,” to which her poems add that of replenishment, of returning to a state in which she will feel complete, whole. Even though she does not frame this notion in terms of returning to one’s “natural state,” like Aristotle would have done (in the earlier

⁵⁷¹ It remains true, however, that not unlike (but not because of) Epicurus, Coignard – like all Christian writers – gives preference to lasting pleasures over temporary ones. The notion of “lasting” hardly suffices, however: it is the idea of beatitude as *eternal* that allows it to transcend the ordinary span of pleasure and reject all its other forms, however long-lasting, *because* they remain temporary. It is in this sense that Coignard chooses to highlight God as (object causing) “**perdurable**” joy (Sonnet XXV, ln. 4).

stage of his thinking on the subject), we could certainly associate it with that of returning to the natural state of mankind before the Fall in the Garden of Eden, when we were still in harmonious relation with God and all of creation, and nothing was lacking. Yet again, it does not follow that the notion of a “natural state” – to which the simple life of a “paysant” remains closest – would suffice to describe man’s original condition in the presence of God. Nor does it follow that celestial eternity will merely restore it: Heaven is not the original Garden. Again, we see that any attempt to characterize the pleasure of being with God has to borrow from other images while recognizing, at every turn, that beatitude lies infinitely beyond them.

Coignard’s outlook does seem to have inherited elements of Platonism, by way of Augustine, Granada, and secular Petrarchan poetry. Plato and his heirs draw a distinction between the type of pleasure experienced when a lack is replenished and the more mysterious type of pleasure that the soul will experience when it reunites with the “One.” Christian Platonism, in the Renaissance, insists on this distinction. Yet Coignard does not seem particularly eager to enforce it: we saw that she highlights the former type of pleasure (replenishment) as one of the first (though not necessarily perpetual) pleasures experienced upon entering the kingdom of Heaven and being united with God. As long as one does not lose sight of what separates human notions of pleasure from the “souverain bien,” it is in fact *better* to envision beatitude in frankly human terms than to speculate on its nature, as some Platonists do, as though we were able to apprehend it as such. This modest approach (we do not know what felicity will consist of, but we sense that it will bring us peace and make us whole) is also authorized by the belief that the body will

eventually be resurrected, in spiritual form, to join the soul in its beatitude⁵⁷². Whatever the latter is, it will not be abstract or disembodied: in this sense, it is not abusive to imagine it by “extrapolating” from our own embodied experience.

As we have seen, Neo-Stoicism is the ethical doctrine that has most visibly found a home in Coignard’s poetry. With respect to the cardinal virtues, rather than the theological ones, there is no question that she honors and pursues courage, resolution, constancy, and mastery of the passions. We have seen that her ethical vocabulary tends to revolve around a “je veux” – suggesting that the will is tested over time, and that virtues in general imply a hard-won habit, to be not just acquired but fought for. The *Hymne de la vertu de Continence*, for example, insists that virtue is only achieved – and merits greater honor – if it is pursued for a longer period of time:

Choisissons le grand nombre ou celuy de soixante^[573],
 A fin de ne tromper l’esper de nostre attente,
 Et encor que ce choix nous semble estre ennuyeux,
 Parce qu’il tient bridez nos desirs vitieux,
 Toutesfois il y a tant de douceurs cachées,
 Qui se monstrent à ceux qui les ont bien cerchées,
 Mais ne faut s’estonner si dans le premier port,
 On treuve la vertu de difficile abbort:
 Ce n’est point tout à coup qu’avoir on la merite,
Car tant plus une chose est de longue poursuite,
Plus apporte d’honneur au ferme poursuyvant,
 Car jamais la vertu sans combat ne se rend.
 (101-112, 622)

However, as we have also seen, even when the poet tries to master her passions, she admits that she may be defeated and that, in any case, she will never be able to do so

⁵⁷² Coignard does seem to believe that, preceding this reunion, the soul and the physical body are separated, the soul going to Heaven immediately. It is in this sense that death is nothing but “le repos de l’ame qui desire / Se delivrer de son fardeau charnel” (Sonnet LXXXI, lns. 12-13, p. 238). Similarly, see ln. 53 in *Complainte de la Vierge Marie*: immediately after Christ dies on the Cross, “Le corps ne sentit rien car il n’avoit plus d’ame” (p. 542).

⁵⁷³ Cf. I Timothy 5:9-10: At the age of 60, a widow could be added to the list of those benefiting from Church assistance.

perfectly until she reaches Heaven. She often laments the dissolution of the same virtues that she recommends; in the end, we are reminded that they will never develop entirely from her will (*i.e.*, the seat of her own agency); rather, their success depends most of all on God's grace⁵⁷⁴. God and the will can cooperate, but grace will take over whenever the will (inevitably) falters. In other words, while the ethical command of human will is not entirely disqualified on its own terms, it is both reaffirmed and superseded by the spiritual and eschatological reality of our condition.

The most important difference between Coignard's implied ethics and the Stoic system is that virtue is not, for our poet, practiced for its own sake. Pleasure may not be the sovereign good, but neither is virtue as such. Being with God is a prospective good that is infinitely superior to any "bien intérieur" recommended in ethics, of the Stoic kind or otherwise. It follows that virtue is practiced by Christians for the sake of some other purpose or reward: it is not right to instrumentalize God, but it *is* right to instrumentalize the virtues we practice, at least with respect to our ultimate goal, which should *not* be simply to keep practicing them. Thus, in Sonnet XII, we saw that the point of the message is not that virtue be repaired as virtue but that it be made apt to receive the Word of God, whose purpose exceeds it. Elsewhere, virtue is represented as a means to please and access God and (or as) the "repayment" that He has promised. This same logic allows the devout believer to abandon the cardinal virtue of temperance, the Aristotelian notion

⁵⁷⁴ In the opening lines of *Hymne de la vertu de Contenance*, a similar notion is applied to the degree of virtue possessed by the very words of her poetry: "Avant que de ma bouche un mot je face naistre, / **Je veux** tres-humblement supplier mon doux maistre / D'eslargir de ses biens à ma nécessité, / Et monstrier dessus moy sa liberalité, / Car **je ne puis former parole vertueuse**, / Ayant dedans le coeur une ame vitieuse. / Mais s'il te plaist, Seigneur, de revestir mon coeur / De **ces rares vertus dont tu es le donneur**" (1-8, 617). Again we see the poet's will ("Je veux") dedicated to recognizing that it does not suffice.

of a “golden mean,” or the serene *apatheia* advocated by Stoicism, in favor of the “extreme” that is true love for God, which is at the heart of devotional practices.

This love is also known as the theological virtue of charity, about which Coignard departs even further, unsurprisingly, from the Stoic notion that virtue is a matter of will, since charity – God’s love for us, and our love for Him and one another in return – is, by definition, a grace given to those who desire it, carrying sweet, “easy” rewards that can be experienced even in this lifetime:

Imitons la vertu de ces trois simples femmes,
 Et nous aurons des fruits pour sustenter nos ames.
 Ceste belle vertu nous monstrera les muis
 Des saints thresors du ciel, de paradis les huis,
 Mais que ces qualitez soient bien avant poussées
 Dedans le plus profond de nos humbles pensées.
 C’est un plaisant repos qui chasse tout esmoy,
 C’est l’armure d’espoir, le soustien de la foy,
 Le baulme pour guerir nos griefves maladies,
 Nettoyant du peché les playes envieillies.
 Ce doux medicament est bien mis au pouvoir
 De celuy qui le cherche et le desire avoir,
 Quoy que ceste vertu soit grandement utile,
 Si rend elle à chacun **la pratique facile;**
Elle peut soulager nostre penible faix,
Mettant entre nos mains la couronne de paix:
 Car si le vray Chrestien est armé de ses armes,
 Il ne craindra l’effort des plus cruels alarmes.

(Hymne sur la louange de la Charité, 311-328, 603-604)

Charity already gives us some “repos” in this life (and therefore a taste of more to come). This helps mitigate the double risk mentioned above: any imagination of future bliss powered by love (for God) as *currently* felt is sanctified by it, therefore elevated above ordinary pleasures; likewise, our love for God, if genuine, makes us want to be with Him for His own sake. As saint Paul famously says (I Cor. 13:5), charity (contrary to ordinary attachment, and erotic love in particular) never seeks “its own advantage.” The more our

image of celestial pleasures is shaped by disinterested love for the God who will provide them, the less it can be suspected of making those pleasures our goal.

The problem, of course, is that charity too, like the will, tends to falter in the human soul, as Coignard confesses in the all-important Sonnet XC (“si quelque fois mon amour diminue”). Charity too, in human experience, often has to be desired, hoped for, longed for, as shown by Sonnets XV, XXXIII, XXXVI, and C among others. It follows that the poetry that expresses its author’s sincere love for God could not pretend, without lying, that this “amour” is always there and constitutes its sole, self-sufficient argument.

One element, among Coignard’s attempts to express or suggest beatitude by connecting it with charity, stands out to us in particular. Sonnet XXV states in no uncertain terms that the poet wishes to “estre à” God. That is, she wishes to be *devoted to* God, to *exist for* God, and to *belong to* God. This desire is also expressed in Sonnet XIV, (“Je me suis à luy seul entierement vouée,” 13, 157). In Sonnet XV, she asks that Charity (*i.e.*, Christ’s love) “enlass[e]” her soul in its “rets amoureux” (14, 158); and in Sonnet XXXVII, she describes her heart as being “espris,” seized by God’s love, her “seul bien, seul amour” (8, 183). In contrast, we saw how the secular poets want witnesses to their pain: they are often focused on themselves, or they wish to see, hear, or hold once more the object of their affection. In *De la gloire*, however, Coignard’s desire does grow or expand a bit from the simple wish to “estre à” God. While this wish is not passive to begin with (in that charity, even more than the will, animates it), in *De la gloire* she wonders, more proactively still, when she will get to contemplate God, to see His face.

This is how she sketches out this beatific vision:

Le voyant en sa beauté,
En sa gloire nompareille,

En sa sainte royauté,
 Pleine de douce merveille.
 (61-64, 341)

The terms chosen here are not directly descriptive: they do not claim to tell us what God's beauty, glory, or royalty "look like," but merely set us on the path initiated by our understanding of these notions. The key, however, is that these traits characterizing God will be *seen*, will be an object of *vision*. While the poet does not describe what we will see, she insists all the more effectively that we *will* see it. This is what she calls "la consommation / De la perdurable vie" (65-66), the perfect accomplishment or "realization" and fruition of eternal life. The beatific vision is *not* the baseline, starting point, or "medium" for the perfect beatific life: it *is* that life, in and of itself; the whole of it. To see God is to be with God, and vice versa: by this vision, writes Coignard, "Toute ame sera ravie" (68, 341). Of course this ravishment of our soul is nothing like the devouring of our life caused by our fear of death (lns. 83-84). Rather, the soul that will be

Jouissant en ce saint lieu
 De la presence divine,
 De la gloire du haut Dieu
 (69-71)

will be entirely fulfilled, by virtue of the Platonic paradox, expressed elsewhere, according to which "le coeur qui fort aime, / Vit plus en son aimé que non pas en soy mesme" (*Complainte de la Vierge Marie*, 193-194, 551): a state that is described as painful alienation (from oneself) by the secular poets is transformed here – in the light of charity – as the highest conceivable (and most blissful) mode of being.

Given the order in which Coignard writes of all that will happen – in the future tense – to our faculties, to the soul, heart, mind, will, memory, but also to the senses, which receive special emphasis, it seems that the "union parfaite" that will occur

(according to lns. 169-172) is expected to take place only after the body has been placed in Heaven and reunited with its soul: the full “consommation” is an embodied experience; which suggests that the sense of sight is involved in the “vision” that allows it. All aspects of the beatific vision are also fully lived as effects of it: what the poem is forced to describe successively amounts to a single, eternal reality (vision as union, union as vision), in which everything occurs at the same “time” (which is not time anymore). Again the Passion provides an indispensable mediation here: Christ’s own words from the Cross, as quoted in Sonnet CXVII, help shed light on the transformation of what we keep envisioning, as mortals, in temporal terms, and on our possible *anticipation* of it.

Having declared to His heavenly Father that “tout est consommé, Pere, voicy mon heure” (8, 281), with a human sense of ending (“consommation” in this case means “termination”), Jesus continues as follows:

[...] mon peuple est racheté,
J’ay choisi dans mon cœur une espouse nouvelle.
[...]
Et tant qu’à l’advenir les siecles dureront,
Elle doit estre en moy comme je suis en elle.
(10-14, 281)

As long as time itself exists – *i.e.*, *before* the full “consommation” that will end time itself and fulfill this promise in Heaven –, mutual love (charity) will ensure, in this life, a form of union between Christ and those whom His death has redeemed. It is from within this sense of mutual love that Coignard’s most ardent poems are written. The metaphorical rope that directly and tightly unite Creator and creature is “amour” (*De la gloire*, 170, 348). When the poet longs to “languir d’amour” (213) for God’s own “presence amoureuse” (216), she makes clear that she is not “there” yet; but, in an indirect sense, she is, since love, as soon as it is felt, does “realize” a form of union that will last as long

as time before being full “realized” in eternity. The wish reiterated in *La Mort et Passion*, where Coignard implores her Lord, on the Cross: “Et qu’avec toy, Seigneur, en la mort et la vie, / Par une forte amour je sois tousjours unie” (125-126, 528), is more than a mere wish in this sense: the “union” was made real by redemption, and so love experiences it for real even as it does not (yet) experience it in full.

The extent to which this “earthly” beatitude enacted by love anticipates its heavenly counterpart remains an open question, however. As Sonnet LXXVII makes clear, Coignard believes that it consists in conforming one’s own will to God’s, following the example of all other creations and creatures:

Toute felicité que l’homme peut cognoistre
Et desire jouir au monde passager,
Consiste à saintement sa volonté ranger,
Unissant son vouloir à celui de son maistre.

L’air, la terre et le ciel, et tout ce qui a estre,
Suit comme son troupeau ce haut et grand berger,
Tout ce qui doit ça bas nostre exil soulager,
C’est ce bien de le suivre et de le recognoistre.

Bien-heureux sont ceux-là qui voyent clairement
Ce que nostre bon Dieu nous monstre incessamment,
Nous dirons à jamais: heureuses les oreilles

Qui escoutent parler l’esprit de verité,
Bien-heureux sont les coeurs en toute eternité,
Adorans, plains d’amour, ses bontez nompareilles.

(233-234)

The earthly version of “felicité” described in the quatrains does not erase the sense that this world is “passager”; nor can it be separated from a sense of relief to be had during this exile – for which we should be all the more grateful when experienced against the background of suffering and death. There would seem to be a contrast between this form of happiness and that experienced by those who are already “en toute eternité” (13),

where proper and full adoration and love will take place. Yet lines 9-12 allow for some ambiguity between the two: the “bien-heureux” described there could already be the elect, but might also still be those who pay attention, in this world, to what God is saying and showing, thus “seeing clearly,” not Him yet (as will happen in Heaven), but at least the full order and intent of His Creation. This ambiguity goes as far as Coignard can go (without explicitly counting herself among “ceux-là”) in the anticipation of beatitude⁵⁷⁵.

While one’s free will is expected to play a small (though by no means easy) role in the process described by this sonnet, it is ultimately by God’s grace that the weak and sinful human being will be able to carry it out satisfactorily. This is the condition to any form or measure of beatitude on earth. As we have seen, the ultimate accomplishment of human will is to yield before God’s, thus dedicating its own energy, as it were, to humbling and ultimately erasing itself. The call to conform one’s will to God’s is then implied at the end of Sonnet CIII:

Mais de ta sainte main, ô Dieu plein de bonté,
J’embrasseray mon mal ou ma douce santé,
Car ton divin vouloir est ce que je veux suivre.
(12-14, 263)

Loving God and His goodness, compared to this, is certainly a more positive and dynamic affection to possess. It can strive, to an extent, without the paradox of self-erasure inflicted on will, even though it too, as we just saw, will naturally ebb and flow in the

⁵⁷⁵ Conversely, we may also ask here whether the elect will retain any memory of the “monde passager.” This question could also be raised with respect to what may or may not be implied about Mary’s transformed impression of Christ’s (and, by extension, her) wounds. In *La descente de notre Seigneur aux limbes*, the Mother of Christ experiences “Tant [...] de plaisir en ses divins regards” (ln. 216, p. 583) when she sees her resurrected “enfant bien-aimé” (207) that, upon looking at “les pertuis des playes glorieuses, / Qui furent à son coeur des pointes douloureuses” (213-214), those very wound openings now feel to her like “doux amoureux dards” (214-215). In other words, will pains endured on earth (or the memory thereof) not be forgotten but, instead, be transformed into something pleasant? Or does this portion of Coignard’s narrative merely serve to enhance our impression of Mary’s happiness in that moment on earth?

heart of sinful mortals⁵⁷⁶: since “la douce charité” (133) “est imparfaicte au monde” (134), we can only expect to possess perfect, complete love – charity filled with “l’extremité / De dilection profonde” (*De la gloire*, 135-136, 345) – when it flows from God in His presence, instead of palliating His absence. “Earthly beatitude” is real (made real by love), but once again we see how much Coignard’s poetry remains balanced and self-correcting: there is no such thing as anticipation (no matter how legitimate), in her poems, without some sort of reminder of the necessary distance and distinction between the “bonheur” we may have and the one we *will* have, if and when reunited with God.

With this study, we hope to have advanced the body of scholarship concerning a relatively obscure female poet from 16th-century France. But it is this self-correcting – the endless inflections and nuances dictated by faith and humility that we see at play in her work, between and within her poems – that we have come to appreciate the most; both as a poetic quality and as a form of guidance. For what we have found, along the way, is that the profoundly sincere art of Gabrielle de Coignard may help us to face and express the ambiguities or tensions that we encounter, inevitably, in our own ethical and spiritual experience.

⁵⁷⁶ See also (in addition to XC) Sonnet XCVIII: “Heureux desirs dressez si hautement, / **Heureux vouloir d’aymer parfaitement**, / Ceste beauté qu’en silence j’adore” (lns. 12-14, p. 258). The desire to love perfectly is there, but it is not yet actualized.

APPENDIX

ODES DE BERNARD DU POEY - transcription de l'édition de 1551

ODES

Du Gave, Fleuve en Bearn.
 Du Fleuve de Garonne, avec les
 tristes chans à sa Caranite.

Par Bernard du Poey de Luc en Bearn.

[Emblem: OU VERTU GUIDE HONNEUR SUI]

A TOLOSE.

Par Guyon Boudeville, juré de la ville
 et Université d'icelle. 1551.

[p. 2 –]

A tresillustres Prince,
 Et Princesse
 Antoine de Bourbon Duc de Vandosme,
 et Madame J[e]anne de Navarre
 Ses souverains Seigneurs.

[...]

[p. 20 –]

P. Du Cedre
 Tolosain à l'Auteur, de l'Ode de Garonne.
 SONNET.

L'Amenité des verdoyans rivages
 Enflent le cours de la claire Garonne
 Le sol fertile ses habitans guerdonne
 Abondamment de vins bleds et fruitages.
 L'onde arrosant des prés les frais herbages
 A l'œil fâché tel contentement donne
 Que le premier des Fleuves on l'ordonne
 De l'Aquitaine en fruits ou pasturages.

Nature l'a embelly par saison
 Mais nostre auteur plus sans comparaison
 Son loz et bruit à tous fera cognoistre
 Puis qu'en ses vers fait la description
 De l'heur et bien qu'est en sa region
 Ou nul n'avoit voulu la plume mettre.

[p. 21 –]

A Monseigneur Jaques
 Du Faur President
 d'Enquestes à Paris et Abbé de la Case
 Dieu, à son retour de Paris.
 Sonnet.

Quand le soleil descend au Capricorne,
 Double les nuits: son flambeau gracieux
 En esloignant du trait de noz clairs yeux
 Alors l'hyver survient humide, et morne.
 Puis retournant au taureau la terre orne
 Des fleurs, chassant l'Aquilon odieux,
 L'air rend serain, clairs, et benins les cieux:
 Lors Amalthée espand biens de sa corne.
 Flora adonc boutons, et fleurs nourrit,
 La terre embrasse, et doucement cherit,
 L'embellissant d'un tapiz de verdure.
 Ainsi Garonne estoit de plaisir nue,
 Souz la faveur qui rit, de ta venue
 Voyant en toy tout ce que peult nature.
Jusques à quand?

[p. 22 –]

ODE II.
 Ode de Garonne, par
 Bernard du Poey de Luc en Bearn.

Les cieux colourés par nature,
 Les traits divers de la peinture,
 Arbres chargés, champs jaunissans,
 L'ouvrage de Marqueterie,
 Maintes fleurs parmy la prairie,
 Soulagent les cœurs languissans.
 L'oraison enrichit la fable,
 Comme la viande la table,

Les astres font les cieux luisants,
 Divers harnois faut en bataille
 L'esmail decore la medaille,
 Ainsi plaisant au cœur les chants.
 Changeons propos: sus donc ma plume,
 Aux Muses tost le feu allume,
 A fin que de chants tous divers,
 A tant de mes chansons latines,
 Chantent les ondes cristalines
 De Garonne par l'univers.

[p. 23 –]

Sus donc saisons son bruit durable,
 Je luy suis beaucoup redevable,
 Aiant receu don precieux,
 Par l'ordonnance clementine,
 M'a fait present de l'Esglantine.^[577]
 Me reservant encore mieux.

Le Souci qui commence à croistre
 Promet de me faire cognoistre
 Un jour si bien, que les neuf sœurs
 Me feront chapeaux de fleurettes,
 Entrelassant des violettes,
 Avec leurs sucrées douceurs.

Alors par ta cource legere
 Diray que tu es menagere,
 D'avoir si belles fleurs produit.
 Les arrousant de ta claire onde,
 Dont merites par tout le monde
 Que soit entendu ton bon bruit.

⁵⁷⁷ “Et par ces derniers vers il paroît que sa poésie avoit été reçue avec applaudissement aux jeux floraux institués par dame Clémence à Thoulouse, et qu’on lui avoit décerné cette fameuse églantine dont la mesme ville m’a honoré depuis deux années ([footnote]3). Mais ô prix célèbre, ô couronne d’honneur, que l’on t’acquerroit” (p. 473). “[A]lors avec si peu de peine et tant de bonheur et de gloire qu’il faut aujourd’hui t’acquérir avec de longs travaux et de longues veilles, et qu’il est encore besoin de bonne fortune aussy bien que de haute vertu pour te meriter!” (p. 474). “Ce fut en 1652 que Colletet reçut de l’Académie des jeux floraux l’églantine d’argent émaillé. Il rédigea donc en 1654 la notice sur Bernard de Poey” (p. 473, n. 3). (“Vies des poètes gascons: Par Guillaume Colletet de l’Académie Française. I Bernard du Poey (autrement appelé Bernard du Poy en béranis)” in *Revue de Gascogne: bulletin mensuel du Comité d’histoire et d’archéologie de la province ecclésiastique d’Auch*, Tome VI, 1865. Auch, imprimerie et lithographie Félix Foix, rue Balguerie. <[https://books.google.com/books?id=WRCQAAMAAJ&pg=PA471&lpg=PA471&dq=Bernard+du+Poey+de+Luc+en+Béarn's+Ode+de+Garonne"&source=bl&ots=AbZ0psyFQ4&sig=ACfU3U3rC-p5sTIHTu6hHNbE-4GXxNecIw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjFrWwo9fnAhWvmAKHZJ3BAoQ6AEwAHoECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=Bernard%20du%20Poey%20de%20Luc%20en%20Béarn's%20Ode%20de%20Garonne"&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=WRCQAAMAAJ&pg=PA471&lpg=PA471&dq=Bernard+du+Poey+de+Luc+en+Béarn's+Ode+de+Garonne)>.)

Si la France en avoit de telles,
 Feroit ses terres immortelles,
 N'auroit champ qui ne fut fertile
 Sans y faire aucun labourage,

[p. 24 –]

Du Nil n'estimant le rivage
 Oseroit dire estre inutile.
 Ton loz s'estend par les provinces,
 Tu es souhaitée des princes.
 Le Cardinal fait honorer
 Ton nom, et d'Armagnac la gloire,
 En eternisant ta memoire:
 Qui te pourroit mieux decorer?
 Le ciel luy promet davantage
 Par vertu, qu'il a pour partage:
 Passant les Contes ses aieuls.
 C'est la perfection des Muses,
 Fortune desprise, et ses ruses,
 Son loz croist par fais vertueux.
 Bourbon source, et divine race
 T'a demandée, et prince en grace:
 Ainsi ton renom par tout luit,
 Plus que du Pactole admirable,
 Tu es sur tout autre honorable
 Comme est le clair jour sus la nuit.
 De ton Mansencal l'excellence,
 Fait parler ta longue silence:

[p. 25 –]

Maugré le temps trop envieux:
 Contre l'heur present se despite,
 Par sa mutation subite,
 N'estimant que le bruit des vieux.
 La vertu des Faurs exquise
 De tout pais desja requise
 Par la faveur qu'ils ont des cieux:
 Chacun à te chanter esveille,
 Par les sons plaisans à l'oreille,
 Et chans aux Muses gracieux.
 Tu ne seras oncq' consumée,
 D'autre ne sera que fumée
 Au regard de ton bon sejour

Les Bertrans te feront entendre,
 Plus que n'a l'Asie Alexandre,
 Te changeant la nuit en clair jour.
 Je voy que par tout on le chante,
 Toute estrange peuple te hante:
 Te voiant tournée au soleil.
 Les graces sont en toy infuses
 Par Durban^[578]: qui commande aux Muses,
 Lequel a peine a son pareil.

[p. 26 –]

Tu n'as que faire du Parnase,
 Laisse troubler l'eauê du Pegase
 En toy chacun voit meilleur heur.
 Qui augmente tes grans richesses,
 Car le breuvage es[t] des deesses.
 Chose digne de ta grandeur.
 Tu reluis comme une lumiere,
 Dessus toutes es la premiere.
 La Seine n'en peult approcher.
 Tu sers aux estranges de voile:
 Aiant Bagis pour ton estoille,
 Que ne puis par escrit coucher.
 De vertu et lois es la source.
 Voy que chacun vers toy prend cource.
 Pour les perles chez toy chercher.
 En admirant du Paul ta guide,
 Tu n'as rien en toy qui soit vuide
 D'honneur: voire jusque au nocher
 Tu as ton Ferrier pour la rose,^[579]
 Tes saintes Lois si bien dispose
 Que le Tibre a de ton bon heur
 Envie: et forge sus l'enclume

⁵⁷⁸ “Pierre Mauleon Durban, fameux conseiller au parlement de Thoulouse, et grand Mécène des gens de lettres, toutes imprimées à Thoulouse l'an 1551.”

⁵⁷⁹ “B. du Poey dit d'Arnoul du Ferrier, sur lequel il faut voir Scévole de Sainte-Marthe en ses Eloges des hommes illustres: Tu as ton Ferrier pour la rose” (p. 260). “Vies des poètes gascons: Par Guillaume Colletet de l'Académie Française. I Bernard du Poey (autrement appelé Bernard du Poy en béarnis)” (p. 475) (*Revue de Gascogne: bulletin mensuel du Comité d'histoire et d'archéologie de la province ecclésiastique d'Auch*. Vol. VI. Auch: imprimerie et lithographie Félix Foix, rue Balguerrie. 1865. <[https://books.google.com/books?id=WRCQAAMAAJ&pg=PA471&lpg=PA471&dq=Bernard+du+Poey+de+Luc+en+Béarn's+Ode+de+Garonne"&source=bl&ots=AbZ0psyFQ4&sig=ACfU3U3rC-p5sTIHTu6hHNbE4GXxNecIw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjF-rWwo9fnAhWvmAKHZJ3BAoQ6AEwAHoECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=Bernard%20du%20Poey%20de%20Luc%20en%20Béarn's%20Ode%20de%20Garonne"&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=WRCQAAMAAJ&pg=PA471&lpg=PA471&dq=Bernard+du+Poey+de+Luc+en+Béarn's+Ode+de+Garonne)>).

[p. 27 –]

De tes deux ailes, par sa plume
 Te servant à jamais d'honneur.
 Je n'approche point par parole
 A ta vertu, qui sus l'air volle,
 Et n'entre point en cerveau creux.
 Car desja les neuf cieux possede,
 A dame Minerve succede:
 Aiant Daphis le bien heureux.
 Pourroit il mieux ton renom croistre
 Qu'il fait? voyant tes Fauris renaistre,
 Des fameux, ton loz est premier.
 Lequel impossible est que meure,
 Car sur le temps fait sa demeure
 Par ton Papius, et saint Germer.
 Ton immortalité tesmoigne
 Ton nom: qui de ton bruit m'esloigne,
 Tant plus que j'en cuide approcher,
 Admirant Cognard, et saint Pierre,
 Mon esprit plus loing en erre:
 Quand veux tes louenges toucher
 Venise s'esbahit, Romme ose
 Parler du Senat de Tolose

[p. 28 –]

Que jamais n'eut tels Senateurs
 L'Italie n'en a encore,
 Dont toute la Guenne adore,
 Qui a des Graces les liqueurs.
 Pavie en Coras attente,
 Combien qu'envie la tormente
 Est contrainte de t'avouër.
 Eygua est de telle eloquence,
 Que bien prisée es de la France,
 Comme la source du sçavoer.
 Maintenuë est par eux justice,
 Et bien gouvernée la police
 Soit en public, ou en secret,
 Par Malard: qui tousjours l'augmente,
 Qui si bien la ville contente,
 Que chacun l'estime discret.
 Voy tes Capitols icy Romme,

Languedoc est fleurissant, comme
 Tu fuz apres Tarquin ton Roy,
 Ceux ci le rendent admirable,
 La paix le rend par tout aymable,
 Te gardant d'un tel desarroy.

[p. 29 –]

Lon cognoit ta ville changée,
 Contre l'ignorance vengée.
 Par du Perier, Custos, Fernand.
 Dont les lois en ton clair sein nouënt.
 Et plusieurs escoliers s'y jouënt
 Sur leurs lucs ton renom s'estend.

La medecine icy pratique,
 Thomas, qui sçait le tour spherique,
 Lequel Ferrier fait chanter.
 Voy Monverd, Gaspar, et la Roche,
 Ausquels Galen de rien n'approche:
 Grece n'ose plus se vanter.

Voila tes vertus manifestes,
 Qui t'otroient les dons celestes,
 Si t'ont illustrée les dieux.
 Les Nymphes sortent à la dance.
 Autour sont Muses, d'accordance
 Oyant les sons melodieux.

Ignorance y est abbatue,
 Et la jeunesse s'esvertue,
 A l'exemple de ton Paschal⁵⁸⁰
 Lequel a pour riche heritage

[p. 30 –]

De Ciceron le beau langage,
 Tellement qu'il n'a point d'esgal.
 Revergat les Muses abbreuve,
 C'est celuy qui Phœbus appreuve,
 Tel l'a pour soy voulu nourrir.
 Luy presentant la ronde sphere,
 Pour manier nostre hemisphere:
 Qui ne te laissera mourir.

La jeunesse arrouses civile,
 Tresor precieux de la ville:
 Les sçavans te font adorer

⁵⁸⁰ Historiographer of the King.

Car par la Perriere es cognue,
 Contre l'envie maintenue:
 Heureux qui en peult savourer.
 Divins esprits de leur nature,
 Prennent icy leur nourriture,
 Les Dieux les t'ont voulu choisir:
 Te serviront pour tesmoignage
 Les Faus encore de jeune age,
 Desquels as receu maint plaisir.
 Le temps comme le ciel l'ordonne,
 Tient une dorée couronne,

[p. 31 –]

Afin d'en faire à Cuias part.
 A Forcatel de mesme forge,
 Qui aux lois de nouveaux noms forge
 Fameux bruit, et honneur depart.
 Il n'y a lieu qui tant m'agrée,
 Ou mon esprit plus se recrée
 Contemplant les dons plantureux.
 L'excellente beauté des femmes,
 Sans deshonneur, et sans diffames.
 Qui s'en approche est tresheureux.
 Au Roy seul doit l'obeissance:
 Il ne craint d'autrui la puissance
 Le pays qui de soy est fort.
 Des Gots la tourbe y fut humée,
 Cesar y perdit son armée:
 Mal se sceut Simon de Monfort.
 Tu as des marchans grand caresse,
 Lesquels usent de ta largesse
 Brief je voy que rien ne te faut
 On chante autour chansons et hymnes.
 Ce sont certains evidens signes,
 Que ton onde claire le vaut.

[p. 32 –]

Il n'y faut aucun artifice,
 Doxe y bastit maint edifice
 La grand Arabie en odeurs,
 Ne tant Phalerne en vin abonde,

Ne l'Inde en baume tant feconde,^[581]
Comme produisent tes humeurs.

Auster est ton vent ordinaire,
Aquilo ne t'est point contraire,
Zephire te voit par esbat,
Le soleil par la voye oblique,
Pour toy demeure en son tropique
Les elemens sont sans debat.

Ton eauë coulante doux resonance,
La fertilité, loz te donne,
Tu reçois Tar en ton Giron,
De la Riege es bien aimée,
De mon Gave fort estimée.
Lot fait son cours en l'environ
Ton onde doucement distille
En coulant vers Bourdeaux subtile
Par Lairac, la Salle ondoiant:
Ou j'ay passé mainte journée.

[p. 33 –]

Agen la voit souvent tournée,
Les sons de Scaliger oyant.
Comme tu es la bienheureuse,
D'ouyr sa Muse gracieuse:
Heureux suis de l'avoir cogneu,
Du temps que je suivois Diane
Et lisois l'amour d'Oriane:
Heur plusgrand ne m'est advenu.

Or donc tresheureuse riviere
A nous faire bien coutumiere
Entenz de ma plume les sons
Sois moy benine et secourable
Et si veux m'estre favorable
Recompense auras de chansons.

Jusques à quand?

⁵⁸¹ “Voir le chap. 10 du livre x des Histoires diverses de cet Elien dont M. Miller (de l'Institut) vient, à la grande joie du monde savant, de retrouver quelques pages inédites dans sa mission scientifique en Orient” (p. 476, n. 1). (<<https://books.google.com/books?id=WtRCAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA471&lpg=PA471&dq=Bernard+du+Poey+de+Luc+en+Béarn's+Ode+de+Garonne>&source=bl&ots=AbZ0psyFQ4&sig=ACfU3U3rC-p5sTIHTu6hHNbE-4GXxNecIw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjF-rWwo9fnAhWvmAKHZJ3BAoQ6AEwAHoECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=Bernard%20du%20Poey%20de%20Luc%20en%20Béarn's%20Ode%20de%20Garonne&f=false>.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Editions of Gabrielle de Coignard's *Œuvres chrestiennes* (or excerpts thereof)

- Coignard, Gabrielle de. *Oeuvres chrestiennes de feu Dame Gabrielle de Coignard. Vefve a feu Monsieur de Mansencal Sieur de Miremont, President en la Cour de Parlement de Tolose. A Tolose, Par Pierre Jagourt, et Bernard Carles.* 1594.⁵⁸²
- . *Oeuvres chrestiennes de feu Dame Gabrielle de Coignard, Vefve à feu Monsieur de Mansencal, Sieur de Miremont, President en la Cour de Parlement de Tholose. A Tournon, [par Claude Michel] Pour Jaques Faure Libraire en Avignon.* 1595.⁵⁸³
- . *Œuvres chrestiennes - CXXIX Sonnets.* Collection "Le Thresor du Sonnet." Vol. III. Mâcon: Protat, pour Les Amis du Sonnet, 1900.⁵⁸⁴
- . *Œuvres chrétiennes.* Edition critique par Colette H. Winn. Geneva: Droz, 1995.
- . *Spiritual Sonnets: A Bilingual Edition.* Trans. Melanie E. Gregg. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004.

II. Other Primary Sources (Antiquity - 17th Century)

- Aquinas, Saint Thomas of (d'Aquin, d'Aquino). *Summa Theologica.* Trans. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Bros, 1947. <<https://sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/index.htm>>.
- Aucassin et Nicolette.* Ed. Jean Dufournet. Paris: Flammarion, 1984.

⁵⁸² Colette Winn's 1995 edition is based on the copy Rés. DXVI-88 of the Bibliothèque Municipale de Toulouse ("Ex libris Jo. Olirurii"), which has another copy (Rés. DXVI-434, "Ex-libris gr.: Bibliothèque du clergé de Toulouse, don Dheliot. Mention ms.: 'Lautier a S: Ciprien'"); see Coignard 120.

- The copy Resp Pf XVI-63 of the Bibliothèque universitaire de l'Arsenal de Toulouse ("Ex libris Petri Lafauriani et amicorum") is available online: <<https://tolosana.univ-toulouse.fr/fr/notice/075570165>>.

- So is the copy of the Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon (800 733, "Gilibert (?)isoulrier" signature): <https://numelyo.bmlyon.fr/f_view/BML:BML_00GOO0100137001100532402>.

⁵⁸³ See Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71874d>>. This copy (BnF Rés. Ye 2008) Winn lists as "C" in a list of six that she consulted (Coignard 121). It bears the "Ex. libris: Le Marquis de Guinege" and a Jesuit emblem.

⁵⁸⁴ See Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5449875b>>. This edition reprints the title page of the 1594 *editio princeps*.

- Augustine, Saint. *S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia: De Civitate Dei contra Paganos libri XXII*. Augustinus.it., N. p., n.d. <<http://www.augustinus.it/latino/cdd/index.htm>>.
- . *S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia: De Doctrina Christiana libri quatuor*. Augustinus.it., N. p., n. d. <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/dottrina_cristiana/index.htm>.
- . *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Vol. II St. Augustin's [sic] City of God and Christian Doctrine*. Ed. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. Trans. Marcus Dods. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Co., 1887. <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2053>>.
- Baïf, Jean-Antoine de. *Les Amours de Francine*. Ed. Ernesta Caldarini. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1966.
- Bible. *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. ESV Text Edition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- Bible. *La Sainte Bible, contenant le Vieil et Nouveau Testament. Traduite en François par les Theologiens de l'Université de Louvain. Avec les Concordances des lieux et passages controversez de l'Ecriture Sainte. Fidelement reveuë, corrigée, et enrichie de Figures en Taille Douce. À Paris, De l'Imprimerie de Pierre Variquet, Chez Gabriel Quinet, au Palais, à l'entrée de la Galer[ie] des Prisonniers, à l'Ange-Gardien. M. DC. LXXXIII. Avec Privilege du Roy, et Approbation des Docteurs*. Paris: G. Quinet, 1683.
- Bible. *La Sainte Bible contenant le Vieil et Nouveau Testament, Traduite en François, selon la version commune. Par M. René Benoist, Angevin, Docteur Régent en la faculté de Théologie à Paris*. Paris: Chez Gabriel Buon, au Clos Bruneau, à l'enseigne Saint Claude, 1566.
- . *La Sainte Bible Contenant le Vieil et Nouveau testament, Latin François, chacune version correspondante l'une à l'autre, verset à verset. Avec annotations nécessaires pour l'intelligence des lieux les plus difficiles: et Expositions contenant briefves et familiares Resolutions et Observations tant des lieux qui ont esté depravez et corrompus par les heretiques de nostre temps, que de ceux qui ouvertement confirment la Foy et Religion Catholique. Aussi les figures et argumens sur chascun livre, declarans sommairement tout ce que y est contenu. Par M. René Benoist, Angevin, Docteur Regent en la faculté de Theologie à Paris. A Paris Chez Sebastien Nyvelle, aux Cicognes rue saint-Jaques. 1568. Avec privilege du Roy. Vol. I. Paris: Nyvelle, 1568. <https://books.google.com/books?id=6rNbAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gb_s_g_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>. [Genesis – Job]*

- . *Le Second Tome de la Sainte Bible, Latin François, chacune version correspondante l'une à l'autre, verset à verset. Avec annotations et expositions des lieux les plus difficiles: et principalement de ceux qui ont esté depravez et corrompus par les heretiques de nostre temps. Par M. René Benoist, Angevin, Docteur Regent en la faculté de Theologie à Paris. A Paris, Chez Sebastien Nivelles [sic] en la rue saint Jacques, aux Cygognes [sic]. 1568. Avec Privilege du Roy. Vol. II. Paris: Nivelles [also spelled Nyvelles], 1568. <https://books.google.com/books?id=_rNbAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>. [Psalms – III Machabees]*
- . *Le Nouveau Testament de Nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, Latin François, chacune version correspondante l'une à l'autre, verset à verset. Avec annotations et expositions des lieux les plus difficiles: et principalement de ceux qui ont esté depravés et corrompus par les heretiques de nostre temps. Par M. René Benoist, Angevin, Docteur Regent en la faculté de Theologie à Paris. A Paris, Chez Sebastien Nyvelles, aux Cicognes, rue Saint Jacques. 1568. Avec Privilege du Roy. Vol. III. Paris: Nyvelles [Nivelles], 1568. <https://books.google.com/books?id=CrRbAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>. [Matthew – Revelation]*
- Calvin, Jean. *Institution de la religion chrestienne, mise en quatre livres et distinguee par chapitres en ordre et methode bien propre. Par Jean Calvin. A Geneve, De l'Imprimerie de Jaques Bourgeois. M. D. LXII. Geneva: Jaques Bourgeois, 1562. Bibliothèque de Genève. <<https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-3236>>.*
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On Ends*. Trans. H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1914.
- . *On Moral Ends*. Ed. Julia Annas. Trans. Raphael Woolf. New York: Cambridge U.P., 2001.
- . *On the Orator: Books 1-2*. Trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 1942.
- . *Orator*. In *Brutus, Orator*. Trans. H. M. Hubbell. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 1952.
- Crenne, Hélisenne de. *Les epistres Familieres et invectives de ma dame Helisenne, composées par icelle dame, De Crenne. Avec privilege. Imprimées à Paris par Denys Janot Libraire et Imprimeur, demourant en la rue neufve nostre Dame, à L'enseigne Saint Jehan Baptiste pres Sainte Geneviefve des Ardens. Paris: Denys Janot Libraire et Imprimeur, 1539. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8609511v>>.*
- Desportes, Philippe. *Les Amours d'Hippolyte: Edition critique suivie du Commentaire de*

- Malherbe*. Ed. Victor E. Graham. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1960.
- . *Diverses amours et autres Œuvres meslées*. Ed. V. E. Graham. Geneva: Droz / Paris: Minard, 1963.
- Du Bellay, Joachim. *La Deffence, et illustration de la langue françoise* (1549). Ed. Jean-Charles Monferran. Geneva: Droz, 2001.
- . *Œuvres poétiques*. Ed. Henri Chamard, revised by Henri Weber. Vol. II. Paris: STFM, 1970.
- . *Œuvres poétiques*. Ed. Henri Chamard, updated by Yvonne Bellenger. Vol. V. Paris: STFM, 1983.
- . *L'Olive*. Ed. E. Caldarini. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1974.
- Du Poey de Luc en Bearn, Bernard. *Poésie en diverses langues. Sur la naissance de Henry de Bourbon Prince trèsheureux, né au Chasteau de Pau au mois de décembre. 1533. Tolose: Jacques Colomies. 1554. Avec Privilege*. Toulouse: Jacques Colomies, 1554. <<https://books.google.fr/books?id=Cd9mAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.
- . *Odes Du Gave, Fleuve en Bearn. Du Fleuve de Garonne, avec les tristes chans à sa Caranite. A Tolose. Par Guyon Boudeville, Juré de la ville et Université d'icelle. 1551*. Toulouse: Boudeville. 1551. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1512248s>>.
- Du Vair, Guillaume. *De la constance et consolation és calamitez publiques. A Paris, Par Mamert Patisson, Imprimeur du Roy. Chez Rob. Estienne. M. D. XCIII. Avec privilege*. Paris: R. Estienne, 1594. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k110442s>>.
- . *La sainte philosophie: Avec plusieurs traitez de pieté. Derniere Edition. A Rouen, Chez Adam Mallassis, Libraire, tenant sa boutique dans la court du Palais. 1603*. Rouen: A. Malassis, 1603. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k83227x>>.
- Epicurus. "Principal Doctrines, 1-40." *Principal Doctrines*. Trans. Peter Saint-Andre. *Lexundria.com: A Digital Library of Classical Antiquity*. N.p., 2008. <https://lexundria.com/epic_kd/1-40/psa>.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. *Epicureus*. In *Colloquia familiaria. ad optimarum editionum fidem diligenter emendata, cum succincta difficiliorum explanatione*. Leipzig: Sumptibus Ottonis Holtze, 1867-1872. Encoded and made available by the Stoa Consortium, University of Kentucky at <<https://web.archive.org/web/>>

20100809031315/http://www.stoa.org/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Stoa:text:2003.02.0006:colloquium=63>.

---. *The Colloquies of Erasmus*. Trans. Craig R. Thompson. Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1965.

---. *ASD [i.e. Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi]*, 1-3. Eds. L.-E. Halkin *et al.*, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1972.

---. *Œuvres choisies*. Trans. Jacques Chomarat. Paris: Le Livre de poche, 1991.

---. *Érasme, Colloques*. Ed. E. Wolff. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, II, 1992.

Ficino, Marsilio. *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*. Trans. Sears R. Jayne. Thompson, CT: Spring Publications, 1985.

Flaminio, Marcantonio (Marc Antoine Flaminus; Marcus Antonius Flaminus).
See: Marquets, Anne de.

Granada, Fray Luis de (Louis de Grenade; Louis of Granada). *Le vray chemin et adresse pour acquerir et parvenir à la grace de Dieu, et se maintenir en icelle, par le moyen et compagnie de l'Oraison et Contemplation en la Loy et amour de Dieu. Avec trois discours de l'efficace des principales œuvres de Penitence, l'Aumosne, l'Oraison, et le Jeusne. Fait en espagnol par Reverend Pere, F. Louïs de Grenade, docteur en Theologie, Provincial de l'ordre de S. Dominique: et mis en François, selon l'ordre de l'Auther, par F. de Belleforest Comingeois. L'utilité de ce livre se voit par l'exhortation de l'Auther qui suit l'Epistre du Traducteur: et l'ordre de l'œuvre par le Prologue, et le sommaire en la page suivante. Seconde Edition. A Paris, Chez Guillaume de la Nouë, rue saint Jacques, à l'enseigne du nom de Jesus, M.D.LXXIX. Avec Privilege du Roy*. Trans. F. de Belleforest. Paris: Chez Guillaume de la Nouë, rue saint Jacques, 1579.
<<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5316540200>>.

---. *Obras Completas: Tomo I: Libro de la Oración y Meditación*. Ed. Huerga Alvaro. Vol. I. Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española Dominicos de Andalucia, 1994.

Grévin, Jacques. *Second Livre de la Gelodacrye in Le theatre de Jaques Grevin de Clermont en Beauvaisis, A tresillustre et treshaulte Princesse Madame Claude de France, Duchesse de Lorraine. Ensemble, la seconde partie de L'Olimpe et de la Gelodacrye. A Paris, Pour Vincent Sertenas, demeurant en la rue neuve nostre Dame, à l'enseigne saint Jehan l'Evangliste, et en sa boutique au Palais, en la gallerie par ou on va à la Chancellerie. Et Pour Guillaume Barbé rue saint Jehan de Beauvais, devant le Bellerophon. M.D.LXII. Avec Privilege*. Paris: Vincent Sertenas rue neuve nostre Dame et Guillaume Barbé rue saint Jehan de

Beauvais, 1562. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k87013242>>.

---. *La Gélodacrye et les Vingt-quatre sonnets romains*. Ed. Michèle Clément. Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2001.

Guérout, Guillaume. *Second Livre de la description des Animaux, contenant le Blason des Oyseaux, Composé par Guillaume Guerout. A Lyon, Par Balthazar Arnoullet. M. D. XXXXX [sic.]. Avec Privilege du Roy pour cinq ans*. Lyon: Balthazar Arnoullet. 1550. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70827n>>.

Jodelle, Etienne. *Les Amours. Contr'Amours, Contre la Riere-Venus*. Ed. Emmanuel Buron. Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2003.

Labé, Louise. *Œuvres complètes: Sonnets – Élégies – Débat de folie et d'amour*. Ed. François Rigolot. Paris: Flammarion, 1986.

Lafaille, Germain de. *Annales de la ville de Toulouse depuis la réunion de la Comté de Toulouse à la Couronne: Avec un abrégé de l'ancienne histoire de cette ville et un recueil de divers titres et actes pour servir de Preuves ou d'éclaircissement à ces Annales. Seconde Partie. A laquelle on a ajouté des additions à la Première Partie, et plusieurs Pièces importantes concernant les Fiefs Nobles et Roturiers de la Sénéchaussée de Toulouse et du reste du Languedoc, et l'exemption de cette Province des Droits d'Assise ou Assignat, et autres: [...]. Par M. G. de Lafaille, Ancien Capitoul, de l'Académie des Jeux Floraux de Toulouse. A Toulouse, De l'Imprimerie de G. L. Colomyés. M. DCCI. Avec Privilege du Roy. Vol. II*. Toulouse: Colomyés, 1701. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1040123m>>.

Le Saulx, Marin. *Theanthropogamie en forme de dialogue par sonnets chrestiens*. London: Thomas Vautrolier, 1577.

Lipsius, Justus. *De constantia libri duo, Qui alloquium praecipuè continent in Publicis malis. Antverpiae, Apud Christophorum Plantinum. CIO. IO. LXXXIV*. Leiden: C. Plantin, 1584. <https://books.google.com/books?id=UGCQI4yG-QYC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Loyola, Saint Ignatius de (Ignacio of Loyola; Ignace de Loyola). *Les exercices spirituels*. Trans. Jean-Claude Guy. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982.

Magny, Olivier de. *Les Souspirs*. Ed. David Wilkin. Geneva: Droz, 1978.

Marguerite de Navarre. *La Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*. In *Théâtre profane*. (Nouvelle édition revue.) Ed. V. L. Saulnier. Geneva: Droz / Paris: Minard, 1978.

Marot, Clément. *Œuvres poétiques*. Ed. Gérard Defaux. Vol. II. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1993.

Marquets, Anne de. *Sonets, prières et devises en forme de pasquins pour l'assemblée de Messieurs les Prélats et Docteurs, tenue à Poissy, M. D. LXI. A Paris, Chez la veufve Guil. Morel. M. D. LXVI*. Paris: Veuve Guillaume Morel, 1566. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k72288p>>.

---. *Les Divines poësies de Marc Antoine Flaminius: Contenant diverses Prieres, Meditations, Hymnes, et actions de graces à Dieu: Mises en François, avec le Latin respondant l'un à l'autre. Avec plusieurs Sonnets et Cantiques, ou Chansons Spirituelles pour louer Dieu. A Madame Marguerite, sœur du Roy treschrestien Charles IX. Chez Nicolas Chesneau, rue S. Jaques, à l'enseigne de l'Escu de Froben, et du Chesne verd. 1569. Avec Privilege du Roy*. Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1569. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71875r?rk=64378;0>>.

---. *Sonets spirituels*. Ed. Gary Ferguson. Geneva: Droz, 1997.

Missale Romanum. Cincinnati: Benziger Brothers, 1956.

Molinier, Guilhem. *Las Leys d'Amors*. Ed. Joseph Anglade. 4 vols. Toulouse: Privat, 1919-1920.

Nostredame, César de. *Les Larmes de la sainte Vierge appears in: Nostredame, César de. Les Perles, ou les Larmes de la sainte Magdeleine. Avec quelques Rymes saintes dédiées à Madame la Contesse de Carces. Par Cesar de Nostradame Gentilhomme Provençal. A Tolose. De l'Imprimerie des Colomiez. 1606*. Toulouse: Colomiez, 1606. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623322n>>.

Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées. Texte de L'edition Brunshvicg*. Ed. Charles-Marc des Granges. Paris: Garnier frères, 1964.

Petrarch (Petrarca; Pétrarque), Francesco. *Toutes les euvres vulgaires de François Petrarque. Contenant quatre Livres de M. D. Laure d'Avignon sa maistresse: Jadis par luy composez en langage Thuscan, et mis en François par Vasquin Philieul de Carpentras Docteur es Droictz. Avecques briefz Sommaires ou Argumens requis pour plus facile intelligence du tout. En Avignon. De l'Imprimerie de Barthelemy Bonhomme. Avec privilege du Roy. 1555*. Trans. Vasquin Philieul [and Clément Marot]. Avignon: B. Bonhomme, 1555. <<http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb31094601b>>.

---. *The Canzoniere, or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Translated into verse with Notes

and Commentary by Mark Musa. Bloomington, I.N.: Indiana U. P., 1996.

Rabelais, François. *Pantagruel*. Ed. V. L. Saulnier. Geneva: Droz, 1965.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. G. Demerson. Paris: Seuil, 1973.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. Mireille Huchon and François Moreau. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994.

Romieu, Marie de. "Brief Discours que l'excellence de la femme surpasse celle de l'homme" In *Les premières œuvres poétiques de Mademoiselle Marie de Romieu, Vivaroise, Contenant un brief Discours, que l'excellence de la femme surpasse celle de l'homme non moins recreatif que plein de beaux exemples. Le tout, A tres-haute et tres-illustre princesse ma dame Marguerite de Lorraine Duchesse de Joyeuse. A Paris, Pour Lucas Breyer, tenant sa boutique au second pillier de la grand' salle du Palais. 1581. Avec Privilège [sic] du Roy*. Paris: L. Breyer, 1581. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k72784p>>.

Ronsard, Pierre de. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. P. Laumonier. Vol. I. Paris: STFM, 1973.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. P. Laumonier. Vol. II. Paris: STFM, 1973.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. P. Laumonier. Vol. III. Paris: STFM, 1968.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. P. Laumonier. Vol. IV. Paris: STFM, 1980.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. P. Laumonier. Vol. VIII. Paris: STFM, 1973.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. P. Laumonier. Vol. XVI. Paris: STFM, 1983.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. P. Laumonier. Vol. XVIII-1. Paris: STFM, 1967.

---. *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*. Ed. F. Goyet. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990.

---. *Les Amours*. Eds. Henri and Catherine Weber. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1993.

Scève, Maurice. *Délie, objet de plus haulte vertu*. Ed. Gérard Defaux. 2 vols. Geneva: Droz, 2004.

Schroeder, Rev. H. J. (trans.), *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1978.

Sébillot, Thomas. *L'Art poétique françois*. Eds. Félix Gaiffe and Francis Goyet. Paris:

Librairie Nizet (STFM), 1988.

Seneca. *On the Happy Life*, VII, 1-VIII, 1; *Moral Essays. Volume II*. Trans. John W. Basore. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Valla, Lorenzo. *De Vero Falsoque Bono*. Ed. Maristella Lorch. Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1970.

---. *On Pleasure: De Voluptate*. Trans. A. Kent Hiatt and M. Lorch. New York: Albaris Books Inc., 1977.

---. *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie*. Ed. Gianni Zippel. 2 vols. Padua: Antenore, 1982.

Vindry, Fleury. *Les parlementaires français au XVI^e siècle. Tome Second (Fascicule II): Parlement de Toulouse*. Paris: H. Champion, 1912. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k91419k/f241>>.

III. Secondary Sources on Gabrielle de Coignard

Baker, Deborah Lesko. "Gabrielle de Coignard's *Sonnets spirituels*: Writing Passion within and against the Petrarchan Tradition." *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 38.3 (2015): pp. 41-59.

Caëtano, Marie-Laurentine. '*Je suis Chrestienne et bruslant de ta flamme*': *Poétique et spiritualité: Les œuvres chrétiennes de Gabrielle de Coignard*. M.A. thesis. Lyon: Université Lumière Lyon 2, 2008.

---. "'Le remède salulaire de ceste poésie spirituelle': une réception posthume orientée des *Œuvres Chrétiennes* de Gabrielle de Coignard." In *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* n°70 (2010): pp. 57-72. <<https://doi.org/10.3406/rhren.2010.3097>>.

---. '*Moy qui suis, ô Dieu, ton humble chanteresse*': *Anthologie de la poésie spirituelle féminine du XVI^e siècle en français*. Ph.D. thesis. Lyon: Université de Lyon 2, GRAC, 2012. <<https://grac.univ-lyon2.fr/anthologie-de-la-poesie-spirituelle-feminine-du-xvie-siecle-en-francais-685397.kjsp>>.

---. "'Comme nous dit tresbien ce bon Roy pénitent', les Psaumes de David dans les *Œuvres chrétiennes* de Gabrielle de Coignard." In *Graphè* n°27: *Les Psaumes de David*. Arras: Artois presses université, 2018. pp. 113-135.

- . ““Quel sentiment as tu, ô mon ame [...]?” L’expression des sentiments dans les *Œuvres chrétiennes* de Gabrielle de Coignard (1594).” *Textes et contextes* [Online] 13.1 (2018). Web 8 Mar. 2019. <<https://preo.ubourgogne.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=1793>>.
- Cave, Terence. *Devotional Poetry in France c. 1570-1613*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U. P., 1969.
- Dunn-Lardeau, Brenda. “Les Béatitudes comme source d’inspiration dans la poésie de Gabrielle de Coignard et d’Anne de Marquets.” In *Échos poétiques de la Bible*. Eds. Josiane Rieu, Béatrice Bonhomme, Hélène Baby, Aude Préta-de Beaufort. Paris: Honoré Champion. pp. 165-177.
- Duru, Audrey. *Essais de soi: poésie spirituelle et rapport à soi, entre Montaigne et Descartes*. Geneva: Droz, 2012, pp. 158-163.
- Ferguson, Gary. “The Feminisation of Devotion: Gabrielle de Coignard, Anne de Marquets, and François de Sales.” In *Women’s Writing in the French Renaissance: Proceedings of the Fifth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium, 7-9 July 1997*. Eds. Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1999. pp. 187-206.
- Gendre, André. “Quête de Dieu et séduction du monde dans les *Sonnets spirituels* de Gabrielle de Coignard.” In *Cité des hommes, cité de Dieu: travaux sur la littérature de la Renaissance en l’honneur de Daniel Ménager*. Geneva: Droz, 2003. pp. 419-430.
- Gilles-Chikhaoui, Audrey. *D’une voix l’autre: plaisirs féminins dans la littérature française de la Renaissance*. Ph.D. thesis. Ottawa: Université d’Ottawa, 2014.
- Kaiser, Huguette-Renée. *Gabrielle de Coignard: poétesse dévote*. Ph.D. thesis. Atlanta: Emory University, 1975.
- Llewellyn, Kathleen M. “Passion, Prayer, and *Plume*: Poetic Inspiration in the *Œuvres chrétiennes* of Gabrielle de Coignard.” *Dalhousie French Studies* 88. Nova Scotia: Dalhousie U.P. (2009): pp. 77-86. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40838093>>.
- Nassichuk, John. “Le couronnement de Judith, représentation littéraire au XVI^e siècle d’une héroïne deutérocanonique.” In *Camenae* n°4: *L’Héroïque* (June 2008). <<http://sapat.ephe.sorbonne.fr/media/d6de5db1c23f997205e13b52136f144a/camenae-04-jnassichuk-sandra.pdf>>.
- Navelle, André. *Familles nobles et notables du Midi toulousain au XVe et XVIe siècles. Généalogies de 700 familles présentes dans la région de toulouse avant 1550*. 11

vols. Fenouillet: Recherches historiques du Midi. 1991-1994.

O'Connor, Dorothy. *Louise Labé. Sa vie et son œuvre*. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972 (reprint of the 1926 Paris edition).

Salies, Pierre. "Gabrielle de Coignard: poétesse toulousaine du XVI^e siècle." *Archistra* 79 (March-April 1987): pp. 33-43.

Sommers, Paula. "Gendered Distaffs: Gabrielle de Coignard's Revision of Classical Tradition." *Classical and Modern Literature* 18.13 (Spring 1998): pp. 203-210.

---. "Female Subjectivity and the Distaff: Louise Labé, Catherine Des Roches, and Gabrielle de Coignard." *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 25 (1999): pp. 139-150.

---. "Spatial Dynamics and the Female Poet: Gabrielle de Coignard and Catherine des Roches." *Romance Notes* 41.3 (Spring 2001): pp. 363-373.

---. "Gendered Readings of *The Book of Judith*: Guillaume du Bartas and Gabrielle de Coignard." *Romance Quarterly* 48.4 (Fall 2001): pp. 211-220.

Wolff, Philippe. "Une poétesse peu connue du XVI^e siècle toulousain: Gabrielle de Coignard." *Midi: Revue des sciences humaines et de littérature de la France du Sud* n° 0 (1986): pp. 4-17.

IV. Other Secondary Sources

Allen, Don Cameron. "The Rehabilitation of Epicurus and His Theory of Pleasure in the Early Renaissance." *Studies in Philology* 41.1 (Jan. 1944): pp. 1-15. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4172640>>.

Anglade, Joseph. "Origines du Gai Savoir." In *Recueil de l'Académie des Jeux Floraux*. Toulouse: Imprimerie Douladoure, 1919.

Baird, Henry Martyn. *History of the Rise of the Huguenots of France*. Vol. II. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879. <<https://books.google.com/books?id=YTYsAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

Camus, Marie-Pierre. "Le vocabulaire du plaisir dans les poésies de Marguerite de Navarre." In *Et c'est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble: Hommage à Jean Dufournet*. Vol. I. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1993. pp. 309-319.

- Chappell, Timothy. "Augustine's Ethics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. (Second Edition) Eds. David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump. Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge U. P., 2014. pp. 180-207.
- Chiron, Pascale. "Mouvement et repos dans la cité de Dieu." In *Cité des hommes, cité de Dieu. Travaux en l'honneur de Daniel Ménager*. Geneva: Droz, 2003.
- Clément, Michèle. *Une poétique de crise. Poètes baroques et mystiques (1570-1660)*. Paris: H. Champion, 1996.
- Cordier, Jean-Yves. "Les papillons dans la Délie, et dans les livres d'emblèmes du XVI^e siècle." *OverBlog: Le blog de jean-yves cordier*, 1 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.lavieb-aile.com/2015/11/les-papillons-dans-la-delie-et-dans-les-livres-d-emblemes-du-xvie-siecle.html>>.
- Dauvois, Nathalie. *L'Humanisme à Toulouse: 1480-1596. Actes du colloque international de Toulouse, mai 2004*. Dir. Nathalie Dauvois. Paris: Champion, 2006.
- Dawson, John Charles. *Toulouse in the Renaissance; the Floral games; University and Student Life; Etienne Dolet (1532-1534)*. New York: Columbia U. P., 1923.
- Dubois, Claude-Gilbert. *La poésie du XVI^e siècle en toutes lettres*. Paris: Bordas, 1989.
- Evain, Aurore. "Histoire d'autrice, de l'époque latine à nos jours." In *SÊMÉION, Travaux de sémiologie* n° 6, "Femmes et langues." Dir. A.-M. Houdebine. (Feb. 2008): pp. 53 - 62 / re-published online at SIEFAR in 2009. <http://siefar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Histoire-dautrice-A_-Evain.pdf>.
- Ferrer, Véronique, "Pour une poétique réformée: l'influence de Calvin sur les poètes des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles." *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 110.4 (2010): pp. 883-899.
- Floyd, Shawn. "Aquinas: Moral Philosophy." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. N.p., n.d. <<https://iep.utm.edu/aq-moral/>>.
- Fournier, Hannah S. "La voix textuelle des *Sonets spirituels* d'Anne de Marquets." *Etudes littéraires* 20.2 (1987): pp. 77-92.
- Fumaroli, Marc. *L'âge de l'éloquence. Rhetorique et "res literaria" de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique*. Geneva: Droz, 2008.
- Gélis, François de. *Histoire critique des Jeux Floraux: Depuis leur origine jusqu'à leur transformation en Académie (1323-1694)*. Toulouse: Imprimerie et Librairie

Édouard Privat, 1912. Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique, BNF. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k55439700>>.

Gélis, François de, Joseph Anglade, and François Galabert (eds.). *Le Livre Rouge. Actes et délibérations du Collège de Rhétorique (1513-1641), textes publiés par F. de Gélis et J. Anglade, mainteneurs des Jeux Floraux, collationnés sur l'original par Fr. Galabert, archiviste. Introduction, notes et arguments, par M. F. de Gélis.* 2 vols. Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1933-1940.

Huchon, Mireille. *Louise Labé, une créature de papier.* Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 2006.

---. "Dé-Tournes-Ment," *Seizième siècle* n°10 (2014): pp. 105-126.

Jones-Davies, Marie-Thérèse (ed.). *Le plaisir au temps de la Renaissance.* Turnhout: Brepols, 2010.

Joplin, Patricia. "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours." *Stanford Literature Review* 1.1 (Spring 1984): pp. 25-53.

Katz, Leonard D. "Pleasure." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. N.p., 2016. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/pleasure/>>.

Konstan, David. "Epicurus." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. N.p., 2016. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/epicurus/>>.

Krazek, Rafal. *Montaigne et la philosophie du plaisir. Pour une lecture épicurienne des Essais.* Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011.

Kretzmann, Norman, and Eleonore Stump (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge U. P., 1993.

Langer, Ullrich. *Penser les formes du plaisir littéraire à la Renaissance.* Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2009.

Le Goff, Jacques. *La Naissance du Purgatoire.* Paris: Gallimard, 1981.

Margolin, Jean-Claude. "Épicure, l'épicurisme et la philosophie du plaisir d'après l'Épicureus d'Érasme." In *Le Plaisir au temps de la Renaissance.* Dir. Marie-Thérèse Jones-Davies. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010.

Martz, Louis Lohr. *The Poetry of Meditation: a study in English religious literature of the seventeenth century.* New Haven: Yale U. P., 1962.

McMahon, Darrin M. *Happiness: A History.* New York: Grove Press, 2006.

- Millet, Olivier. "Marot et Calvin: chanter les psaumes." In *Clément Marot "Prince des poètes françois."* Eds G. Defaux and M. Simonin. Paris: Champion, 1997. pp. 463-476.
- Morris, Thomas, prod. "Stoicism." *In Our Time*. BBC Radio-4. London, 4 Mar. 2005. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003k9fs>>.
- . "St Thomas Aquinas." *In Our Time*. BBC Radio-4. London, 17 Sept. 2009. <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b00mkd63>>.
- Müller, Armand. *La Poésie religieuse catholique de Marot à Malherbe*. Paris: Imprimerie R. Foulon, 1950.
- Nauta, Lodi. "Lorenzo Valla." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. N.p., 2017. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/lorenzo-valla/>>.
- Opitz, Claudia. "Contraintes et libertés (1250-1500)." In *Histoire des femmes en Occident*. Dir. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot; Vol. 2: *Le Moyen Age*. Dir. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. Paris: Plon, 1991. pp. 277-355.
- Papy, Jan. "Justus Lipsius." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. N.p., 2019. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justus-lipsius/>>.
- Piper, John. "Christian Hedonism: Forgive the Label, but Don't Miss the Truth." *Desiring God* (Jan. 1995). <<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/christian-hedonism>>.
- Sellars, John. "Neo-Stoicism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. N.p., n.d. <<https://iep.utm.edu/neostoic/>>.
- Shaw, Mary Lewis. *The Cambridge Introduction to French Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2003.
- Snyder, James G. "Marsilio Ficino's Critique of the Lucretian Alternative." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72.2. U. of Pennsylvania P. (2011): pp. 165-181.
- . "Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499)." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. N.p., n.d. <<https://www.iep.utm.edu/ficino/>>.
- Van Riel, Gerd. *Pleasure and the Good Life. Plato, Aristotle and the Neoplatonists*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Weijers, Dan. "Hedonism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. N. p., n.d. <<https://>>.

www.iep.utm.edu/hedonism/>.

Williams, Carolyn D. "Hedonism." In *The Oxford Companion to The Body*. Ed. Colin Blakemore and Sheila Jennett. New York: Oxford UP, 2001. p. 353.

Williams, Pamela. *Through Human Love to God. Essays on Dante and Petrarch*. Leicester: Troubador Publishing, 2007.

V. Research Tools

Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330-1500). ATILF-CNRS et U. de Lorraine, 2015.
<<http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>>.

Morier, Henri. *Dictionnaire de poétique et de rhétorique*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1981.

Rey, Alain, Marianne Tomi, Tristan Hordé, and Chantal Tanet. "Plaisir." *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française: contenant les mots français en usage et quelques autres délaissés, avec leur origine proche et lointaine*. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1995. pp. 1537-1538.

Trésor de la langue française informatisée (TLFi). Paris: CNRS Editions, 2004.
<<http://atilf.atilf.fr/>>.