

## INTRODUCTION

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From 1337, when Philip VI confiscated Aquitaine from Edward III, until 1453, when the English lost the duchy for good, France and England engaged in the intermittent military conflict that historians have named, somewhat inaccurately, the Hundred Years' War. This period of hostilities coincided with a remarkable efflorescence of vernacular literature in both countries. French literature, which had come to dominate the secular culture of Christendom in the twelfth century, continued to flourish in texts by authors such as Machaut, Deschamps, and Christine de Pizan, the first woman known to earn her living as a writer. In England, over which France had exercised cultural hegemony since the Norman Conquest, a renaissance of literature in the native language occurred during the second half of the fourteenth century with texts by such authors as the anonymous *Gawain* poet, Langland, Gower, and Chaucer, the father of English literature. The intersection between these two contemporaneous phenomena, the sociopolitical circumstances of the Hundred Years' War and the production of vernacular literature in France and England, is the subject of this collection of essays.

These essays participate in the "turn toward history" that has marked literary studies during the last decade.<sup>1</sup> As will be apparent, their analyses have been enabled and invigorated by the recent conversation about historical criticism. Like the old historicism, these essays assume that a text speaks of the period during which it was composed, but they also insist that it speaks to its time, questioning as well as articulating its culture. Like Marxist and cultural-materialist criticism, these essays explore the nexus between literature and sociopolitical conditions, but without subscribing to a particular model of the historical process. And like the New Historicism and cultural poetics, these essays acknowledge the textuality of history. They agree with Paul de Man that "the bases for historical knowledge are not empirical facts but written texts," but they reject the dismissal of the

material reality of the past implicit in the concluding clause of his sentence: "even if these texts masquerade in the guise of wars or revolutions."<sup>2</sup>

Despite their debt to these diverse methodologies, the essays in this collection heed Lee Patterson's warning that "historical criticism must abandon the hope of any theoretical foundation and come to rest instead upon its own historically contingent moment and upon convictions that find their final support within experience."<sup>3</sup> After analyzing the limitations of both Marxist and New Historicist practices, Patterson concludes by identifying the dilemma for historical critics: "the question was—and remains—whether cultural analysis is possible without an explicit commitment to a specific philosophy of history, a specific definition of the real. Can history be written without causality? And if not, is causal explanation possible without a foundational commitment to some narrative of historical action, be it the fulfillment of the Spirit, the rise of a heroic bourgeoisie, or the class struggle entailed by social inequality?"<sup>4</sup> In response to this dilemma, Patterson proposes a critical historicism, informed by the investigator's self-reflection about his or her own historicity and validated by its political rather than its theoretical efficacy.<sup>5</sup> Such a critical historicism assumes that literary and critical texts can interrogate as well as bespeak their cultures and that they can perform local and small-scale interventions to challenge the dominant social and political formations of their own historical moment.

Although she does not use the term *critical historicism*, Gabrielle Spiegel formulates a methodology for textual analysis that incorporates many of the premises which Patterson articulates. She enjoins historical critics to concentrate upon what she terms the social logic of texts as "situated uses of language."<sup>6</sup> Instead of assuming the dominance of either history or literature, she explores the reciprocity of context and text as mutually constitutive. "All texts occupy determinate social spaces," Spiegel explains, "both as products of the social world of authors and as textual agents at work in that world, with which they entertain often complex and contestatory relations. In that sense, texts both mirror and generate social realities, are constituted by *and* constitute the social and discursive formations which they may sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform depending on the case at hand."<sup>7</sup> By recognizing the complex interdependence of text and context and the possibility that the text might oppose as well as acquiesce to dominant ideologies, Spiegel implicitly acknowledges the agency of authorship without claiming that the author can act entirely independent of cultural constraints. As Patterson argues, critical historicism must recognize that this

antinomy between the individual and the totality can never be resolved, for, as he succinctly puts it, “the self may be made, but it is also self-made.”<sup>8</sup>

Concurring with Patterson, Spiegel insists that historical critics should focus on the local and contingent rather than the global; they must forgo both master narratives of history and preconceptions about the text’s relationship to its culture. “There is no way to determine a priori the social function of a text or its locus with respect to its cultural ambience. Only a minute examination of the form and content of a given work can determine its situation with respect to broader patterns of culture at any given time.”<sup>9</sup> Spiegel thus balances the claims of history and literature by calling for a criticism that respects the specific and unique details of both the context and the text. “What this means,” she explains, “is that a genuine literary history must always to some extent be both social and formalist in its concerns, must pay attention to a text’s ‘social logic’ in the dual sense of its site of articulation and its discursive character as articulated *logos*.”<sup>10</sup> By combining historicist and formalist analysis, Spiegel recognizes the aesthetic dimension of literary texts without implying that it allows access to a transcendental truth.

In fact, Spiegel insists on the historicity of literature by contending that this dual perspective on the text’s social logic can best be achieved by concentrating on the moment of its inscription, “that is, on the ways in which the historical world is internalized in the text and its meaning fixed.”<sup>11</sup> She distinguishes inscribing from recording by emphasizing the mediation of the author. In contrast to recording, inscribing “represents the moment of choice, decision, and action that creates the social reality of the text, a reality existing both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the particular performance incorporated in the work, through the latter’s inclusions, exclusions, distortions, and stresses.”<sup>12</sup> Spiegel thus contends that the text constructs its context as much as the context constructs the text.

It is precisely this reciprocity between literature and history that the following essays explore. Concentrating on the moment of inscription, they investigate the social logic of texts that speak of and speak to the Hundred Years’ War. Examining the ways in which these texts manifest the sociopolitical conditions under which they were produced and analyzing the work they perform in their cultural economy, these essays demonstrate how history influences literature and how literature intervenes in history.

Any effort to scrutinize the reciprocity between history and literature must begin by situating the texts under consideration in the chronology of the Hundred Years’ War. Historians usually divide these 116 years into four

periods: 1337–1360, 1360–1396, 1396–1422, and 1422–1453.<sup>13</sup> Important treaties or truces in 1360, 1396, and 1420 were soon breached and hostilities were renewed. English dominance in the first and third periods alternated with increased French resistance in the second and fourth.

Although historians debate the fundamental causes of the Hundred Years' War, the immediate catalyst was the feudal and dynastic disputes between Edward III and the French monarchy. As duke of Aquitaine, Edward, like his predecessors back to Henry III, owed liege homage to the French king. In 1328, a year after Edward assumed the throne, the French monarch died without a direct heir. As nephew of the deceased Charles IV, Edward asserted a right to the French crown. Although the French nobility chose Philip of Valois as king, Edward's royal lineage through his mother conflicted with his feudal position. According to Prestwich, "The claim to the French throne transformed the whole basis of disputes between the rival sovereigns. No longer would Edward III appear as a rebellious vassal, disregarding the terms of his homage; rather, as a claimant to the throne he was the equal of Philip VI."<sup>14</sup> With Edward's renewal of his homage to the new French king in 1329 and 1331, though, the dispute seemed settled. Fundamental differences, however, remained unresolved.

According to contemporaries, the event which ignited the hostilities was the vowing game dramatized in the anonymous French poem of the 1340s, *Les Vœux du heron* (*The Vows of the Heron*).<sup>15</sup> This poem purports to record the incident that provoked Edward III to wage war on France: an imputation of his cowardice by Robert d'Artois. Although no other evidence confirms that the poem's vowing session actually occurred, both contemporary chroniclers and recent historians acknowledge Robert d'Artois's role as an actual or an ostensible cause of the hostilities between England and France. Banished by Philip VI, he received asylum from Edward III in 1336. According to Froissart, Robert d'Artois incited the English king to assert his claim to the French throne; in the final revision of the *Chroniques* extant in the Rome manuscript, Froissart even alleges that Robert dictated the declaration of Edward's hereditary right read before the Parliament in March of 1337.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Philip VI cited Edward's refusal to extradite Robert d'Artois as the evidence of a breach of fealty that justified the French confiscation of Aquitaine in May of 1337. Recent historians, however, regard Robert d'Artois as the excuse for, rather than the instigator of, the hostilities, even though they disagree about whether it was the English or the French king who used the banished aristocrat to rationalize his own conduct.<sup>17</sup>

Although it was composed in the first decade of the Hundred Years' War, *The Vows of the Heron*, as the essays by Norris Lacy and Patricia DeMarco demonstrate, foreshadowed the ruthlessness of the English troops and the suffering of French civilians in the century to come. Until Henry V changed the strategy in the second decade of the fifteenth century, the English army's primary tactic of *chevauchée*, or prolonged raid, not only undermined the authority of the French king but also wreaked devastation, or *damnum*, on the populace of the invaded country. It was also during this period that the English won most of their great military victories: Sluys in 1340; Crécy in 1346; the successful siege of Calais in the subsequent year; and Poitiers in 1356, when King John II was captured by the Black Prince. Through these spectacular victories, Edward III and his son gained their renown as military leaders. For the French, though, as Ellen Caldwell shows, these defeats came to represent, at least from the nineteenth century on, their courage and endurance in such powerful works of art as Delacroix's painting, *La Bataille de Poitiers* (1829–30), and Rodin's sculpture, *Les Bourgeois de Calais* (1884–86).

Encouraged by the domestic havoc in France and the failure of the peace negotiations, Edward III returned to Calais in 1359 and set out for Rheims, where he must have planned to be crowned king. After almost two months of extreme privation during the dead of winter, Edward abandoned the siege of Rheims and turned his troops toward Burgundy. In the meantime, however, a young *valetus*, or yeoman, named Geoffrey Chaucer, serving under Prince Lionel, was captured outside Retters (Réthel). As John Bowers argues, this wartime experience may well have changed the course of English poetry by inciting Chaucer's reaction against the French literature that had exercised cultural hegemony in his homeland since the Conquest. After a terrible storm in April of 1359 while the English army was encamped near Chartres, Edward agreed to relinquish his claim to the French throne in return for full sovereignty in Aquitaine and neighboring territory and a ransom of three million *écus* (£500,000) for King John. Signed in 1360, this Treaty of Brétigny (or Calais) brought to a close the first period of the Hundred Years' War.

In England, though, the Treaty of Brétigny proved controversial. Those who had benefitted financially from the war objected to Edward's relinquishment of his claim to the French crown. Composing the A-text of *Piers Plowman* between 1368 and 1374, Langland, one of the earliest opponents of the Hundred Years' War, criticized these militarists, I argue, in the debate between Meed and Conscience in Passus III. The Treaty of Brétigny held for

less than a decade. In 1369 Edward responded to Charles V's intervention in a dispute between the Black Prince and some of the nobility of Aquitaine by resuming the title of king of France, and Charles retaliated by confiscating the duchy. The second period of the Hundred Years' War had begun.

In the 1370s the English did not attain the military success of the preceding period. Rather Charles V and his constable, Bertrand du Guesclin, gradually reoccupied the land ceded by the Treaty of Brétigny, and the French navy began to raid the southeast coast of England. "For the first time," Desmond Seward writes, "the Plantagenets faced an enemy who was their superior."<sup>18</sup> In 1376 the Black Prince died, and the following year, Edward III died. Richard II assumed the English throne in 1377 at the age of ten. Three years later du Guesclin and Charles V both passed away, but they had managed to win back most of the territory conquered by Edward III.

During this decade and the following one, French and English public opinion turned against the war because of the high taxes required to sustain it and the wastefulness of the nobility. Domestic problems as well as personal inclination led both Richard II and Charles VI, who succeeded his father in 1380, to favor peace. As Allmand observes, though, "both kings came to be surrounded by uncles who sought to further war for their own ends. Each, in his own way, reacted against avuncular pressure."<sup>19</sup> In England, Richard II's disinterest in the war together with his favoritism toward his friends angered one of his uncles and his allies. After successfully pressing charges of treason against five of Richard's advisers and friends in the Merciless Parliament, these Appellant lords gained control of the council in 1388 and tried, unsuccessfully, to reignite the war. Their efforts, as Judith Ferster contends, explain the veiled allusions that Chaucer makes in his enigmatic *Tale of Melibee*. By the 1390s, though, both Richard and Charles were seeking ways to end the hostilities. Their efforts culminated in 1396 in a twenty-eight year truce and the marriage of Charles's daughter Isabella to Richard II. The second period of the Hundred Years' War thus drew to a close.

The truce negotiated between Richard II and Charles VI, however, was broken by the end of the century as both kings lost control of their governments. The recurring bouts of mental illness that Charles VI suffered since 1393 weakened his rule, and in 1399 Richard was deposed by his cousin, Henry. The instability of the last decade of the fourteenth century and the first decade of the fifteenth is reflected in the canons of Eustache Deschamps and John Gower. Charles VI's madness and the competition for power between his uncle, the duke of Burgundy, and his brother, the duke

of Orléans, divided the French into two factions and would ultimately culminate in thirty years of civil war. France's identity as a nation-state had not yet been formed, as Earl Jeffrey Richards's analysis of Deschamps's poetry demonstrates. Likewise, in England in the late 1390s John Gower reverted to French in his last works despite the rapid ascendancy of English as a literary language and his own use of the vernacular for his *Confessio Amantis* at the beginning of the decade. His choice, Robert Yeager argues, was governed by political motives: the increasingly autocratic behavior of Richard II and Gower's knowledge of the preferences of Henry IV.

Domestic problems in both France and England limited full-scale warfare until Henry V ascended to the throne in 1413 and reinstated the English claim to the French crown the following year. By 1419 Henry had captured all the important towns of Normandy in four years of siege warfare. His defeat of the French forces at Agincourt in 1415 has been regarded since the time of Shakespeare, as Ellen Caldwell demonstrates, as the epitome of English heroism. Henry V's spectacular success in the Hundred Years' War culminated in the Treaty of Troyes of 1420. According to its terms, Henry became heir to the crown of France and was to assume the throne at the death of Charles VI. In the meantime, Henry would marry Catherine, Charles's daughter, and act as regent. This "Final Peace," as the English termed it, failed, however, when Henry V died in August of 1422, two months before Charles VI. His heir, Henry VI, was less than a year old.

The fourth period of the Hundred Years' War stretches from the death of Henry V to the expulsion of the English from Normandy and Aquitaine in the middle of the fifteenth century. Under the remarkable leadership of a peasant girl, Joan of Arc, the French broke the English siege of Orléans, and the dauphin was able to journey to Rheims to be crowned Charles VII in July of 1429. The English claim on the French throne, ratified in the Treaty of Troyes, had been refuted. Despite his debt to "la Pucelle," Charles betrayed her hopes for France, a fact that was not lost on Christine de Pizan, the first French woman to support herself through her writing, who ended her career with a poem in praise of Joan. In the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* (*The Tale of Joan of Arc*) Christine, as Anne Lutkus and Julia Walker carefully explain, endorses the Maid's strategy rather than the monarch's. Within two years of her success at Orléans, though, Joan was captured by the Burgundians and their English allies and brought to trial for heresy. One of her characteristics that intrigued the interrogators, as Susan Crane reveals, was Joan's insistence on wearing men's clothes, a fact that raises questions about conceptions of gender in the late medieval period. Burned at the stake in the

English-held city of Rouen, Joan's death led to a period of stalemate as both diplomatic and military efforts to settle the war fell short during the 1430s and 1440s.

*Cleriadus et Meliadice*, the anonymous French romance whose hero becomes king of England through marriage, expresses, as Michelle Szkilnik explains, the longing for peace throughout this period. Prospects for a settlement seemed to increase with the Truce of Tours in 1444, by the terms of which Henry VI married Margaret of Anjou, a niece of the French monarch. "Once again," Allmand remarks, "it was hoped to postpone a settlement and place faith upon a personal union between the royal families of the two countries to resolve the outcome of the old dispute between them."<sup>20</sup> Once again, however, these hopes were disappointed. Within five years the war resumed, and the English soon lost Normandy and then Aquitaine to the French. Though most contemporaries at the time may not have realized it, the Hundred Years' War was over when Bordeaux finally fell in July 1453, and the English were expelled from France.

As this overview of the Hundred Years' War reveals, this was a momentous century marked by controversy and turmoil. Inscribed during these tumultuous times, the texts under consideration here engage, either overtly or covertly, in the debates about war policy, military practices, and national identity that raged throughout the period. Investigating this imbrication of literature and history, the essays in this collection demonstrate, as Spiegel puts it, how "texts both mirror and generate social realities, are constituted by *and* constitute the social and discursive formations which they many sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform depending on the case at hand."<sup>21</sup> The relationship of a specific text to the particular case at hand is precisely what each of the following essays attempts to elucidate.

The first pair of essays investigates the intersection of the literary and the historical in *Les Voeux du heron* (*The Vows of the Heron*). With its fictive account of the events that precipitated the Hundred Years' War, this poem exemplifies the overt political uses to which literary texts could be put in the Middle Ages. As Norris Lacy and Patricia DeMarco show, though, these uses are often problematic for readers unfamiliar with the contemporary scene upon which the poem comments. Their complementary essays enact a critical conversation that situates *The Vows of the Heron* in its historical and cultural context.

In "Warmongering in Verse: *Les Voeux du heron*," Norris Lacy, the poem's most recent editor, provides the historical context needed to appreciate the complexity of the political agenda informing *The Vows of the*



*Heron*. Although this poem was probably composed during or after 1346, the vowing game it dramatizes is set in September of 1338. Its participants are clearly identified as historical personages associated with the inception of English hostilities against France. Lacy demonstrates that the temporal displacement of this fictive banquet to the decade before the early battles of the Hundred Years' War enables the poet to develop numerous discrepancies between the oaths made by the poem's speakers and their actual subsequent exploits. This gap between fiction and fact, story and history constitutes the poem's irony and, coupled with the escalating violence promised by the later vows, leads Lacy to conclude his essay with speculation about the *Vows*' critique of militaristic posturing.

In the second essay of this collection, "Inscribing the Body with Meaning: Chivalric Culture and the Norms of Violence in *The Vows of the Heron*," Patricia DeMarco confirms Lacy's speculation by exploring several different perspectives for establishing the critical purpose of the poem's irony. Acknowledging that the graphic representation of violence in a chivalric text does not per se indicate the author's censure, she provides the grounds for evaluating the *Vows*' many depictions of the war's devastation of non-combatants, particularly women. Examining the poem's violation of the function of the wounded body in chivalric literature, its questioning of English motivation according to the principles of just war theory, and the defamiliarization of war's horrors achieved by the pregnant queen's final vow, DeMarco concludes that the *Vows of the Heron* critically reflects on chivalric violence even though the poet can offer no alternate ethos to counteract it.

The second pair of essays shows that the militarism of the nobility was also criticized by two of the most popular Middle English authors, William Langland and Geoffrey Chaucer. Unlike the French author of *Les Voeux du heron*, though, these London writers are more oblique in their criticism in order to avoid the reprisals of the powerful English magnates who favored war. In our respective essays, Judith Ferster and I analyze Chaucer's and Langland's covert endorsements of efforts to make peace with France in the 1360s and 1380s.

In "Meed and the Economics of Chivalry in *Piers Plowman*," I contend that Langland discloses the material incentives for war occluded by chivalric ideology during the debate between Conscience and Meed in the first dream vision of the A-text of *Piers Plowman* (circa 1368–1374). I demonstrate that Langland ascribes to his character Meed the same arguments against the Treaty of Brétigny (1360), according to which Edward III was

to relinquish his claim to the French throne, that are expressed in contemporary discourses opposing the king's withdrawal from the war. Comparing Meed's defense of the profits that accrue to military leaders with the economic practices of Edward III and the nobility during the first phase of the hostilities from 1337 to 1360, I establish that Langland uses Meed's objections to this treaty to question the motives of the king and his magnates for waging war on France.

Judith Ferster's essay, "Chaucer's Tale of Melibee: Contradictions and Context," resolves the debate between formalist and historicist critics about Chaucer's purpose in assigning to his own persona in *The Canterbury Tales* his translation of Albertano of Brescia's *Liber consolacionis et consilii*. She reconciles the paradoxes and contradictions that seem to deconstruct this treatise with the apparent topicality of its message by situating the Melibee in the controversy provoked by the Appellant lords from 1386 to 1389 over advising the king. Displeased by Richard II's overtures of peace with France, these powerful magnates insisted that they serve as the king's councillors and that he pursue the war. In this context, Ferster concludes, the Tale of Melibee's deconstruction of the Appellants's ideology of advice signals Chaucer's cautious allegiance to the king and to peace.

The next three essays examine the formative influence of the Hundred Years' War on nationalism in England and France. This period of military hostility coincided with the first phase in the emergence of the nation-state and impelled the development of distinctive nationalist ideologies in both countries.<sup>22</sup> Although the process was only initiated during the Hundred Years' War, both the English and the French begin to identify themselves against the other, their opponent in the intermittent conflict that lasted for over a century.

In the case of England, the differentiation from France occasioned a reaction against the ascendancy of the enemy's literature and language and incited the development of a native, vernacular culture. As Turville-Petre observes: "The emergence of the fully-fledged nation involves a process by which a unifying culture is widely disseminated throughout the population. . . . The use of English was a precondition of the process of deepening and consolidating the sense of national identity by harnessing the emotive energy of the association between language and nationalism."<sup>23</sup> John Bowers and Robert Yeager analyze how this nascent ideology of Englishness affected the canons of the period's preeminent poets, Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower. Acquaintances living and writing in or near London during the last quarter of the fourteenth century, both were associated in some

capacity with the royal court and informed about the various debates regarding English war policy. While Chaucer's entire *oeuvre* is in Middle English, Gower remained a trilingual poet, composing in French even at the end of the fourteenth century.

Using postcolonial theory in "Chaucer after Retters: The Wartime Origins of English Literature," John Bowers analyzes Chaucer's literary productions through *The Legend of Good Women* as reactions against French artistic hegemony. Despite the prestige of the opponent's culture among the aristocrats of Edward III's court, Bowers speculates that the young Chaucer's humiliating captivity near Rheims for several weeks, if not months, in 1360 spurred him to dissociate his poetry from the dominance of his French contemporaries. Bowers correlates Chaucer's canon prior to *The Canterbury Tales* with the events of the Hundred Years' War and demonstrates that his relationship to the French tradition has political as well as artistic dimensions.

In "Politics and the French Language in England during the Hundred Years' War: The Case of John Gower," Robert Yeager addresses an anomaly in this trilingual poet's career: his abandonment of English in the texts he composed after the *Confessio Amantis*. Unlike Chaucer's canon, Gower's manifests no clear evolution toward Englishness, despite the increasing popularity of the native language and the growing antagonism toward France. Yeager resolves this apparent discrepancy by carefully establishing the probable chronology of Gower's works and their extant manuscript copies. Dividing the poet's career into three periods, he demonstrates the correspondence between Gower's choice of language and the immediate political circumstances, especially changes in the reigning king's policy toward France.

Because its language and literature had enjoyed preeminence throughout Europe since the twelfth century, the process of establishing French national identity was not primarily linguistic. Rather, during the fifteenth century the conflict between France and England was increasingly conflated with salvation history as the French came to regard themselves as God's chosen people. Earl Jeffrey Richards examines the differences between the traditional conception of a 'nation' and this nascent nationalism in his essay, "The Uncertainty in Defining France as a Nation in the Works of Eustache Deschamps." He demonstrates that Deschamps is a transitional figure, foreshadowing the emerging concept of national identity, but nonetheless emphasizing conventional Christian universalism and statist hierarchy. Although he denounces France's enemy using the traditional rhetorical epithets of Englishmen with tails and perfidious Albion, Deschamps ultimately attributes the Hundred Years' War to sin on both

sides. His cosmopolitanism is manifest, Richards concludes, in his praise of his English contemporary, Geoffrey Chaucer.

The next pair of essays focuses on the role of two extraordinary French women, Christine de Pizan and Joan of Arc. Despite their differences of age, class, and experience, both Christine de Pizan and Joan of Arc excelled in professions that were regarded as the exclusive domain of men in the late Middle Ages. Their paths crossed in 1429 when, at the end of her long and distinguished career, Christine wrote her final poem, *Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* (*The Tale of Joan of Arc*), in honor of the extraordinary peasant girl who had just led the military victory over the English that made possible the dauphin's coronation at Rheims.

In contrast to the guarded references to the Hundred Years' War made by Langland and Chaucer, Christine de Pizan earned her living and her fame writing texts that engaged in political polemic. During the first quarter of the fifteenth century, she distinguished herself both as an opponent of misogyny and a proponent of the monarchy. In "The Political Poetics of the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*," however, Anne Lutkus and Julia Walker contend that in her final text Christine de Pizan, disregarding possible reprisals, voices her opposition to a monarch she had formerly supported, Charles VII. They demonstrate that Christine intervenes during late August or early September of 1429 in support of Joan of Arc in her debate with the newly crowned king about whether to take Paris. Arguing that the usual date of "the last day of July" for the poem's completion ignores the chronology of the events it refers to, Lutkus and Walker show that in the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* Christine engages in her last act of political propaganda on behalf of Joan and France, not Charles VII and the monarchy.

In "Clothing and Gender Definition: Joan of Arc," Susan Crane interrogates the textual traces of "la Pucelle" in the transcripts of her trial to investigate the significance of cross dressing to her self-conception. After evaluating the reliability of the various transcripts of Joan's own, admittedly coerced, responses, Crane examines the meaning assigned to her transvestism both by her inquisitors and by the accused herself. Transgressing the gendered oppositions within the semiotics of clothing, Joan's cross dressing, Crane concludes, troubles her sexuality. Like the other essays in this collection, Crane's demonstrates the imbrication of history and literature, but from a different angle: she shows that historical documents, rather than offering unmediated access to the past, are as ambiguous as literary texts; nonetheless, if they are interrogated critically, they can afford us at least a partial glimpse, if not an extended gaze, of the past.

Michelle Szkilnik, like Crane, also investigates the impetus that the Hundred Years' War afforded for imagining a radical revision of social formations. In "A Pacifist Utopia: *Cleriadus et Meliadice*," she reads this French romance of the 1440s as a counterpoint to Froissart's *Chroniques*; through its contrasting fiction of France and England at peace, it complements the chronicle's commemoration of chivalry on the battlefield. A realistic romance, *Cleriadus et Meliadice* invokes familiar names of places and personages to create the same texture of historicity that Froissart does. As Szkilnik establishes, however, the violence that erupts in the *Chroniques*' narrative of the Hundred Years' War is, in the romance, either directed toward the heathen other or contained by the chivalric exploits of its exemplary hero, Cleriadus. Through her exploration of its attempt to recuperate the chivalric idealism discredited by the grim realities of a century of warfare (as shown in the preceding essays on *Les Voeux du heron* and *Piers Plouman*), Szkilnik accounts for the remarkable popularity of this late-medieval romance, which is extant in nine manuscripts and five editions printed between 1495 and 1529.

The final essay of this collection, Ellen Caldwell's "The Hundred Years' War and National Identity," traces the long shadow that this conflict has cast on constructions of nationalism in England and France. Examining both visual and verbal representations of the war, ranging from the *Apocalypse* tapestries commissioned by the duke of Anjou in 1373, to Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *Henry VI, Part 2* as well as Olivier's and Branagh's films of the former, to Delacroix's painting and Rodin's sculpture depicting French defeats, Caldwell demonstrates how the Hundred Years' War has been used to write "analogue history." Later events, such as the two world wars in this century, have been inscribed in terms of the national paradigms established by the Hundred Years' War: France's victimization and endurance in contrast to England's glorious conquests. However, as Caldwell shows through her analysis of Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2* in the second half of her essay, representations of the Hundred Years' War have also critiqued nationalism and the sacrifices that subjects have been required to make on behalf of the state.

Clearly these essays are connected not only by their common focus on texts that respond to the Hundred Years' War, but also by certain recurrent themes that these texts share: a critique of the aggressive violence and excessive greed of men-at-arms, the need to express such criticism of powerful military and political figures covertly, and the role that war plays in imagining social change and constructing national identity. Most surprising,

though, may be the antiwar sentiments that several essays expose in texts like *Les Vœux du heron*, Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Chaucer's Tale of Melibee, and *Cleriadus et Meliadice*. Perhaps the opposition of French writers to the Hundred Years' War is to be expected, given the great suffering imposed on the populace by the English *chevauchées*. However, it may seem anachronistic to attribute pacifist attitudes to fourteenth-century English authors like Langland and Chaucer; one might well suspect that the critic, an American academic in the post-Vietnam era, is imposing his or her own values on these Middle English texts.

Although political historians have recognized that popular opposition to the Hundred Years' War in both England and France was primarily a protest against increased taxation, few have discussed other motives for objecting to the military conflict. Recently, however, social historians have found new evidence of antiwar sentiments in the sermons, religious treatises, and literature of the century. John Barnie argues that at least by the 1380s "peace became a matter of overriding concern to men of conscience."<sup>24</sup> Ben Lowe takes this claim even further: "Without too much exaggeration it can be said that a true movement, albeit an uncoordinated one, swept across England in the later Middle Ages, determined to end the war with France and tending toward a reevaluation of the whole practice of war itself."<sup>25</sup> Indeed, both Lowe and Barnie identify Gower, Langland, and Chaucer as among the major proponents of this new "intellectual environment wherein we find the first sustained discourse of peace."<sup>26</sup> Thus, while the Hundred Years' War has long been regarded as the beginning of the traditional enmity between the English and the French, it also provided, as these essays demonstrate, the impetus for a new conception of the possibility of peace.

#### NOTES

1. For J. Hillis Miller's use of this phrase in his survey of the critical terrain in his 1986 Presidential Address to the Modern Language Association, see "The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading, and the Question of the Material Base," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 283.

2. Paul de Man, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 298.

3. Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 48.

4. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past*, 68.

5. Patterson introduces this term in "Critical Historicism and Medieval Studies," in *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1308–1530*, ed. Lee Patterson, *The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics* 8 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Although he chooses to leave the term open-ended, so that "critical historicism is able to refer to a wide range of historicist initiatives while still asserting the crucial fact of initiation itself, of work that conceives of itself as something other than business as usual" (2), Patterson distinguishes his own practice from New Historicism and Marxist criticism.

6. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 77.

7. Spiegel, "The Social Logic of the Text," 77.

8. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past*, 74.

9. Spiegel, "The Social Logic of the Text," 77.

10. Spiegel, "The Social Logic of the Text," 77–78.

11. Spiegel, "The Social Logic of the Text," 84.

12. Spiegel, "The Social Logic of the Text," 84.

13. This summary of the major events of the Hundred Years' War draws upon Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300–c. 1450*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 6–36; May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307–1399*, Oxford History of England 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 105–49; Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards: War and State in England, 1272–1377* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980; London: Routledge, 1990), 165–87; Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); and Desmond Seward, *The Hundred Years War: The English in France 1337–1453* (New York: Atheneum, 1978).

14. Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, 170.

15. John L. Grigsby and Norris J. Lacy, eds., *The Vows of the Heron (Les Voeux du heron): A Middle French Vowing Poem*, Garland Library of Medieval Literature 86, series A (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 7.

16. Jean Froissart, *Chroniques de J. Froissart*, ed. Siméon Luce et al. (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1869–1975), I:118–19, 359–60.

17. For the differences of opinion about Robert d'Artois's role, see McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, 115, 120, 124, 126; Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, 168–69; W. M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 9–10; and Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Battle* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 170–73, 184, 274–75, 293.

18. Seward, *The Hundred Years War*, 103.

19. Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*, 24.

20. Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*, 35.

21. Spiegel, "The Social Logic of the Text," 77.

22. See Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, trans. Susan Ross Huston, ed. Fredric L. Cheyette (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), for a discussion of the myths and symbols of nationhood developing in France during this period; Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), examines the beginnings of English nationalism in the half-century prior to the Hundred Years' War. Both authors discuss competing conceptions of nationalism in their introductions.

23. Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, 10.

24. John Barnie, *War in Medieval English Society: Social Values in the Hundred Years War 1337–99* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), 129.

25. Ben Lowe, *Imagining Peace: A History of Early English Pacifist Ideas, 1340–1560* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 146; for a discussion of the continental peace discourse, see 72–79.

26. Lowe, *Imagining Peace*, 71; for discussions of Gower, Langland, and Chaucer, see 82–102; Barnie, *War in Medieval English Society*, 122–31; and Robert F. Yeager, "Pax Poetica: On the Pacifism of Chaucer and Gower," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 9 (1987): 97–121.