



The Poetics of the Self and/as the Other in Hoccleve’s “La Male Regle”¹

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Abstract

“La Male Regle” is one of Thomas Hoccleve’s autobiographical poems in which the poet displays not only humour but also self-confrontation. Listing all of his follies, which are attributed to his youth, the persona stands out as a “self” that has transformed from being the “other” that has committed many sins to a repentant self. In this way, the persona of “La Male Regle,” also named Hoccleve, exhibits a complaint about the “other” self with a confessional tone. Moreover, the poem highlights not just the process but also the reasons of othering his self, which reveals the social dimension of identity. Othering stands out as the outcome of social impositions and religious doctrines on masculine identity. Unveiling the social aspect of masculinity, “La Male Regle” demonstrates identity to be performed, shaped and acknowledged in the society in which it is situated. Using his poem as a textual platform for othering, Hoccleve displays the influence of society on one’s identity formation and the difficulty of protecting reputation in the community as a male. Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyse Hoccleve’s “La Male Regle” as a reflection of the mature persona’s confrontation with his younger self that is othered by the follies of his youth about failing to conform to the ideals of masculinity in the Middle Ages. In this way, the article aims to present a discussion of Hoccleve’s poetics of the self and/as the othered self in his “La Male Regle.”

Keywords: Hoccleve, “La Male Regle”, the poetics of the self, the other, masculinity

Introduction

Thomas Hoccleve (1368-1426), a clerk of the Privy Seal who was granted annuity by King Henry IV, reveals a number of autobiographical details in his poems. “La Male Regle de T.

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Hoccleue,² which was written in ca. 1405, is among Hoccleve's early autobiographical poems. Being a penitential and petitionary poem, "La Male Regle" displays a self that moves back and forth between being a public self and a private self. Attributing all of his follies that he committed when he was young to his youth, the persona of "La Male Regle" exhibits a poetics of the self formed not only by humour but also by self-confrontation. In a confessional and repentant tone, "La Male Regle" displays how a self becomes the other for a male when he fails to conform to the ideals of masculinity dominant in his society.

"La Male Regle" is a poem in which the persona explicitly addresses himself as Hoccleve (line 351).³ As Daniel Wakelin states, "Hoccleve's intimate poems have become well known as a form of autobiography" (2010, p. 567) among which is "La Male Regle." Rooted in the begging poem and goliardic writing tradition (Perkins, 2007, p. 594), "La Male Regle" is a 448-line autobiographical poem exposing the persona's past and present conception about his identity. Therefore, "La Male Regle" has also been defined as an "[i]ntrospective" poem (Seymour, 1981, p. xiii), "an apology", "a confession" (Wakelin, 2010, p. 567), "a mock penitential confession" (Knapp, 2009, p. 194), a "prayer to a god" as well as "a petition" (Perkins, 2007, p. 586).

Embodying all these definitions, "La Male Regle" also exhibits, beside autobiographical details, the workings of identity politics in medieval England and thus the social aspect of identity for a male. Written in a "more conservative eight-lined *balade stanza*" form, "La Male Regle" is about Hoccleve's "bachelor vanities in London" (Seymour, 1981, pp. xviii, xvi) and how his young lifestyle cost him his physical and financial health. The poem can be regarded as a comparison of the present self with the past self. It reveals how identity is socially constructed by disclosing what was regarded as vanity for the youth in medieval London. The poem is about the failure of the younger self to conform to the norms of medieval masculinity as constructed by the society in which it is situated. The older self complains about the younger self which can be regarded as othering the younger self. Uncovering the public aspect of the personal identity formation process, "La Male Regle" becomes a lens which shows how social impositions and religious doctrines pave the way for a male to other his younger self while becoming a "socially acceptable" (Bertolet, 2015, p. 270) masculine figure that complies with the norms of the society. Accordingly, this article aims to analyse Hoccleve's "La Male Regle" as a reflection of the othering process of the younger self by the older self and hence to contribute to the discussion about Hoccleve's poetics of the self and the othered self.

A Mirror to the Self: Health as a Treasure Wasted by Youth

"La Male Regle" displays how the younger self was a product of a life style that was not acceptable for his society and how he becomes the other not just for the medieval society but also for the older self. Therefore, the older self's othering his younger self begins at the very first stanza of "La Male Regle" where the persona emphasizes the significance of health and reveals the conflict between the past and the present selves of the persona. Hoccleve starts "La Male Regle" personifying Health and addressing Health as "precious tresor" and "ground and roote of prosperitee" (lines 1, 2). The persona emphasises the superiority of health compared to all the other earthly riches, and notes that if one is healthy, s/he has "worldly

² Hereafter will be referred to shortly as "La Male Regle."

³ All the references to "La Male Regle" will be to the following edition: Hoccleve, T. (1981). "La Male Regle." In M. C. Seymour (Ed.), *Selections from Hoccleve* (pp. 12-23). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

welthe” (line 6). While Health, the “[e]rthely god, piler of lyf” (line 8), governed him, the persona was very well and felt “no duress” (line 12). Presenting himself as a spendthrift wasting his healthy body and healthy days in pursuit of vanities, the persona, as he grows up, realizes that it will not be possible for him to be accompanied by health as time passes. When health departs from him, he is left with no joy and ease. Aware of health’s power and influence over human body, the persona explicitly states his repentance. This repentance is the initiation of the persona’s othering his younger self for losing his health. It was his youth, not his mature self, that could not sustain his health. Moreover, by paying no attention to his health, that younger self aided distancing health. However, if health stops favouring one, this means the loss of all her/his ease since, as Hoccleve the persona asserts, “[t]hy loue is lyf, thyn hate sleeth doun right” (line 19). Due to the role of his younger self in losing his health, the persona defines himself as the “mortel fo” of health (line 22), which means that the persona displays his self as the other, who is responsible for his own fall. The persona indicates that it is not directly because of illness or old age but because of his own follies and not preserving his health that he becomes health’s foe as well as his own foe. According to this view, in harming the persona, his younger self acts like an enemy and therefore is othered by his mature self. He states that it is out of “my ignorance / Vnto seeknesse [I] am knyht” (lines 21-22) and thus acknowledges the assistance of his younger self in the process. Instead of accusing any external factor for the loss of his health, the persona confesses the guilt of his other (that is, his younger) self in failing to conform to the norms of the society. After all, “fro penaunce” he “now” knows (line 23) that he should not complain of Health’s “disseuerance” (line 20). Evidently, starting with the first stanza, the poem has a repentant tone, which is functional for the persona to other his younger self and to differentiate his othered younger self from his present self.

The othering of the younger self through the conflict between the past and present selves of the persona continues in the next stanza as well. Full of repentance for the self he had been, the persona says that if he had known the power of health, he would not have been brought up to such a low status in health and thus in life. The persona explicitly confronts his former self and attributes all his wrongs concerning keeping healthy to his youth. With the help of a number of proverbs such as “[p]rosperitee is blynd and see ne may” (line 34), the persona explains his coming to the realization of his follies at his own expense. As stated, his opponent who destroys his health is none other than his own younger self.⁴ Thus, he withstands the follies committed by his younger self in order to differentiate his present self from his former self:

Myn vnwar yowthe knew nat what it wroghte,
This woot I wel, whan fro thee twynned shee.
But of hir ignorance hirself shee soghte
And kneew nat that shee dwelling was with thee;
For to a wight were it greet nycetee
His lord or freend wityngly for t’offende,
Lest that the weighte of his aduersitee
The fool oppresse and make of him an ende. (lines 41-48)

⁴ Nicholas Perkins defines this younger self as “Hoccleve’s *alter ego*” (2007, p. 586). Because of the fact my article centres its discussion of Hoccleve’s poetics of the self in “La Male Regle” on the social aspect of identity formation process, psychoanalytical comments regarding the presentation of the self as the other have been excluded from the discussion.

These lines show that his youth is the embodiment of his othered self and different from his present self. Such othering of the younger self is in line with the medieval favouring of the mature males from the younger ones. As Ruth Mazo Karras indicates, “[m]edieval society did distinguish [...] between younger and grown (mature) men” (2002, p. 15). Hence, Hoccleve’s othering his younger self can also be regarded as a part of displaying himself as a mature man who now complains about the follies of his youth.

Gendering Youth and the Masculine Self

In the textual platform of “La Male Regle,” Hoccleve is “splitting his self on a temporal axis” (Perkins, 2007, p. 588), and personifies his younger self as “she”, which is in accordance with medieval gender politics favouring the male over the female and the misogynist tradition.⁵ The persona’s acknowledging of his part in the follies committed against his health as “myn ignorance” (line 21) now is bestowed upon “hir ignorance” (line 43). This shift in gendering his othered younger self, from “my” (that is “his”) to “her” enhances the othering process of his younger self and increases the tension between his younger self and his present self. Moreover, gendering his other self as “she”, the persona displays the masculinity of the present grown-up self over the past othered self. Full of repentance, the persona promises health to do him reverence and fight against their foes from then on (line 52). “That cruel thief” (line 52), who seems to be his younger self, causes the conflict between the persona and health. His younger self steals away his health and, to recompensate this, his present self asks for reconciliation with and the mercy of health (lines 55-59). As Nicholas Perkins notes, Hoccleve “imagines an inner battle for control between health and sickness/poverty, a *psychomachia* that interlaces confession, violence and petition” (2007, p. 597). However, rather than simply creating a split identity within his self and totally distancing himself from his othered self, the persona acknowledges his agency in committing all the crimes of his youth. As a result, the persona combines the self with the other in his identity:

My lustes blynde han causid thee to varie
Fro me thurgh my folie and inprudence;
Wherfore I, wreeche, curse may and warie
The seed and fruyt of chyldly sapience. (lines 61-64)

The faults of the othered self also belong to him and his lusts have their share in all those faults. Hence, it is not possible to totally move away from his other. Therefore, the persona, through self-scrutiny, regards “[m]y lustes” (line 61), not “her” lusts, as the source of those faults. It is for this reason that the poem is regarded as penitential and confessional.

Another reason for the persona’s othering his younger self is revealed in the next line. The persona defines his youth as “rebel” (line 65), which draws attention to the conflict between the desires of the youth and the society that evaluates these desires. At this point, the role of the society in forming and controlling identities stands out as an important factor in shaping one’s identity. In this respect, Hoccleve’s “La Male Regle” exemplifies “a form of masculine identity we can describe as a social self” that was “a primary identity in late medieval society where community was so important” (Neal, 2008, p. 8). As Norman L. Jones and Daniel Woolf argue, the formation of the social self takes place “within its historical and social context” (2007, p. 3). The individual is not alone in this process but is situated within a community. David Aers also emphasises the significance of socio-economic, cultural,

⁵ For a discussion of strict gender matrix dominant in medieval culture which was rooted in religious doctrine, see for instance Kueffler (2001, p. 2) and Uitz (1990, p. 153).

religious and political background as well as gender politics of a given community to influence the formation of the self which is actually a co-product of the society and the individual (1988, pp. 2-4). “La Male Regle” exemplifies such a situatedness of the self by mirroring “the socially performed lives of men in late medieval England” (Neal, 2008, p. 243). Apparently, and as the following stanzas of the poem illustrate, if a male lost his name and fame in medieval English society because of his follies, he would be regarded as a rebel and a social misfit, which points to the significance of the society in the identity formation of a male in the Middle Ages.

Social Mirror to the Self

Remembering that identity was a public as well as a private issue in the Middle Ages, it can be suggested that the persona others his self in “La Male Regle” in order to assert his recovered self, which highlights the social aspect of his othering his self both as part of his identity formation process and as part of his seeking social approval as a man. Since “genders are performative” (Butler, 2011, p. ix), it is functional for the persona to perform and display his masculinity since “the command of the self” (Neal, 2008, p. 2) was a crucial part of medieval masculinity practices. Accordingly, “La Male Regle” becomes a textual platform for the persona to perform and display his masculinity as well since his othering his younger self demonstrates his mastery over his self as a man.

The social impositions on a male’s identity formation are revealed in the complaints of the present self of the persona about his youth in “La Male Regle.” Accusing his youth of not conforming to the rules of Reason and hating Reason’s doctrine (line 66), the persona addresses personified Youth this time directly and asks her why she did not yield into Reason’s rule that would lead her to felicity (lines 69-72). Rather than following Reason’s rule, Youth chooses perils. Regarding her own wit superior to all the others, Youth asks for no counsel and has the bridles in her own hands (lines 72-80). The persona, therefore, confronts Youth by saying “[n]ow youthe, now thow sore shalt repente / Thy lightlees wittes dulle, of reson derke” (lines 87-88). Despite the warnings of his own friends about his misrule and their advice to avoid it, the persona was so driven by his lusts that he did not pay any attention to them (lines 89-94). Only now, when he is “so rype” (line 95), can he regard his actions as follies that do not follow the rule of reason. Hence, the persona presents himself as a self who has transformed from being an othered self with a number of follies to a mature self, from being a rebellious youth to a conformist adult. In this respect, in “La Male Regle” Hoccleve exemplifies Sebastian Sobceki’s arguments about how “fifteenth-century persons were quintessentially *sociocentric* in their self-perception, that is, [how] they viewed themselves primarily as embedded in society and thus delimited by it, rather than as independent agents free to attach or detach themselves from societal constructs” (2019, p. 2, emphasis original). The persona’s presentation of and confrontation with his younger self as his other that has failed to conform to the social norms displays the significance of social acceptance for him. While his younger self had difficulty in “social placement” as he seems to have had “sense of not belonging” to his society (Perkins, 2007, p. 590),⁶ his grown-up self, now recognizing the follies of his former self, others his younger self in order to conform to the expectations of his society and to be regarded as a socially accepted masculine figure.

⁶ A sense of belonging was crucial for medieval people not only in terms of their estates since the lack thereof led to the formations of “hybrids” as it has been argued by Nazan Yıldız (2014, p. 51), but also in terms of their genders.

Religious Mirror to the Self

Similarly, the persona accuses his youth of being a gluttonous self, which draws attention to the impact of religious doctrines in one's identity formation process in the Middle Ages. The problem with his younger self seems to be that he committed gluttony. In his youth, rather than following his reason, he withdrew from it and while reason advised him to eat and drink in a timely manner, he chose to obey his "wilful youthe" (line 107) by eating and drinking excessively. He was driven by excess in eating and drinking for twenty years. Consequently, this "greedy mowth" (line 114) leads him to sickness. Furthermore, his company of Bacchus turning him into a glutton leads him not only to sickness but also to "penylees maladie" (line 130). His gluttony both destroys health and leads him to poverty. The voice of reason now ruling the grown-up self of the persona is aware of the religious doctrines in medieval society in which his masculine self is located.

Beside Bacchus, the othered younger self of the persona was also in the company of Venus and a frequent visitor at Paul's Head "[t]o talke of mirthe and to disporte and pleye" (line 144), which presents him now as a follower of lechery.⁷ Guided by Seven Deadly Sins such as gluttony and lechery, the persona's younger self is the reason that causes his misplacement in the society, which associated the name and fame of a male with honour and reputation. So, the grown-up self others his younger self that would cause his being othered in the society in which he lives if it were not for his reformation. Evidently, identity for a male in medieval England was not just a private issue but a public one, always under the scrutiny of the society. The present self of the persona, who is now integrated into his society and is following its norms, others his younger self to assert his transformation and conforming to the social norms.

Cowardice and Lack of Reputation Creating Problems for Masculinity

The persona reveals that his cowardice and lack of reputation in the society also created problems for his masculinity. His cowardice was a fault in preventing the development of his masculine identity. Despite being a frequent visitor of taverns and excessive drinker, the younger self is full of "many cowardyse" (line 175). As a result of such cowardice, he refrains from fighting with other men, which is another stain on his masculine image. Although he is well known among the taverners and cooks since he pays them whatever they want (lines 177-184), this so-called reputation among people from lower estates does not provide him with social respect but rather damages his social image as a man. In summers, when he leaves the tavern to go to the Privy Seal, under the influence of heat and superfluity, he uses a boat for transportation (lines 184-192). Since he always pays the boatmen too much, they welcome him every time. In winters, the boatmen, all of whom call him "maistir" (line 201), take care of him (lines 193-200). Yet, his mastery over those who call him a master does not contribute to his reputation since their flattery is mere hypocrisy as now acknowledged by grown-up persona. In other words, his younger self could receive respect only from the lower estates and just for material reasons, which turns the situation into flattery, while his grown-up self now recognizes the vanity of being such a master lacking true reputation. As M. C. Seymour states, "La Male Regle" displays how young persona "(somewhat tongue-in-cheek) lead[s] an expensively convivial and mildly foolish life in his leisure hours" (1981, p. xii), which enhances grown-up persona's reasons for othering his younger self.

⁷ Actually, the persona notes that "[h]ad I a kus I was content ful weel, / Bettre than I wolde han be with the deede" (lines 154-155). He does not seem to be interested in "the deed," since even speaking of it makes him red.

Following the acknowledgement of flattery as hypocrisy, the persona delivers a long digressive speech on flattery and truth. Again accusing his youth, the persona explains how flattery leads man to fall (lines 203-289). Addressing flattery, the persona explains how even the folk of high degree are deceived by false tongue, adversity, flattery and hypocrisy, how subtle deceivers misguide people through such examples from the Book of Nature of Beasts and the Scripture. Indicating that men do not like hearing truth but flattery, he then returns to his misrule again. Nothing much is left in his purse because of the excess that appear in the form of fiend, gluttony, melancholy, strife and mortal lust. There is none like him in the Privy Seal who turns to cups (lines 307-312). He gets so drunk that he cannot get out of his bed easily in the morning (lines 313-319). His fellow clerks Prentys and Arondel are also similar to him (321-326) and share the “cryme” (line 327), that is sloth (Bertolet, 2016, p. 23). Ironically enough, these lines imply that it is not because the persona is sick but because he lacks the material means that he cannot maintain his extravagant life (Seymour, 1981, p. 106). While he claims that he has recovered from his follies, in fact, he does not have the material means to go on committing his follies. Accordingly, even though the persona others his younger self, his mature self seems to have the potential to turn to an othered self if he regains the means. Therefore, his othering his younger self stands out not simply due to his self-recognition and self-awareness, but rather due to the social aspect of identity and the need for social acceptance.

A didactic point regarding the impact of the society on one’s identity formation process, as a result of which the persona others his younger self in “La Male Regle” is that Hoccleve defines himself as the “mirroure [...] of riot and excess” (line 330). He has performed all the actions that would lead him to lose social acceptance. As a result, as Daniel Wakelin states, “Hoccleve here becomes a lesson for others” (2010, 570). Hoccleve overviews the actions and behaviour of his younger self through the filter of the society and materializes this scrutiny as a poem, “La Male Regle.” That is why Nicholas Perkins regards “La Male Regle” as an example of Hoccleve’s use of “literary selfhood” and argues that “Hoccleve’s identity, then, is both subject of and subject to the texts he writes” (2007, p. 588, p. 593). In other words, Hoccleve’s identity not only shapes but also is being shaped by his works as exemplified by “La Male Regle.” Self-confrontation in the poem shows that “La Male Regle” is a product of Hoccleve’s identity situated in a patriarchal society. Laying bare his self-investigation in “La Male Regle,” Hoccleve both confronts his identity and lets the society/reader observe his identity and thus intermingles the public and private aspects of identity. The combination of the public with the private in “La Male Regle” reveals that Hoccleve’s “intimate writing has a public purpose” (Wakelin, 2010, p. 569). Beside talking to and othering his younger self, Hoccleve’s “La Male Regle” also becomes a textual platform for setting himself as an example for the readers. Throughout the poem, Hoccleve seems to be “constant[ly] gossiping about himself” (Bennett, 1954, p. 147) as the embodiment of whatever his society labels as folly and others himself in the public and textual platforms of the poem.

Actually, the follies committed by the persona’s/Hoccleve’s younger self are also functional to contribute to his masculinity displaying his mastery over his body and senses. As Derek G. Neal explicates,

[m]odest control over the body in all its expressions, including speech, supported a prudent and responsible masculinity by making it more socially credible. Yet for self-control to be meaningful, one had to have something to control. Especially (but not only) among youngmen, masculinity could demand

the open indulgence of bodily appetite (in drinking, fighting, and illicit sexual acts) just as powerfully as authority might insist on its strict restraint. (2008, p. 9)

Hence, on the one hand, the follies of his youth cause the persona to other his younger self; on the other hand, they provide the means for him to display how he has achieved self-control, which is an indispensable feature of masculinity in medieval English society.

Poor Health and Poor Purse in Old Age

In "La Male Regle" the problem with identity is not just related to the failure of the younger self to conform to the ideals of masculinity in his society, but also related to financial failure of the older self. Evidently, the persona is now sick and needs recovery. Yet, his sickness is not only bodily but also financial:

[...] Syn that my seeknesse
As wel of purs as body hath refreyned
Me fro tauerne and other wantonnesse,
Among an heep my name is now desteyned.
My greuouus hurt ful litil is conpleyned,
But they the lak copleyne of my despense.
Allas, that euere knyght I was and cheyned
To excesse, or him dide obedience. (lines 337-344)

Following these lines, he explicitly warns himself by addressing himself: "Be waar Hoccleue, I rede thee therfore, / And to a mene reule thow thee dresse" (lines 351-352). He is speaking to himself, his "other" self. As a result, although there are addresses in the poem, "La Male Regle" "is not, strictly speaking, a dialogue. Hoccleve instead creates different voices and identities within one speaker: reprobate, moralist, penitent, petitioner" (Perkins, 2007, p. 590). He has learnt that dispensing large brings man's loss. Referring to the scarcity of his annual rents and to his borrowing and debts, he says that folks in such cases dread more offense of men and courts (lines 361-383). Therefore, the persona sends a smart warning to Hoccleve saying that he should no more thus be grieved (lines 384-392). In order to be "releued, / [o]f body and purs" (lines 386-387), he should "[b]e now no lenger fool" (line 392). At this point, Hoccleve presents "[t]he problem of boundaries and the coherence of the body/self" (Perkins, 2007, p. 588). He lacks health not just in his body but also in his purse. This lack can also be related to the influence of society on Hoccleve's identity formation and his sustaining his reputation in the community. As Derek G. Neal argues, "[m]odern associations of masculinity with control, dominance, or competitive, aggressive actualization of self fail to convey the texture of the late medieval masculine world" since "English culture at this time saw guile, trickery, or craft [...] as essentially incompatible with masculinity. In contrast, a social manhood involved "trueness": an open and uncomplicated honesty wherein a man's outward expressions corresponded to his inward intentions" (2008, p. 7). In this respect, "La Male Regle" can also be regarded as a negotiation not just between the younger and the present selves of the persona, but also between Hoccleve's masculinity and medieval gender norms regarding masculinity.

Towards the end of "La Male Regle," the persona asks forgiveness for his othered self in order to recover his present self. The persona states that "[...] My poore purs and peynes stronge / Han artid me speke as I spoke haue" (lines 395-396). Addressing Health again, he

submits himself totally to his ordinance and asks for repentance and forgiveness. The persona equates the sickness in his body and in his purse:

My body and purs been at ones seeke,
And for hem bothe I to thyn hy noblesse
As humbly as that I can byseeke
With herte vnfeyned reewe on our distresse.
Pitee haue of myn harmful heuyesse.
Releue the repentant in disease.
Despende on me a drope of thy largesse,
Right in this wyse if it thee lyke and plese. (lines 409-416)

Hoccleve directly addresses Lord Furnivall in the following stanza and asks for his annual payment. Since “the doumb man no lond getith” (line 433), he has decided to write a petitionary verse. He wants to be relieved by coins: “By coyn I gete may swich medecyne / As may myn hurtes alle that me greeue / Exyle cleene and voide me of pyne” (lines 446-448). Throughout the poem, Hoccleve presents how external factors like the social and religious norms as well as financial dependency influence the integrity of his identity and his body as indicated by his failing health and purse. It is for this reason that he becomes his own other. Feeling alienated in the city,

[c]oncern about social placement is central to that [of Hoccleve’s] identity, in a period where fears of economic decline, social flux and religious division were a nagging presence. Hoccleve seems poised on the margins of various, sometimes competing spheres: London and Westminster; ‘clerkly’ and secular; extremes of wealth and poverty; feudal service and the money economy. (Perkins, 2007, p. 589)

Caught in between such binaries, the persona others his younger self since it is because of his younger self that he has committed the follies mentioned in his poem. He needs recovery; yet, it is not only his purse but also his self that needs this recovery. Therefore, “La Male Regle” can also be regarded as a textual means to understand “how Hoccleve’s selfhood seems threatened” and to “indicate ways in which conventional formulations, and the activities of reading and writing, help to reform (and re-form) his identity” (Perkins, 2007, p. 588). Accordingly, writing about his follies in “La Male Regle, Hoccleve, on the one hand, exhibits how he others his younger self and, on the other hand, becomes a mirror for himself to confront that othered self and improve himself. Furthermore, “describing the prodigal follies of his youth and how he came to reform them” (Lang, 2010, p. 31), Hoccleve exhibits, through “anecdotal disclosure” of his follies in the poem (Knapp, 2001, p. 18), how he has transformed from being an othered self to being a repentant and socially acceptable self and sets himself as an example for the others.

Conclusion

“La Male Regle” presents how the persona others his younger self by scrutinizing all his follies and confessing how his othered self does not fit into the social expectations as a masculine figure since his reputation is at stake in the society due to his follies. As the embodiment of a number of Seven Deadly Sins from gluttony and lechery to sloth, Hoccleve confronts his youth as his othered self. He holds a mirror to his inner self, externalizes it through textual self-scrutiny and makes it the subject matter of his poem, “La Male Regle.”

Moreover, displaying his "marginal selfhood" to the public, Hoccleve presents "his own self available for public scrutiny" as well (Perkins, 2007, p. 593). In this "public scrutiny," he becomes his own scrutinizer and the voice of the society and others his younger self for the follies mentioned. Accordingly, "La Male Regle" presents Hoccleve's poetics of the self and the othered self and the process of othering and recovering his own self. The other, hence, stands out not as an external entity, but an internal one in Hoccleve's "La Male Regle" and foregrounds the situatedness of a medieval male in a community with certain social and religious norms in his identity formation process.

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