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ROMAN DE LA ROSE: NATURE'S GRACE

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The *Roman de la Rose* is almost invariably treated as two distinct poems that have very little to do with one another; in this view, Jean de Meun took up Guillaume de Lorris' unfinished allegory of courtly love in order to express his own naturalistic philosophy of love and to scoff at courtesy. Whether one accepts Jean's naturalism or takes it as irony, there is truth in this theory of the *Roman*. The truth in this opinion has been tyrannous, however, for too many critics have assumed it to be an exclusive truth and have declared the *Roman* to be entirely disunified. The question of unity in the *Roman de la Rose* is very important for a proper understanding of the poem itself but is even more important for a true notion of the long tradition of love that stems from the *Roman*; and, as we shall see, Chaucer was one of the principal poets in this tradition. Consequently, one of the primary topics of this essay will be unity, especially the unity of the theme of love in the *Roman*. This subject leads naturally to Jean's philosophy, which centers on love and which is both highly derivative and original. In expressing this philosophy Jean altered the traditional allegorical form somewhat; a close look at the changes Jean made in his genre will, finally, reveal something about the origins of the seemingly revolutionary and unique literary form of the *Canterbury Tales*.

i. UNTRY. Late though it is, Guillaume de Lorris' portion of the *Roman de la Rose* is certainly a document in the literary history of courtly love, for it was only Jean de Meun's inspiration (or audacity) that later linked courtly love explicitly to the Chartrian tradition. Whether the critic chooses "inspiration" or "audacity" to describe Jean's art will determine which of two possible critical

theories of the poem he accepts. The established theory in modern times has it that Jean did not write a poem but "a mere heap of poetry"¹ and that "il contribue lui aussi à la satire de l'amour courtois. . .," indeed, that he writes an "anti-Guillaume."² Against the relative torrent of this opinion is a trickle of opposition. Virtually alone, Professor Alan M. F. Gunn asserts that the *Roman* is a unified whole, that Jean's intellectual and skeptical conclusion complements Guillaume's naive and enthusiastic introduction.³ The resolution of the question hinges on the two poets' treatment of love, for that is Guillaume's only theme; and the unity of the whole poem, despite Jean's digressions and apparent lack of focus, depends on this one topic.

Courtly love is a vast and only roughly mapped area; it will not be possible to do anything in this essay but to notice a few of its well-known landmarks and to survey them with reference to the adjacent prospect of Chartrian philosophy.⁴ *Amor* plays a part in the writings of both Bernard de Clairvaux and Alain de Lile, and Alain's hero in the *Anticlaudianus* resembles a courtier. The first of these facts merely illustrates a heritage Chartrian views share

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1958), p. 154.

² Gérard Paré, *Les idées et les lettres au XIII^e siècle: Le "Roman de la Rose"* (Paris, 1947), p. 344.

³ Professor Gunn's view is presented most fully in *The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of the "Romance of the Rose"* (Lubbock, Texas, 1952). A more recent but more specialized restatement of his theory is "Teacher and Student in the *Roman de la Rose*: A Study of Archetypal Figures and Patterns," *L'Esprit Créateur*, II (1962), 126-34. This article is central: Professor Gunn's theory makes the unifying factor in the poem the *persona* who develops from an immature courtly lover to a fully educated man. Although I am heavily indebted to Professor Gunn's view, his emphasis and mine are rather different, as will soon appear.

⁴ The bibliography of courtly love is quite large and the theories concerning it are extremely diverse: Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, tr. Montgomery Belgion (New York, 1966); Lewis, *Allegory of Love*; Alexander J. Denomy, *The Heresy of Courtly Love* (New York, 1947); and D. W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton, 1962) — these works merely give one a taste of the variety of interpretations. An excellent recent discussion of these theories with full references is in Donald R. Howard, *The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 83-109.

with courtly love — an origin in platonism or perhaps even more remote Near-Eastern philosophies and religions. But this parallel is basic and important; it helps explain why Alain depicts a gentleman and why Jean sought to fuse love and philosophy.

Perhaps two of the most noticeable things about courtly love generally and Guillaume's expression of it particularly are its parody of religion and its complete devotion to the worldly pursuit of woman. The poet implores the woman's favors even as he compares her and his own passion with divine things. The critics have long noted the seeming blasphemy of courtly rhetoric and have generally ascribed it to one of three causes: that courtly love is a form of heretical mysticism in disguise; that it represents a lamentable but venial slip into passionate sin; that "courtly love" is merely the name of a satirical convention which ironically applauds blasphemy in order to promote charity and orthodoxy.⁵ The first of these solutions is of little relevance here; Guillaume is very far from the origins of courtly love and no critic to my knowledge has ever doubted his orthodoxy. The second theory is obliged either to ignore or to discount courtly love's blasphemy and its parody of religious language, and thereby denies courtly love one of its most important and interesting characteristics and renders it nearly identical to simple sensuality. The final view presents a broad and even panorama but does not allow us to see enough detail, and it prescribes a single reading to every piece of medieval love literature; this view will therefore not solve any particular problem, because it does not allow the formulation of one. It is best simply to recognize the tradition Guillaume writes in and to study his text as it comes.

In the opening portion of the *Roman*, Guillaume describes the garden as though it were paradise, and this is an impression Jean allows to stand until Genius contrasts the garden with the park of the Lamb, late in the poem. The garden is an earthly paradise, an Eden where birds sing like angels, and the gentry within look

⁵ These are the views of de Rougemont and Denomy, Lewis and Robertson, respectively; this summary does none of these authors justice but it should give some idea of the conflicts and the difficulty at present in codifying a view acceptable to even a few of the specialists in this field.

like angels.⁶ Later, when the dreamer has become a lover, his emotions range from paradisaical to infernal, depending on his success; an unsuccessful lover is a martyr or in hell, while a merely hopeful one is in paradise.⁷ And the lover, as the god of love himself explains, is like a Christian in an inscrutable world; he is buoyed by hope — hope of eventual “salvation.”⁸

As we shall see later, Guillaume’s presentation of love is by no means simple or slavishly traditional, but it does have a tinge of blasphemy about it that makes the love he describes seem like a mysticism of the world and the flesh.

Jean’s portion of the poem opens with the lover in despair and ready to abandon hope; he finds himself at the point of death and wishes to confess to the god of love.⁹ Reason enters and the long dialectic of Jean’s poem begins. Love fares quite variously during the thousands of lines that ensue, but Jean’s portion commences with nearly the same blasphemous imagery that Guillaume’s maintains. The following sections of this essay will deal with the dialectical middle of Jean’s part of the *Roman*; meanwhile the subjects of love and overall unity are best served by skipping to the contrast between the garden and the park near the end of the poem.

This contrast is part of a sermon by Genius to Amors’ barons before they storm the castle of the rosebud. On the face of it, this sermon certainly seems to attack courtly love. There is, says Genius, no real similarity between the garden and the park; they are as fable and truth, and the garden is “neienz” compared to the park.¹⁰ Even so, Genius is able to compare the two for several hun-

⁶ Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Ernest Langlois, Société des Anciens textes Français, no. 63, 5 vols. (Paris, 1914-24), ll. 635-42, 663-68, 722-26. All references to the *Roman* will be from this edition; although this is the standard edition of the poem, Harry W. Robbins’ translation into English is more readily available (New York, 1962). The notes will also refer to this translation for convenience. The passages cited above correspond to Robbins, pp. 14-15, ll. 79-82; p. 16, l. 140.

⁷ Ll. 2593, 3354, 2416, 3269-70, 3295; Robbins, p. 55, l. 10; p. 73, l. 72; p. 51, l. 109; pp. 72-73, ll. 13, 31.

⁸ Ll. 2620-42. Robbins, pp. 55-56, ll. 28-43.

⁹ Ll. 4061-4220; Robbins, pp. 91-94.

¹⁰ Ll. 20287-92; Robbins, p. 403, ll. 7-10. The entire passage in question here comprises just over 400 lines — 20279-682; Robbins, pp. 430-38.

dred lines. First of all, the garden is square and therefore inferior to the spherical park: "The square has always been considered inferior to the circle, and hence was employed to symbolize the earth, whereas the circle expresses Heaven or eternal existence."¹¹ This initial, most general, comparison is the essence of the difference between the garden and the park. The garden's pine, spring and crystal contrast with the park's fruitful, holy olive tree, and its triune fountain and carbuncle; each of the two last represents the Trinity. The water in the garden leads to intoxication and death, that in the park to eternal life; the jewel in the garden beclouds the eye while that in the park is perfectly clear and luminescent. This comparison, say most of the critics, coming as it does after thousands of lines of ribald satire, is the final thrust of Jean's anti-courtly battle, the ultimate in righteous indignation.

But what Genius goes on to say and do must force us not merely to alter but nearly to reverse this conclusion. Genius has come to the siege in the garden to help with the campaign. Before he does, at the end of his sermon, he assures the barons that by following Nature they will enjoy the true paradise.¹²

Genius' action is the crucial event of the war and the poem; the defenses soon crumble and the lover journeys to the shrine of the rose — where, having consummated his love, he awakens to end the poem. Nature's and Genius' help has been essential and climactic. But why, following his visionary sermon, does Genius give such help? He aids the powers of the garden that he denounces and even promises the barons eternal salvation, providing they *continue* to live morally. Genius and, at one remove, Nature are paradoxical — they are both preachers and matchmakers. But the paradox is not unresolvable, for Genius does not actually condemn the garden or courtly love. The garden and the park are in fact comparable, as his long comparison of them shows. They do differ, however, and their difference is indicated by the connotations of the square and the circle. The garden is the earthly paradise, the park is eternal heaven. The garden's loveliness —

¹¹ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (Oxford, 1961), p. 149.

¹² Ll. 20668-78; Robbins p. 438, ll. 296-303.

its similarity to heaven — makes it dangerous; an untutored person, such as Guillaume's lover, is liable to take it for heaven. An educated person, such as Jean's lover (at the end of the poem), can enjoy the garden and still be saved, for he knows the garden is as "neienz" to the park. The fact that the garden and the park both admit of extended comparison and are at the same time incomparable creates the unity and the tension of the *Roman de la Rose*.

The overall presentation of love in the *Roman* is strikingly similar to Alain's in the *De planctu Naturae*. In both poems earthly love is a reflection of divine love, and in both this reflection creates paradox. The structure and the characters of Alain's poem are built on paradox. Genius in the *Roman* shows this heritage in his double function. And both Guillaume and Jean define love as paradoxical. In Guillaume's portion of the poem the god of love calls love a burning fire.¹³

Jean's Raison defines love simply by lifting a long list of oxymorons from the *De planctu Naturae*.¹⁴ Although Raison is no friend of love in this poem and although her "explanation" confuses the dreamer, there is no reason to discount her testimony. The allegorical figures who side with love, directly or indirectly, form a broad range of values that illustrate the paradox of love and the pervasiveness of Alain's influence.

Reason, nature, fortune and love are the essential ingredients of Alain's intellectual systems in both of his long poems. All of these appear in both sections of the *Roman*, although not so prominently in Guillaume's as in Jean's portion. But in both parts of the poem these elements assume very similar roles and never conflict with Alain's system. Jean's Nature and Genius, and his description of Fortune's isle, are obvious borrowings from Alain; we shall consider these and other aspects of his philosophy in the following section of this essay. Guillaume's Raison is an innovation in the Chartrian tradition as a character but not as a concept. Just as in Alain the sphere of reason is the arena for love and all worldly pursuits as well as the reflector of divine light, so in Guil-

¹³ LI. 2349-52; Robbins, p. 50, ll. 60-64.

¹⁴ LI. 4293-4330; Robbins, pp. 95-96, ll. 51-78.

laume Raison stands above Nature and is completely divine.¹⁵ Again as in Alain, Raison is also a mean between extremes.¹⁶

But in both parts of the *Roman* Raison is opposed, or at least seems opposed, to courtly love. This position corresponds well enough with the *Anticlaudianus* where Venus is a purely evil character, but it seems contrary to the allowance made in the *De planc-tu Naturae* for two Venuses and two Cupids. Guillaume's Raison never condones earthly love, nor does Jean's in explicit terms; but the next section of this essay will attempt to show that the task of Jean's dialectic is to link earthly and divine love by means of a rational process. In this sense Jean's and Alain's views of reason are identical.

Both in Alain and in the *Roman* reason opposes earthly love, and for the same cause: love subjects man to an infatuation with mutability, time, and fortune; love is therefore foolish, because, as Reason is in the best position to know, man is able to escape time and dwell in eternity. Jean had no occasion to alter his predecessor's insights in this respect. Guillaume's Amant says that Love is as inconstant as the sea itself.¹⁷ Raison for her part knows only too well the results of the lover's subjection to love and Fortune—an early and meaningless death.¹⁸

Raison and Amant in Guillaume's section of the poem anticipate, without the religious conclusions, all of Genius' objections to the garden near the end of Jean's portion. This consistency does not prove in detail that the *Roman de la Rose* is a unified whole, but it does, I think, shift the burden of proof to those who would make a case for disunity. From the thematic analysis we have made so far it seems likely that Jean read Guillaume's unfinished allegory and not only responded strongly to the subject but recognized a partially submerged intellectual structure with which he agreed but which he felt needed development and more overt expression. The following section of this essay will explore in more detail how Jean develops his philosophical theme.

¹⁵ Ll. 2987-95; Robbins, p. 64, ll. 11-16.

¹⁶ Ll. 2978-80; Robbins, p. 64, ll. 5-6.

¹⁷ Ll. 3494-98, 3978-85; Robbins, p. 76, ll. 93-96; pp. 86-87, ll. 123-30.

¹⁸ Ll. 3051-56; Robbins, p. 67, ll. 61-65.

But before going on to philosophy, it is necessary to consider a very important aspect of unity that few critics have addressed themselves to when discussing the *Roman* — aesthetic unity. Jean's "personality" is of course very different from Guillaume's; the two differ profoundly on matters great and small, all the way from choices of single words to the full presentation of character. It is certainly too much to expect Jean to use Guillaume's style; with that expectation, there will be no unity among the products of any two men. But it is possible to find unity and coherent development among diversity. The artistic unity of the *Roman* certainly does not have the lapidary qualities of the *De planctu Naturae*; rather it is a poem constantly in a state of flux, constantly altering course and finding its way. Jean wrote during a time of intellectual upheaval, when the rediscovery of Aristotle was changing the form and content of philosophy, and when the Church felt threatened by subversive doctrines.¹⁹ The *Roman* is a dynamic poem, and sometimes a confused poem without a clear purpose, a proper epoch, or any genre at all. Nevertheless, nearly all — even the seemingly least disciplined — aspects of Jean's art have some sort of precedent in Guillaume. The key to the artistic structure of the entire poem is in the verses that describe the garden. Guillaume's diction gives the garden a threefold significance: it is divine, "rational" and literal at once.

The dreamer is so impressed by the garden that he can only compare it and its occupants to heaven,²⁰ and though the use of *sembler* reminds us that we are viewing the garden through the eyes of the dreamer, still, we have been struck by the imagery of paradise and divinity. When Jean later picks up this theme he is able to make explicit what Guillaume's *sembler* implies — at least to Jean.

It is the "rational" level in the *Roman* that makes the poem an allegory. Most of the characters in the *Roman* belong to Alain's sphere of reason, including Reason herself. Most of the characters,

¹⁹ Professor Paré, in the work cited above, makes this generalization concrete with many valuable quotations from Jean's contemporaries.

²⁰ Ll. 634-42, 661-68, 720-27. Robbins, p. 14, ll. 78-83; p. 15, ll. 95-99; p. 16, ll. 136-41.

that is, are abstractions. This feature makes the poem an allegory, for it remains at this "level" almost entirely. Guillaume, at least, is a fairly consistent allegorist in this respect; his religious imagery does not really take his share of the *Roman* into anagogy, even though it does prepare the way for Jean to do so.

Both Jean and Guillaume, however, more frequently descend beneath the sphere of reason into literal "realism" than they rise above it into eternity. Jean's "realism" is famous, and we will return to it at the end of the essay; but Guillaume's use of the literal level has, to my knowledge, gone unnoticed. Guillaume is far more genteel and decorous than Jean but no less literal in several passages. Immediately after the dreamer encounters the allegorical figures outside the garden he hears the birds within; because the reader is at this point immersed in the allegorical mode, he is surprised to find that there are in the garden "oisiaus trois tanz / Qu'en tot le reiaume de France."²¹ Such a comparison would be simple hyperbole if it described a *real* garden; but in the midst of allegory it is a subtle and charming comment on the allegorical form itself. The description of the garden contains numerous comparisons of this sort: Oiseuse has a cloak from Ghent; the trees come from Islam; Chauciez had a literal childhood, for she has loved Deduiz since she was seven; Amors carries two Turkish bows; and Largesse is in Alexander's lineage and has an Arthurian knight as a companion.²² One could cite many such examples. Although Guillaume is not as bold in his realism as Jean de Meun, nonetheless he does anticipate his continuator's practice. If realism destroys the unity of allegory, the poem was ruined before Jean de Meun wrote a word. Guillaume bequeathed to Jean a complex allegory written on three "levels." Jean added nothing to this aspect of the poem's form, but his style does function to make the distances between the levels seem far wider than they do in Guillaume.

Jean did radically change the form of the *Roman* in another way. However, this change, it seems to me, provides the final reason for calling the *Roman* disunified. Guillaume's poem is a microcosmic

²¹ Ll. 482-83; Robbins, p. 11, ll. 243-44.

²² Ll. 564, 592, 834, 909, 1130, 1175-90. Robbins, p. 13, ll. 29, 48; p. 18, l. 45; p. 19, l. 99; p. 29, l. 256; p. 24, ll. 286-98.

allegory: the poet and the dreamer are nearly synonymous, and the action represents a purely psychological archetype of the experience of love. Although the sphere of reason resembles divinity part of the time and at other times seems part of the literal, contingent world, it still remains distinct and features only "demons" and the dreamer's soul *in ecstasi*. The latter part of his section, however, which introduces Reason begins to break the pattern and prepares the way for Jean. Jean takes rather great liberties with the narrow and demanding microcosmic form. The broadly ranging discussion of Nature, Genius, and Raison; the siege and battles; and the realistic satire of Amis, Faus Semblant and La Vieille all give Jean's poetry the encyclopedic scope of macrocosmic allegory. In all of this Jean does not break the law of Guillaume's art, although he does seem to violate its spirit. But besides the cosmic dimensions and heroic conventions of macrocosm, Jean also adopts, in part, the impersonal epic voice of the grander form. As we shall see later, the "I" in Jean's poem technically remains "Guillaume" but much of the time also seems to be Jean de Meun the poet, who is certainly not the poem's dreamer. This practice is inconsistent in itself, and it also differs greatly from the personal lyricism of Guillaume's verse. But Jean's mixed form, undisciplined as it may seem, functions in parallel with his explicit philosophy. Both the form and the content of Jean's portion of the *Roman* serve together to make the reader view love critically and completely, to see it from a distance, in all its varieties and in its cosmic setting. The *Roman* in its entirety contains both rapture and philosophy, and it contains them as a slow process of development from one to the other, but one does not negate or even oppose the other; Jean complements Guillaume and alters him in the process. But he never tries to destroy the rapture, without which his philosophy would have no subject.

ii. PHILOSOPHY. Most recent commentators on Jean de Meun's philosophy stress the modernity of his thought and the influence on it of thirteenth-century Arabian and scholastic systems, both orthodox and heretical. Since Ernest Langlois' study of Jean's sources there has been no question but that Alain de Lille influenced Jean greatly; so definitive, indeed, has Professor Langlois' identi-

fiction of the Chartrian sections of the *Roman* seemed, that the issue has remained closed to criticism throughout this century. But it is an issue worth reopening, not in order to examine the passages Jean translated into his poem from Alain, but rather to see how the structure of Alain's philosophy affects the intellectual foundation of the *Roman*.

The bases of Jean's, as of Alain's, system are reason, love, fortune, and nature. With both men, too, reason is the center of the universe, coupling mutable creation to the eternal Creator; and in this sense reason is the key to both philosophies. Although Jean makes a character of Raison and has her speak at far greater length than Alain does about his *ratio*, the two men share virtually identical opinions on the subject. Raison is clearly divine and higher in the scheme than Nature (something that is not clear in Alain); she implies that she is uniquely, "Qu'il n'est nule qui s'i compere, Fille Deu le souverain pere. . ."

But despite her great authority, second to no character's in the poem except perhaps Genius', she is, as she says, "pas nou devin."²³ Thus Jean's Raison, like Alain's *ratio*, is both divine and worldly; moreover, Raison links the divine creation to man with words — her special domain:

. . . Deus faites les choses,
 Au meins ne fist il pas le non,
 Ci te respon: espeir, que non,
 Au meins celui qu'eles ont ores;
 Si les pot il bien nomer lores
 Quant il prumierement cria
 Tout le monde e quanqu'il i a;
 Mais il vost que nons leur trouvasse
 A mon plaisir e les nomasse
 Proprement e comunement,
 Pour creistre nostre entendement;
 E la parole me dona,
 Ou mout très precieus don a.²⁴

This passage expresses Raison's basic function, which is philosophically identical to Alain's *ratio*. But Raison spends most of

²³ Ll. 5815-16, 4403; Robbins, p. 123, ll. 15-16; p. 97, l. 130.

²⁴ Ll. 7084-96; Robbins, p. 145, ll. 133-41.

her time preaching to Amant and urging him not to love, rather to embrace eternal things. Although early in Jean's poem she borrows from Alain to define love as a paradox, her attitude toward love seems thereafter unequivocally hostile. The question arises: Are we to assume that her apparent condemnation of love is Jean's own? Despite the assent of numerous critics to this question, there are two reasons at least not to rush to an affirmative answer. The first of these reasons is simple enough: Raison does not oppose all love, only nonprocreative love, for she, like Jean's part of the *Roman* generally, sees the purpose of worldly love to be the perpetuation of the human species.²⁵ This is not a Chartrian doctrine; it probably comes directly from Aristotle.²⁶ But Jean incorporates it into his basically Chartrian system at a crucial point; it terminates Alain's unresolved dialectic of paradox. Proof of this assertion will later require a general explication of the poem's action. Although it is not very explicit, a metaphor provides the second reason to find that love partly enjoys Jean's favor. Fecundity, by the logic of analogy, becomes "reasonable" when Genius describes the instruments of sexuality as a tablet and stylus.²⁷ Procreation, that is, engenders "words" (individuals) analogous to the Word (divine species and divinity itself); sex is "reasonable" because it can reflect God. This view is nearly identical to Alain's, but it is more specific and more courageous, for it faces the moral problem directly, rather than dividing Venus in two, as does the *De planctu Naturae*, or viewing her simply as evil and synonymous with lust as does the *Anticlaudianus*. This point too will demand our attention later in this essay.

Jean also uses metaphors — one of them directly from Alain — to describe God. Jean's theology is quite conventional, but it is rather important to the central issue of love. Raison, although she claims to be no theologian, figures obliquely in the poem's theology. Jean borrows Alain's definition of God as a sphere with center everywhere, circumference nowhere; such a truth as this, says Nature, speaking here as Jean's spokesman, Plato could never under-

²⁵ Ll. 4377-4421; Robbins, pp. 97-98, ll. 112-44.

²⁶ Cf. Paré, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-59.

²⁷ Ll. 19543-676; Robbins pp. 414-16, ll. 34-139.

stand, although he was the foremost of philosophers, while the Virgin Mary, full of grace, understood it without instruction.²⁸

Another of Nature's metaphors comments indirectly on Raison as well. God sees time and acts of free will in a mirror which reflects eternity; this mirror is God Himself.²⁹ Nature's main theme here is free will, and she goes on to explain how man should live by reason and so align himself both with nature and God's will.³⁰ Specifically,

N'il n'a des destinees garde,
Se sa nativeté regarde
E quenoist sa condicion.³¹

And there is a moral side to rational life; to love God is to know oneself.³²

Nature's discussion of free will continues with digressions on the stars, weather, rainbows, and optics; these seem increasingly irrelevant on first reading. But a consideration of the rather long passage from the comparison of God to a mirror to the treatise on optics shows that while the expository theme has been free will, the focus has shifted from God, down through the cosmos to the human science of optics, which parallels the original mirror analogy. Nature mentions some good texts on optics, and then speculates on how Mars and Venus could have used a "microscope" to see Vulcan's mesh, an episode we shall return to in a moment. But following this aside, Nature wades into the technicalities of her subject. Lenses retain some of their original divinity on earth, for

Briement, mirail, s'il n'ont ostacles,
Font apareir trop de miracles.³³

But one needs a superb mind and keen eyes not to be deceived by the tricks these marvelous gadgets perform, and unfortunately

N'il n'est nus qui si bien se gart
Qui souvent ne faille en regart...³⁴

²⁸ Ll. 19113-44; Robbins, p. 405, ll. 74-97.

²⁹ Ll. 17466-72; Robbins, p. 372, ll. 304-08.

³⁰ Ll. 17553-56; Robbins, p. 374, ll. 367-71.

³¹ Ll. 17721-23; Robbins, p. 377, ll. 488-89.

³² Ll. 17791-95; Robbins, p. 378, ll. 539-42.

³³ Ll. 18207-08; Robbins, p. 387, ll. 42-43.

³⁴ Ll. 18243-44; Robbins, p. 387, ll. 70-72.

Nature next protests at length that this subject is too difficult, deceptive and wondrous for the vulgar laity and decides belatedly: "Bon fait prolixité foir."³⁵

Nature goes right on with hardly a break to discourse on dreams, but we may stop here and take stock. The metaphors of the sphere and mirror show reason from a divine point of view. Plato, the greatest philosopher and reasoner, could not grasp the paradox of the ubiquitous sphere, while Aristotle's and the other philosophers' books on optics cannot prevent deception; even Nature wanders awkwardly about when she tries to explain optics, which is by analogy a faintly divine science. All man theoretically needs in order to avoid catastrophe and to love God are reason and the will to self-knowledge; but reason is never sufficient by itself. One in fact also needs grace such as the Virgin Mary had. Although he recognizes this sort of grace, Jean does not dwell on it; rather he shows Genius offering grace through his priesthood — a priesthood that Alain once alleged, partakes greatly of naturalism. Jean alters Genius' grace somewhat, however; we shall return to it near the end of this paper when we have added some of its other basic ingredients, one of which lies to hand in Nature's seemingly irrelevant digression about Venus, Mars and Vulcan.

When Nature has told this mythological tale, Genius interrupts with an antifeminist comment. Antifeminism is a famous theme in Jean's poem; Genius is one of the most outspoken antifeminists in the poem, and his outburst here can represent the others. He says that even if Vulcan had discovered Venus and Mars together outside of the net, Venus could easily have tricked her husband into believing them innocent, for, like all women,

Tant eüst la langue doublee
En diverses plications
A trouver escusacions.
Car riens ne jure ne ne ment
De fame plus hardiement...³⁶

Surprisingly, Nature agrees with this judgment, and she is soon back to the topic of glasses and lenses. Any reader may be forgiven

³⁵ Ll. 18298; Robbins, p. 389, l. 113.

³⁶ Ll. 18143-46; Robbins, p. 385, ll. 193-96.

for finding "gothic" license and irrelevancy in this passage, shrugging, and plodding back to the main path. But this same reader may also dimly or unconsciously realize two things. First, La Vieille a little before told the same tale with another moral; second, although Nature's and Genius' digression has nothing to do with free will and practically nothing to do with optics, it does touch on the implicit topic of reason. As deceivers of men, lenses are puny compared with women.³⁷

La Vieille's version of the story complements Nature's; to that beldame the villain is Vulcan, a fool who would try to constrain a woman. For women desire liberty naturally and the laws of marriage contradict feminine psychology. Moreover, men possess exactly the same fickle desires — with one exception, that is, the fool

Qui fust d'amours enchifrenez,
 E leiaument s'amie amast:
 Cil, espeir, quite me clamast,
 E pensast a la seue aveir,
 Don il ne preïst nul aveir.
 Mais mout est po de teus amanz,
 Si m'aïst Deus e sainz Amanz,
 Come je crei certainement.³⁸

The entire action of the poem involves such foolish loyalty, and it is intimately related to love, reason, and eternity. True love comes from self-knowledge, which comes from reason; the inconstancy of women (which La Vieille, Nature and Genius all agree on) thwarts man's reason, but the "foolish" lover's dogged loyalty results eventually in Nature's and Genius' grace. This grace and the love that causes it are legitimate, but they will not endure because they are rooted in the mutable world; the rose symbolizes both beauty and transience. The lover must be stable or there will be no grace. A final metaphor succinctly contrasts the eternity of divine things with the impermanence that begins with Reason; in the divine park of the Lamb

Il n'a futur ne preterit,
 Car, se bien la verité sent,

³⁷ Ll. 18143-46; Robbins p. 385, ll. 209-11.

³⁸ Ll. 14140-47; Robbins, pp. 294-95, ll. 228-33.

Tuit li trei tens i sont present,
Li queus prezenc le jour compasse...³⁹

Raison's most noble attribute — language — creates, or at least symbolizes, the juncture between God and man that only love can bridge.

But, as the contrast between the garden and the park shows, there are two sorts of love. When these harmonize, the universe and the individual lover are at peace; when they clash, there is discord and evil. These two possibilities form the ethics of Jean's (and Alain's) universe. The crucial element in this ethical system is earthly love — the garden — for it alone can change; it must conform to the immutable paradigm of divine love. Although Jean writes a continuation to a courtly love allegory, he places great emphasis on perpetuation of the species, and is candidly sensual in several passages; but he by no means limits earthly love to sexuality. Love ennobles the individual and stabilizes society. Raison delineates love's broad philosophical dimensions early in Jean's continuation of the *Roman*:

Bone amour deit de fin cueur naistre...
Amours sont de pluseurs manieres...
Amitiez est nomee l'une:
C'est bone volenté comune
Ae genz entr'aus senz descordance,
Selonc la Deu benivolance...
"Beaus amis," dist ele, "or escoute:
S'a cete amour ne peuz ataindre,
Car ausinc bien peut il remaindre
Par ton defaut com par l'autrui,
Je t'enseignerai bien autre ui.
Autre! Non pas, mais ce meïsmes
Don chascuns peut estre a meïsmes,
Mais qu'il preigne l'entendement
D'amour un po plus largement;
Qu'il aint en generalité,
E laist especialité;
N'i face ja comunion
De grant participacion.
Tu peuz amer generaument
Touz ceus dou monde leiaument:

³⁹ Ll. 20016-20; Robbins, p. 425, ll. 81-84.

Aime les touz autant come un,
 Au meins de l'amour dou comun..."⁴⁰

Raison is the principal authority on all phases of mundane love except sexual; as we have seen, she despises courtly love, and she is less than enthusiastic about natural love, the love that perpetuates the human race.⁴¹

Raison is openly hostile to Venus and discreetly neutral toward Nature; to realize these sentiments takes one to the limits of Raison's insight and to the boundaries of dialectic. The tensions between Raison, Nature, and Venus, only implicit here, form the climax and resolution of the entire poem and Jean's original contribution to the philosophy of Nature. The topic of Jean's originality will concern us at the end of this essay; for now we shall return to perverted secular love and Alain's influence.

False love is generally vicious, but it has two characteristics in particular: it is cupidinous and unstable. Avarice has the same moral primacy in Jean's *Roman* as in Alain's *De planctu*. It dominates the corrupt world:

Mais tant est li mondes endables
 Qu'il ont faites amours vendables:
 Nus n'aime fors pour son preu faire,
 Pour dons ou pour servise traire..."⁴²

And the major handicap to treasure is its slipperiness.⁴³

This instability is very important, for all earthly love, not just perverted avarice, would seem to suffer from it. One of the worst sins a lover can commit is instability and disloyalty. La Vieille, whom we have seen grudgingly recognize the occasional faithful lover, knows well that most lovers, from Jupiter on down, are fickle:

Jupiter et li deu riaient
 Quant li amant se parjuraient;
 E maintes feiz se parjurerent
 Li deu qui par amours amerent...

⁴⁰ Ll. 4597, 4680, 4685-88, 5434-50; Robbins, p. 101, l. 115; p. 103, ll. 35, 39-42; pp. 115-16, ll. 159-69.

⁴¹ Ll. 5775-79; Robbins, p. 122, ll. 129-31.

⁴² Ll. 5149-52; Robbins, p. 111, ll. 119-22.

⁴³ Ll. 5257-66; Robbins, p. 113, ll. 49-54.

Mais mout est fos, si Deus m'ament,
 Qui pour jurer creit nul amant,
 Car il ont trop les cueurs muables.⁴⁴

The dreamer himself, although he is ultimately successful and loyal, falters along the way and must be remained by Amours; despite the fact that he has been doing his utmost

Veire, mais trop par iés muables,
 Tes cueurs n'est mie bien estables,
 Ainz est malement pleins de doute . . .⁴⁵

The good lover, that is, is spiritually immutable and is thus in a position to receive grace. To be a faithful lover is to do more than follow a code; a stable lover can defy perversity and despise, if not avoid, Fortune.

Fortune, Nature, Genius, and Venus are the remaining major deities in the *Roman* whom we need to discuss; they all owe something to Alain. Indeed, they are all strongly Chartrian characters, with one or two changes to make them correspond to Jean's original beliefs. Jean did not have to change Fortune at all, and all he did to characterize her was borrow and translate the description of Fortune's Isle from the *Anticlaudianus*.⁴⁶ The roles of Nature and Genius are scarcely different from those in the *De planctu*. Jean does, however, place greater emphasis on Nature as procreatrix than Alain, and Jean stresses the fact that Nature's efforts render all species immortal, thus defeating death.⁴⁷ Jean takes the greatest liberties with Venus. The double Venus of the *De planctu* would not have served Jean's moral purpose; nor would the lascivious vice of the *Anticlaudianus*. In the *Roman* Venus aids in the defeat of the castle of Shame, and Shame (Honte) is Raison's daughter. The defeat is in part the defeat of reason; Venus and Raison are implacable enemies. Nature needs both as allies and succeeds in getting them, but the tension is great. This tension is original with Jean and distinguishes the ethics of his philosophy. It should

⁴⁴ Ll. 13127-30, 13139-41; Robbins, p. 272, ll. 115-17, 124-26.

⁴⁵ Ll. 10325-27; Robbins, p. 207, ll. 13-14.

⁴⁶ Cp. ll. 5921-6164 (Robbins, pp. 125-29) and *Anticlaudianus*, VIII, 1-62, ed. Thomas Wright, *The Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century* (London, 1872), II, 399-401.

⁴⁷ Cf. ll. 15891-16004; Robbins, 339-41.

be clear that Jean's philosophical debt to Chartres, especially Alain, is very great. But Jean is more than a translator and weaver of quotations and the remainder of this section will attempt to determine the major aspects of Jean's philosophy that are original with him.

The foregoing rather lengthy rehearsal of Jean's debt to Chartres serves an important purpose: it allows us to judge his originality as a philosopher against the background of one important intellectual tradition from which he emerges. It is too common a practice to view Jean either through the lenses of modern science and society or through a charitable veil of Catholic orthodoxy. Both of these views can provide valuable perspectives, but they can also distort the panorama as a whole. The monk Jean Chopinel, however uncannily he may at times seem to anticipate modern attitudes, was not a scientist⁴⁸; nor does he portray the selfish, pragmatic "realism" of what a later century would call the bourgeoisie.⁴⁹ It seems equally dangerous to read his every line ironically, to see the entire poem as "... the ironic presentation of unrelieved inadequacies . . ." ⁵⁰ which define Christian charity by constantly lacking it. Negative definitions are notoriously difficult to "prove," and in this case one must either ignore the park of the Lamb or find simply that "the irony is broad."⁵¹ If neither of these alternatives is attractive, one may examine Jean's poem as one work in a tradition of philosophical allegories, all of which engage in serious dialectic and state conclusions. Jean's conclusions may be startling, but they are not atheistic and they are not ascetic.

However great Jean's debt to Chartrian thinking, it would be inaccurate to deny, and misleading to ignore, his debt to scholasticism and Aristotle. The major effect of this influence on Jean's

⁴⁸ This point of view is presented in detail by Franz Walter Müller, *Der Rosenroman und der Lateinische Averismus des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt, 1947).

⁴⁹ An attack on and bibliography of this popular critical theory are in: Lionel J. Friedman, "'Jean de Meung,' Antifeminism and 'Bourgeois Realism,'" *MP*, LVII (1959), 13-23.

⁵⁰ Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity* (Princeton, 1966), p. 262; although I disagree with the main thrust of her argument, Miss Tuve's discussion is excellent, especially her comments on the aesthetic structure of the *Roman*. Cf. pp. 233-84.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 276.

philosophy is his adoption of the Aristotelean concept of immortal species. Nature to Jean is more than the agent of an ineffable Providence, though she is that. For Jean, things participate vaguely in immortality insofar as they help perpetuate their deathless species. But animals are void of reason and free will; man alone chooses what actions he will perform and his reasons for doing them. Jean, that is, recasts the Chartrian ambivalence concerning the human condition. Jean sees the ambivalence not as a tension so much between *contemptus mundi* and *dignitas hominis* as between nature and reason, earthly and divine impulses. This is not so radical a departure as it may at first seem. Throughout the tradition, nature supervises death, and reason is both partially divine and man's greatest worldly faculty. Jean, by putting the *contemptus* half of human ambivalence in the domain of Nature, who is already ambivalent herself, and by stressing the moral rather than the cosmic aspect of the human condition, in effect alters the philosophical problem; he certainly sees the moral dilemma of worldliness in finer detail than his predecessors. This may become clearer as we examine the final stages of the poem's action.

The plot of Jean's portion of the *Roman*, long as the poem itself is, may be quickly outlined, for there is a great deal of conversation and relatively little forward motion. The lover listens to Raison, who is replaced by Anis. At length Amant discovers Amours, who forgives him for listening to Raison and promises to aid his case. Amours assembles his barons for the conflict, including the hypocrites Faus Semblant and Atenance Contrainte; by trickery these two gain entrance to the castle and find La Vieille who digresses for some time. Dangiers discovers Amant trying to free the imprisoned Bel Accueil, and the barons are hard put to save Amant from a beating. At this point Jean interrupts his poem in order to apologize for it. After this there is an abortive battle that ends in truce; Venus agrees to come to her son's aid, and the battle resumes, but there is a long digression here in which Nature confesses to Genius and dispatches him to the battle where he delivers his sermon. Then the final assault begins. Venus sets fire to the castle and the day is won. It remains only for Amant, with the wallet and staff of a pilgrim of love, to make his way to the shrine where the rose is and to claim his prize.

This plot, allegory's equivalent to philosophical dialectic, defines Jean's notion of love. Love, first of all, is a paradox; lovers must reject reason, which, although it suffices to explain friendship and social love, cannot cope with sexual love and sees it only as immoral. The ensuing dialectic is therefore irrational and can contain contraries. With this in mind one is not shocked to find that love is indeed immoral, as *Raison* says. The lover's affair first begins to go well with the help of *La Vieille*, *Faus Semblant* and *Atenance Contrainte*, all three blatantly immoral characters. When *Venus* and *Nature* enter the battle on love's behalf both the plot and the paradox thicken further, and the definition of love is complete at this point: it consists of *Amours* and his barons, *Nature*, and *Venus*; and it requires the activity of all of these to succeed.

Amours is already ambivalent in *Guillaume*. *Amours* has two bows and ten arrows: five of the arrows are golden and represent courtly virtues; the other five are iron and symbolize vices; the two bows — one slender and fair, the other gnarled and black — shoot the two sets of arrows.⁵² *Amours'* retinue, part of which Jean also inherited from his predecessor, is similarly two-sided. The barons are: *Oiseuse*, *Noblece de cuer*, *Richece*, *Franchise*, *Pitiez*, *Largece*, *Hardemenz*, *Eneur*, *Courtoisie*, *Deduis*, *Simplece*, *Compaignie*, *Seürtez*, *Leesce*, *Jolietez*, *Biautez*, *Jeunece*, *Humilitez*, *Pacience*, *Bien Celers*, *Atenance Contrainte*, and *Faus Semblant*.⁵³ The last two of these attendants, as we have observed, are evil, and they leave hastily when *Genius* arrives⁵⁴; similarly, both *Guillaume* and *Jean* take pains to disavow *Richece*.⁵⁵ But both poets include these characters in strange alliance with *Eneur* and *Seürtez*. And although this ambivalent combination creates a kind of irony, it is not the irony of complete rejection; for honor, security and loyalty simply are not fruitful objects of satire. Rather it is the moral paradox of worldly love that both poets express, *Jean* with much more emphasis than *Guillaume*. *Jean* takes this theme much further with his use of *Nature* and *Venus*.

⁵² Cf. ll. 907-84; Robbins, pp. 19-21, ll. 95-145.

⁵³ Cf. ll. 10449-60; Robbins, p. 210, ll. 8-16.

⁵⁴ Ll. 19445-62; Robbins, pp. 411-12, ll. 6-18.

⁵⁵ Cf. ll. 1017-1126, 10051-306; Robbins, pp. 21-23, ll. 171-253; pp. 202-07, ll. 27-213.

Amours is the commander-in-chief of the long amorous battle that is the *Roman*; but he could not have won the battle without Nature and Venus. Although Venus' aid is climactic, it is best to consider it first. In his depiction of Venus, Jean departs very far from Alain; indeed the epic battle of the *Roman* reverses that of the *Anticlaudianus*, where Venus is one of the chief villains and sorely tries the hero with her torch but finally dies at his hand. In the *Roman* Venus' torch sets the castle ablaze and routs all its defenders. To put it bluntly, the lady (rose) is overcome by lust. Alain could never quite bring himself to admit that sexual impulses were moral, although the *De planctu Naturae* flirts with the issue. Jean's Nature welcomes Venus to the fray as "m'amie."⁵⁶ But Venus hates Raison,⁵⁷ and we have already seen that the feeling is mutual. So Jean's Nature is left in a tense situation, one that does not exist in Alain or the earlier Chartrians.

As a result of this tension, Jean's Nature is the most complex of any in the tradition. Not only does she stand between the implacable enemies Raison and Venus; she also agrees when women are attacked as unstable, even though she herself is a woman. Moreover, she is the head of a cult that worships both God and concrete experience. She is, in short, the focal point upon which the ambiguity of the human condition pours, and she can only weep for her and man's fate. We have seen that Genius is an anti-feminist and that Nature does not quarrel with him; in this passage Genius excludes her from the charge. But later Nature gives away one part of her character in her anxiety to reprove humanity:

Ainz vueil des ja tout reveler;
Car fame ne peut riens celer. . .⁵⁸

Moreover, Nature has personal experience of love, as she reveals when she describes its sorrows.⁵⁹ But Nature is also called "sage senz fin,"⁶⁰ and she certainly seems to be: it is she who describes God, the universe, and man's place in it; and her priest depicts

⁵⁶ L. 19343 ; Robbins, p. 410, l. 7.

⁵⁷ Cf. ll. 20775-84; Robbins, p. 440, ll. 78-84.

⁵⁸ Ll. 19219-20; Robbins, p. 407, ll. 156-57.

⁵⁹ Cf. ll. 18395-404; Robbins, p. 391, ll. 72-76.

⁶⁰ L. 16706; Robbins, p. 356, l. 283.

the park of the Lamb. Nature is ambivalent and ironic in the same way as Amours and his retinue are. Neither is despicable or simply evil; both reflect divinity but are also immoral and somewhat pitiful. The pity of the human condition comes from mutability and death, as always. The rose is a symbol of mutable beauty; the instability of women symbolizes mutability; love is Nature's stop-gap against the rampages of death. The loveliness of the garden, the raptures of love — Nature's grace — serve to check these forces, but they never triumph completely, except from the eternal, "rational" vantage of the species, which is small consolation to the individual. But it is a consolation, and it allows him to put himself into a universal perspective.

Genius expresses the entire philosophy succinctly:

Pensez de mener bone vie,
 Aut chascuns embracier s'amie,
 E son ami chascune embrace
 E baise e festeie e soulace.
 Se leiaument vous entramez,
 Ja n'en devriez estre blamez.
 E quant assez avreiz joé,
 Si con je vous ai ci joé,
 Pensez de vous bien confessier,
 Pour bien faire e pour mal laissier,
 E reclamez le deu celestre
 Que Nature reclame a maistre:
 Cil en la fin vous secourra
 Quant Atropos vous enfourra.⁶¹

The dreamer, with an apt simile, expresses the significance of constancy among lovers:

Vous qui ne creez vos amies,
 Sachiez mout faites granz folies;
 Bien les deüssiez toutes croire,
 Car leur dit sont veir come estoire.
 S'eus jurent: "Toutes somes vestres,"
 Creez les come paternostres;
 Ja d'aus creire ne recreez.
 Se Raison vient, point n'en creez:
 S'el vous aportait crucefis,
 N'en creez point ne que je fis.

⁶¹ Ll. 19885-98; Robbins, p. 422, ll. 300-11.

Se cist s'amie eüst creüe,
Mout eüst sa vie creüe.⁶²

It is with just such religious imagery that Jean closes his poem, and with an equally ambiguous tone. The lover, as he prepares to occupy the defeated castle, becomes a pilgrim on his way to a shrine. The sexual and religious associations on this pious journey come in mingled abundance. The reader who has skipped to the end of the book can hardly know what to make of such blasphemous eroticism. But the poem's conclusion agrees with the philosophy we have just examined. The tone is shocking and immoral because love is, partially, shocking and immoral. But the verse in its bold ambiguity also keeps one fascinated. So does love. Moreover, the lover, whose code we have just considered, by now understands that love and the world are ambiguous. Everyone lives in the world and everyone is immoral. On the other hand, the religious imagery is serious, for earthly and divine love really are similar and analogous. The ambivalence of Jean's poetic world is complete; each of its many assertions is a paradox. No poet before him faced up to or expressed the ambiguous philosophy of the human condition so well as Jean. Alain's philosophy and his art are tidier than Jean's, but they are not as searching or thorough. Jean's form and style, however, unlike his philosophy, do not culminate a tradition; rather they destroy one tradition and begin another. The last section of this essay will attempt to show how Jean, as he wrenched and deformed allegory, prefigured a new genre altogether.

iii. FORM. Jean de Hautville, Guillaume de Lorris, and Jean de Meun, different as they are, all write a new kind of allegory, one which we may term "gothic." This new form stems from a combination of the old microcosmic and macrocosmic allegories. But the ingredients of realism, ornamentation, topical satire, and a new kind of narrative framing, added to this combination, cause the gothic allegory to provide a new sort of literary experience and nearly to jump the boundaries of allegory into the territory of an as yet unnamed genre. Rather than attempt to list the qua-

⁶² Ll. 15753-64; Robbins, p. 334, ll. 68-77.

lities of gothic allegory, let us examine a passage of the *Roman* and observe them at work.

Just as Venus is about to shoot her burning arrow into the castle, the narrator breaks off and tells the story of Pygmalion. To any reader who has come to savor the plot of the *Roman* as he would that of a novel, this inserted tale is an unwelcome, insipid annoyance. It does nothing to support the main action of the poem, and, despite the dreamer's assurances, one never learns explicitly "que ce senefie."⁶³ It is clear, however, that one is not to read the *Roman* as a novel. Any reader who has arrived this near the end should realize that the poet cares relatively little for his plot as such; it merely provides color and concreteness to an almost wholly abstract dialectic. The plot, that is, is a decoration. For this reason, a smaller ornamental story within the larger one is not only not an encumbrance; it actually enhances the ornamental texture of the narrative. Moreover, a digressive subplot can be a valuable means to sum up or anticipate the poem's argument.

The Pygmalion story does both of these things and more. But it does them, first of all, through a veil of partial irony, the sort of irony we have already observed in the *Roman*. On the one hand Pygmalion seems, and even accuses himself of being, unnatural for loving his own lifeless creation. He is partially correct; his love is foolish and irrational. On the other hand, Pygmalion, both as a superlative artist and as a loyal lover, is similar to the creating, eternal God.⁶⁴ So Pygmalion, like all lovers, is mad, a sinner, and divine. Pygmalion's story anticipates the conclusion of the *Roman*: in both, Venus performs a "miracle" and confirms the power and sanctity of love. In broad outline, and in many details that we need not consider, the Pygmalion story summarizes the themes of the *Roman* and so serves as a useful cohering device near the conclusion of this diffuse poem.

But the Pygmalion digression has another task as well. It ends on a note of pathos, which both contrasts with and complements the triumph of love with which Jean ends his basic plot. The Pygma-

⁶³ L. 21213; Robbins, p. 451, l. 306: ". . . what this means. . ."

⁶⁴ Although we do not discuss this, part of Jean's philosophy characterizes God as an artisan. Cf. ll. 16203-10; Robbins, pp. 345-46, ll. 162-66.

lion episode, unlike the main story, goes beyond the consummation of the lover's passion. From Pygmalion's love springs the unfortunate line of Paphus, Cinyras, and his daughter Myrrha; this latter sinned against Nature and deceived her father into committing incest with her. Thereafter she gave birth to Adonis. At this point, the narrator draws himself up short and continues his depiction of Venus' subduing of the castle. But he has said enough to remind us that Venus' "miracles," although they are legitimate and effective in their own sphere, cannot prevent excess, sin, or death; and in some cases they may lead to these things. Adonis, Venus' own fated lover, is the perfect conclusion to Pygmalion's line. The Pygmalion story also hints that it is the lover, through Nature's and Venus' grace, who creates his lady's divine loveliness; she passively receives grace through the lover's ardor. At any rate, Jean's sudden departure into classical mythology near the end of his poem does not come from whimsy or a lack of control; this digression, like most if not all of the others, serves very important artistic and thematic functions.

The Pygmalion digression is important to us primarily as an illustration of Jean's "gothic" techniques. In Bernard, Alain, and even Jean de Hautville there are no such digressions. These poets frequently allude to mythology and history, but their plots and their arguments are always virtually identical and always develop together. Jean de Hauteville, as he pursues his argument in this way, also manages to include contemporary Paris in his fable; his unusual *tour de force* found no true following in the Chartrian tradition, even though Guillaume de Lorris does allude to and satirize French society in brief references. Jean de Meun, while retaining the basic scheme of plot as dialectic, emphasizes the dialectic by fragmenting the plot; and the two are no longer identical in his work. Dialectic becomes synonymous with structure, and the various plots, relevant as they are to the argument and as delightful as they are as ornament, also serve to emphasize the abstractness and impersonality of the dialectic. The world of Jean's poem is more fun and more raucous than that of, say, Bernard; but Bernard's world, for all its starch and dignity, seems more substantial than Jean's. This is an important point, for it affects greatly the most influential aspects of Jean's poetry. It is against

a bare, abstract backdrop that one best evaluates the three of Jean's techniques that Chaucer returned to most often: the use of *persona*, topical satire, and "realism." We may study these separately so long as we realize they form a colorful, concrete aesthetic unit that stands out against the desolate abstraction of plot and argument.

The first of these techniques is *persona*. It is also the most easily separable from its context and, compared at least with what Chaucer later achieved, the crudest of these three devices. Jean's part of the *Roman*, like Guillaume's, is in essence a microcosmic allegory: the dreamer describes what he saw in vision. Although we should not suppose Guillaume in fact to be naively recording an actual experience, there is little aesthetic reason not to suppose it, for whatever disjunction there may be between him and his narrator is artistically irrelevant. Accordingly, Guillaume makes no distinction between himself as poet and as dreamer, and he raises no critical issue concerning his *persona*. Jean, however, sets about quite consciously to distinguish between himself and his narrator. In practice this technique is somewhat confusing but Jean's basic intention is fairly clear. The normal "I" of Jean's, as of Guillaume's, portion of the *Roman* is the lover — Guillaume de Lorris. An obvious identification for the original poet becomes a strange rhetorical device for his continuator. Amours, as he gathers his forces to make war upon the castle, predicts that Guillaume will die before he can set all of his adventures down, but more than forty years later another poet will finish the tale, one Johans Chopinel.⁶⁵

The poet and narrator could not be more distinctly separate. Yet the reader continually forgets to distinguish between the two. In a later passage, for example, the narrator digresses just as battle is about to commence. This digression, like all of them, has the effect of distancing the reader from the main action, but, instead of telling an inset tale, it deliberately draws attention to the artifice of the poem. Here the poet or narrator apologizes, ironically, to anyone he may have offended with his satire.⁶⁶ The poet seems to take the reader right into his workshop, but then one remembers

⁶⁵ Ll. 10566-70; Robbins, p. 212, ll. 85-89.

⁶⁶ Ll. 15135-302; Robbins, pp. 318-21.

that Jean is supposedly writing dramatically for Guillaume who died more than forty years before and that theoretically Jean never speaks in his own poem. Every time the lover speaks, the same ambiguities exist in various degrees. But even if all of this duplicity were disentangled it would make little difference, for Jean uses the *persona* rather crudely, primarily as a jest, but also to prevent the reader from taking the plot or the hero's fate very seriously, and so further abstracting his poem. The lover, "Guillaume de Lorris," like Pygmalion, is long dead; this is the ultimate "natural" condition. Jean expresses this *contemptus mundi* sentiment in several ways but never centrally and almost always, as here, with one of the devices of gothic allegory.

But these hints of *contemptus mundi* in Jean's poetry are perhaps the slightest of the evidence there is to indicate that the *Roman* is a *satura*, as well as everything else it is. For Jean is a very gifted satirist, and his poem contains several thousand lines of satire. Much of his satire Jean borrows directly from the *contemptus mundi* tradition: his characters rail against fortune, avarice and the other vices in quite traditional ways. But Jean added two subjects: women and religious orders. Several characters throughout the poem refer to abuses by clerks, monks and friars, and several also are antifeminist, with virulence and at length. But Faus Semblant and La Vieille embody these two satirical topics in characters new to allegory. Let us begin with Jean's foray into contemporary theological controversy.

When Faus Semblant and his companion Atenance Contrainte enter the poem the generalized *contemptus mundi* satire is transformed into an attack on Jean's contemporary world. Moreover, this topical satire is unlike Jean de Hauteville's depiction of Paris and Guillaume de Lorris' brief references to actual places and events; for Jean de Meun stays entirely within his allegorical frame. Although Faus Semblant disguises himself in a friar's habit and is obviously portrayed by a poet concerned very much with the late medieval controversy over friars, he is also an allegorical soldier in Amours' figural army. Faus Semblant's role in the history of theology has already been admirably described,⁶⁷ but his part in the

⁶⁷ Paré, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-91.

allegory and the aesthetic complexity of his double character have not received the attention they deserve. Faus Semblant's disguise as a friar merely culminates the imagery of costume that attends him. He prefers his humble religious habit because it attracts less notice than secular dress. His wish for secrecy dictates his preference; the key to secrecy seems in fact to be frequent change of costume.⁶⁸ Two themes are implicit in this imagery: the ubiquity of false appearances and the fickleness of Faus Semblant himself. The first of these satirizes Jean's society; the second aids his allegory. Faus Semblant is the antithesis of what a lover should be — stable; and his leading vice is avarice — the plague of love.⁶⁹ These frailties explain why Amours dislikes him and is very dubious about accepting his service.⁷⁰ But they do not explain the paradox of his appearance in Love's army; the word paradox — which is earthly love's essence — does help explain his appearance, however. Skipping Faus Semblant's self-revelation and sermon, we see him at action within the castle. He and Atenance Contrainte have entered by disguising themselves as pilgrim friars and have received hospitality from Male Bouche, who gives Faus Semblant permission to preach. In a short time Male Bouche repents having imprisoned Bel Accueil and falls to his knees to make confession. Faus Semblant unhesitatingly strangles him, slits his tongue out with the razor of treason, and throws his dead victim in a ditch. Here is the paradoxical morality of love with vengeance! It is very tempting to read "love" in such a context as savage irony. But one must recall more of the context than the violence. The victim is an abstraction and not a very attractive one. The murderer, too, for all the concrete details and topical references that attend him, is also an abstraction. And the two are waging an allegorical war, the sort of war sanctioned by centuries of literary tradition. Faus Semblant is a hypocrite, and he is not very welcome to Amours as an ally; when Genius comes to the army Faus Semblant flees immediately. He neither furthers nor enjoys

⁶⁸ Cf. ll. 11009-22, 11187-214. Robbins, p. 222, ll. 91-99; p. 228, ll. 222-40.

⁶⁹ See, for example, ll. 11529-76 (Robbins, pp. 237-38, ll. 80-108) where Faus Semblant explains how he amasses great treasures.

⁷⁰ Ll. 10919-30; Robbins, pp. 220-21, ll. 22-30.

the final victory. Faus Semblant is perhaps the most vivid portrayal in all of literature of the negative half of love's paradox. Jean's realism emerging from abstract allegory separates his character and his reader's response into two contradictory parts and makes the ambivalence of love into strangely dissonant rhetoric. The topic of antifeminism and the character of La Vieille advance this process one more step.

This progress, however, seems to reverse the critical problem. La Vieille is almost universally regarded as a "real" character who has wandered into an allegory. The critics see her not as a realistic abstraction like Faus Semblant but as a somewhat abstract human being.⁷¹ She is also in many ways the Anus of ancient tradition, and her ultimate original is probably Ovid's Dipsas or possibly the old woman in the *Pamphilus*. But, despite the literalness of her autobiography, it seems wiser to assume she is an allegorical figure. The *Roman* is an allegory and contains only allegorical characters, with the possible exceptions of La Vieille and Amis. These two figures have a good deal in common: both expound a cynical art of love derived from Ovid, and both are stock figures from narrative romance and courtly love. But Amis takes the lover's side and La Vieille the lady's. Amis is an outspoken antifeminist; La Vieille is a feminist, but her character, ironically, would help support antifeminist arguments. This sort of parallel and divergent patterning helps abstract the characters of both Amis and La Vieille. Another less obvious but similar set of correspondences between La Vieille and Faus Semblant further reduces the duenna's character so that she becomes more a scheme than a person. Both La Vieille and Faus Semblant are avaricious and both counsel deceit through the help of costume and grotesque cosmetics.⁷² Both of these char-

⁷¹ The most outspoken of these critics is perhaps Professor Paré, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-202; Professor Tuve, *op. cit.*, p. 256, however, breaks with this tradition in calling La Vieille (and Amis) "... bundles of qualities as well as abstractions impersonated. . ."

⁷² Cf. II. 13283-600; Robbins, pp. 277-84, II. 1-251. Professor Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-41, points out that La Vieille's advice concerns what women should do to be loved, but that she addresses Bel Accueil, a "male" abstraction; Lewis uses this observation as evidence that Jean's allegory has "broken down."

acters pervert love into cupidity and unstable fickleness. But besides being similar they are also opposites. La Vieille serves the poem's heroine and counsels greed and instability, the antitheses of virtuous worldly love, while Faus Semblant distorts religious charity as he helps Amant. Each in his own way aids the affair that is the *Roman*, but the counsel of neither wins out. There is much to be said for considering Faus Semblant and La Vieille as a set of opposed but parallel forces that delineates the reverse, disreputable side of love. These forces do not prevail, but without them there would be no struggle, no dialectic, no poem.

La Vieille enters the poem when Faus Semblant is about to leave it. She dominates the next several thousand lines just as Faus Semblant dominated the previous several thousand. But if she parallels Faus Semblant, for what does she stand? As with most allegorical figures the answer is in her name. Faus Semblant is the mutability that comes from hypocrisy and disloyalty. La Vieille is the mutability that time imposes on all created things; she is the villainness Senectus from the *Anticlaudianus*. But she is also pitiful. Although she seems to regret her lost youth only because she regrets her own loyalty to her lover and the chances she therefore missed to extort money from wealthy admirers, one pities her in her old age. Because she admits her present greed, one must believe in her past loyalty and generosity:

Les granz dons que cil me donaient
 Qui tuit a mei s'abandonnaient
 Aus meauz amez abondonaie.
 L'en me donait, e je donaie,
 Si que n'en ai riens retenu:
 Doner m'a mise au pain menu.
 Ne me sovenait de vieillece,
 Qui or m'a mise en tel destrece;
 De povreté ne me tenait;
 Le tens ainsinc come il venait

In fact there is no inconsistency, for La Vieille serves the heroine (either as her literal servant or as one of her faculties) and Bel Accueil is *part* of the heroine, just that part, indeed that would be most interested in La Vieille's topic; Bel Accueil's gender is irrelevant since "he" is only one ingredient of a larger — feminine — personality.

Laissaie aler, senz prendre cure
De despens faire par mesure.

Se je fusse sage, par m'ame !
Trop eüsse esté riche dame;
Car de trop granz genz fui acointe,
Quant j'iere ja mignote e cointe,
E bien en tenaie aucuns pris;
Mais, quant j'avaie des uns pris,
Fei que dei Deu ne sain Tibaut,
Trestout donaie a un ribaut,
Qui trop de honte me faisait,
Mais c'iert cil qui plus me plaisait.
Les autres touz amis clamaie,
Mais lui tant seulement amaie. . .⁷³

The ultimate pity and corruption of old age is that it can make one regret love. La Vieille's complexity is based on the reader's opposed emotional responses to the sadness of lost youth and the vulgarity of present greed. Her character, like Faus Semblant's, is based on a polarity; Faus Semblant's poles define a metaphysical sphere that embraces concrete appearances and complete abstractions, while La Vieille's include the length of time of a human life. It so happens that more modern narrative structures are temporal and emotional rather than dialectical and logical, and La Vieille has become for us the most "realistic" character in the *Roman de la Rose*.

Jean's satire and realism are much more striking than Jean de Hauteville's not because they are truer to life or sharper in wit; for they are neither. Jean de Hauteville builds two divergent structures — one realistic, the other abstract — and so endangers his whole poem; Jean de Meun erects a single allegorical edifice and supports and embellishes it with buttresses of various and often contrary kinds. But the building stands, and it is Jean de Meun's ornamental realism that prevails in the Chartrian tradition throughout the rest of the Middle Ages. Chaucer read the *Roman de la Rose* as a young man and was influenced by it during his entire career. It is a tribute to Jean de Meun that Chaucer, a poet in very many ways his superior, learned the subtler lessons of the

⁷³ Ll. 14459-82; Robbins, pp. 301-02. ll. 219-36.

Roman very slowly. Chaucer quickly adopted and mastered the device of the *persona* in the *Book of the Duchess*. In the *House of Fame* he sporadically attempted various kinds of realism, and by the time he wrote the *Parlement of Fowles* he had grasped the essentials of how satire, ornament and realism may be one thing. But not until he assembled the *Canterbury Tales* did Chaucer surpass Jean's techniques and break out of allegory altogether and into a new genre.