

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

**The Romance of the Rose or
of Guillaume De Dole (Roman
De La Rose Ou De Guillaume
De Dole)**

Edited by
Regina Psaki



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JEAN RENART
*THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE
OR OF GUILLAUME DE DOLE
(ROMAN DE LA ROSE OU DE
GUILLAUME DE DOLE)*

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
REGINA PSAKI

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Introduction

The Problem of Authorship

Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole was an unattributed text in its first complete edition by G. Servois in 1893.¹ Speculation about its author was energetic, however, and in the following decades various studies of the language of this text, of the *Roman de l'Escoufle*, and of the *Lai de l'Ombre*--whose author names himself as one Jehan Renart--strongly supported the hypothesis that the same author produced all three works. In his 1913 edition of the *Lai de l'Ombre*, Joseph Bédier refers to these studies and adds several observations of his own linking the three texts stylistically but takes a resigned tone regarding the persuasive weight of such evidence:

...the real proof of the proposed identification...lies rather in a multitude of elusive analogies, of minute resemblances, each of which considered separately is debatable, and yet which taken together comprise an individual writerly profile, that complex and irreducible thing which we call a style...the strongest proofs, for each observer, are those which he has the most difficulty in conveying to anyone else. (xvi-xvii)

...les vraies preuves de l'identification proposée...sont plutôt dans une multitude d'analogies fugitives, de menues ressemblances, dont chacune prise à part est contestable, et qui pourtant, réunies, composent une physionomie individuelle d'écrivain, cette chose complexe et indivisible que l'on appelle un style...les preuves les plus fortes sont pour chaque observateur celles qu'il lui est le plus malaisé de communiquer à autrui.

Understandably, perhaps, Bédier seems to have suspected that a positivist age would be more convinced by an *engin* than by an impression, and he proposed that in the two unsigned romances, Jean Renart encoded his name into brief epilogues:

quil entra en religion (*Roman de la Rose*, 5655)

con fait par bien povre seurnon
a cort... (*Roman de l'Escoufle*, 9100-01)

In the first example we read (more or less) right to left, to find the name Renart; in the second we read both to the left and to the right of the letters "re" in "povre." Bédier's discovery of this cipher did indeed finalize the broad agreement that Jean Renart had written the three works, as Rita Lejeune's 1935 monograph attests:

The legitimacy of this agreement was confirmed in 1913, when... M. Joseph Bédier showed that the two romances were signed with a secret signature.... From that moment on, Jean Renart was allowed to take his place in medieval literature. (9)
La légitimité de cet accord fut confirmée en 1913, lorsque... M. Joseph Bédier eut démontré que les deux romans étaient signés d'une signature secrète.... A partir de ce moment, Jean Renart conquit vraiment droit de cité dans la littérature médiévale.

In addition to the anagrams and the similarities of language and style, however, Jean Renart left other internal evidence which links the three works. In the *Lai* he refers explicitly to the *Escoufle*, and in the *Rose* he seems to refer to the *Lai*.² In the *Rose*, moreover, he pointedly places the words "escoufle" and "Renart" within a few lines of each other (5417, 5421; Lejeune 1935, 143).

These few clues, however, gain us only a name and a corpus; we know nothing whatsoever about Jean Renart's life or origins beyond what he chooses to hint at in his texts, and it would certainly be imprudent to take those hints at face value.³ We cannot tell with any certainty whether or not in fact he ever became a monk,⁴ ever was a jongleur, ever was attached to any court, ever had firsthand experience of the court and tournament life which he describes so vividly. Despite his language and his apparent familiarity with areas in the northeast of France and in Flanders, we cannot state with certainty precisely where he came from. We cannot, in fact, discuss him as a man at all, but only as an author. Indeed, even then, we are hard put to identify what Jean Renart's literary project was or to isolate the period in which he undertook it. In order to clarify the difficulties involved I will briefly review the controversial dating of the *Roman de la Rose*.

G. Servois, the *Rose*'s first editor (whose introduction remains invaluable for information on how this romance was understood, and misunderstood, from the sixteenth to the late nineteenth century), dated the text c. 1200-1201. Rita Lejeune, who did the second edition, has recently put the date of composition at around 1208-1210, or in any case before the battle of Bouvines in 1214; after that clash between

France and the Empire it seemed inconceivable for an author to gather the knights of the two opposing forces together at a friendly tournament as Jean Renart does in this romance. Both Servois and Lejeune try to identify a historical moment in which all the contemporary and near-contemporary figures mentioned in the *Rose* are present and accounted for, old enough to take part in tournaments and able to be plausibly gathered together in something like amity. Her dating is supported recently by Baldwin and Mattioli but challenged by the text's third editor, Félix Lecoy. Lecoy, whose introduction is substantially indebted to Lejeune's monograph, also tries to harmonize the various life-spans and political alliances of the nobles mentioned by Jean Renart, with the sensible caveat that the period in which the romance is set need not be the period in which it was composed. He thus proposes that Jean Renart meant to evoke the ambience of the period around 1210-1215 but actually wrote the romance much later, in 1227-28 (1961, 395). This revised dating, which Michel Zink seconds, is constrained on the one hand by a period of peace between England and France to which the *Rose* seems to refer and on the other by the date of the *Roman de la Violette*, whose debt to the *Roman de la Rose* is widely accepted by scholars (Lecoy 1961, 399).

These various proposals are based on textual allusions and historical data which are not themselves in dispute. The basis of the conflicting conclusions, however, is interpretative rather than factual: no one examining the date of the *Roman de la Rose* claims to have unearthed new archival evidence which changes the configuration of the whole. The assembly of relevant facts is thus extremely sensitive to the interpretative preferences and assumptions of the individual critics. Thus Mattioli, who contests Lecoy's claim that fifteen years may easily separate the composition of the romance from the period it describes, can only justify her claim to the contrary by recourse to her own interpretative schema, within which the extratextual allusions are meant to be very immediate, concrete, and

...a virtual mirror of the aristocratic society for which Jean Renart is writing. [The] historical walk-ons thus serve the precise function of stimulating the audience's interest, through the concreteness...of characters known to the worldly context of the time. To locate it in the past, even in the near past, strikes me as a hypothesis which belies the very nature of Jean Renart's undertaking. (96)

...quasi specchio della società aristocratica per cui Jean Renart scrive. [Le] comparse storiche assolvono così al preciso fine di stimolare l'interesse dell'uditorio, attraverso la concretezza... di personaggi noti agli ambienti mondani del tempo... pensare ad un passato, anche vicino... mi sembra ipotesi che falsa la natura stessa del procedimento di Jean Renart.

I tend to agree with Mattioli that Jean Renart's allusions, like his lyric insertions, were meant to resonate as modern with the audience for whom he wrote them, not as names and faces current fifteen or eighteen years earlier; I thus tend to date the *Rose* more as Lejeune does, around 1212. But this is a reading preference, and we cannot disguise it as a fact.

This dry debate on the date of composition has serious implications for an interpretation of the text. The scholars who favor an earlier date for the *Roman de la Rose* tend to emphasize the realistic resonances of the work, the historical personae, the timely (or time-bound) extratextual references, the events and habits and ideologies which the text showcases. These readers, believing that Jean Renart wrote from a much closer observation-post than does Lecoy, privilege the "roman réaliste" aspect of the *Rose* as "a real, direct, portrait of a French society" [une peinture réelle, directe, d'une société française] (Lejeune 1935, 332). Baldwin, for example, emphasizes strongly the political timeliness of the tale. On the other hand, those scholars who agree with Lecoy that a considerable distance may separate the events of the text and its composition tend to weight the self-consciously literary quality of the text more heavily. Far from sketching from life, they argue, Jean Renart was carefully manipulating levels of "reality" and "fiction" in such a way as to call into question the stability of both. Echoing Zink's excellent study *Roman rose et rose rouge*, Félix Lecoy in 1980 succinctly routs the "real, direct portrait" model which Lejeune had described (and to which he also had earlier subscribed):

We are thus very far from any "realist" portrait; we are in full "literature,"... a literature made out of literature. (14)

Nous sommes donc ici très loin d'une peinture, disons vériste; nous sommes en pleine "littérature,"... une littérature faite avec de la littérature.

At issue, then, is whether Jean Renart the author represents his world or evaluates it, and whether he is in any fundamental way engaged with his political context, or remains deliberately distanced from it in order

to create a self-sufficient literary world. These two extremes are caricatures, and most scholars would agree that they are by no means mutually exclusive; still they define the spectrum along which criticism of the *Roman de la Rose* has developed in the last decades.

Whether we read Jean Renart as primarily concerned with his political context or with his literary patrimony, however, his *Roman de la Rose* proves him to be a creative and innovative author in two particular aspects, each of which is related to one of these interpretative extremes. His connection to his historical context surfaces in innumerable allusions to contemporary aristocratic figures and to contemporary court life; and his engagement with his literary patrimony surfaces in his self-consciously original interpolation of poetic fragments in his narrative. While Chrétien de Troyes claims aesthetic superiority on the basis of his faithful and artistic rendering of familiar stories, and a troubadour claims it on the basis of the authenticity of his feelings, Jean Renart claims superiority for the *Roman de la Rose* on the rather modern basis of originality: this romance, he says, is "une novele chose / et sest des autres si divers" [quite new / and altogether different from the others, lines 12-13]. In his prologue he notes proudly that this romance, unlike any other, is "brodez par lieus" [embroidered in places, 14] with lyric verses which endow his text with novelty, exclusivity, variety, and beauty. Thus while his subject matter is traditional, his articulation of it is innovative to the point of being revolutionary. He explicitly claims to have devised this literary embellishment, whereas he does not mention or boast of his innovative recourse to a kind of realism which eschews the marvelous in favor of the recognizable present (however idealized and, to use Lecoy's image, "pointilliste" [1961, 395]). Both innovations had a tremendous influence in medieval French literature, as we shall see.

The engagement of this narrative text with its lyric extratext brings us back to the problem of dating. We have seen that scholars using precisely the same evidence have reasoned differently about the probable date of composition of the *Roman de la Rose* and that none of these proposed dates can be considered definitive. The question which most tantalizes the scholars who read Jean Renart as primarily engaged with literary conventions concerns the chronological and intertextual relationship of this *Roman de la Rose* to Guillaume de Lorris' much more famous and influential work, dated 1225. Lecoy's dating of 1227-1228, of course, implies that Jean Renart imitates or reacts to Guillaume

de Lorris, while Lejeune's dating of c. 1210 suggests that if there is any connection between the two, it is Guillaume de Lorris who reacts to Jean Renart.

Considering that both authors examine the interplay of narrative and lyric, it seems likely to me that the more sophisticated constellation should have taken its impulse from the rougher and more literal experiment. If Jean Renart's *Roman de la Rose* splices lyric and narrative together bodily, as it were, Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose* expands a lyric situation into a full-fledged narrative, drawing perhaps on Jean Renart's more literal braiding. If we assume that the second author, whichever he was, knew the first text and in some way responded to it, it is easy to imagine how Guillaume de Lorris could have extrapolated his *Roman de la Rose* from Jean Renart's formal experiment with lyric and narrative imperatives. It is, however, much more difficult to imagine how Jean Renart could have moved from Guillaume de Lorris' nearly seamless melding of the two to his own juxtaposition of narrative context and lyric quotations. I suspect, therefore, that Jean Renart wrote his work significantly earlier than Guillaume de Lorris, whose *Roman de la Rose* was to inaugurate a new, putatively autobiographical narrativization of lyric.

Artistic Achievement

The romance opens at the festive springtime court of Conrad, the young and courtly emperor of Germany, whose courtiers urge him to marry in order to insure the succession. He refuses, until one day he hears a jongleur's report of a superlatively beautiful and virtuous young woman, Liënor, and her noble and valorous brother, Guillaume de Dole. He falls in love with the jongleur's description of her and summons Guillaume to court to test his valor in a tournament and to ask for Liënor's hand--which, of course, he receives. His seneschal, however, envious of Guillaume's rise to favor, thwarts the marriage by prying from Guillaume's mother--who never allows the seneschal to see Liënor--the secret of a rose-shaped birthmark on Liënor's thigh. The seneschal uses his knowledge to substantiate his claim that he has taken Liënor's virginity. The marriage is called off, the emperor is heartsick, and Guillaume is cast into shame and chagrin. Liënor comes to court

and accuses the seneschal of having raped her. When the seneschal proves through a judicial ordeal that far from having raped her, he has never even seen her before, she reveals her identity as Liënor and thus proves her innocence of having been his lover. The marriage takes place, and the seneschal is sent off on crusade by way of punishment.

The *Roman de la Rose*, with three editions published in the past 100 years, has long received attention from historians and literary critics, although with the years the nature and extent of its aesthetic achievement have been evaluated variously. With the consolidation of his *oeuvre*, Jean Renart's position now seems secure as second only to Chrétien in his "profound originality" [originalité foncière, Lejeune 1974, 440]. Accordingly, the *Roman de la Rose* has become the focus of penetrating critical studies in both French and English, and almost no level of hypersubtlety seems too exaggerated to attribute to Jean Renart. The most recent work on this romance tends to privilege as a site of investigation either the lyric insertions or the gender issues raised by the text. (Critics from Baumgartner on have certainly noticed the extent to which gender issues are implicated in the romance's constitutive genres, but they typically focus considerably more attention on one aspect than on the other.) Focusing more closely on gender implications--specifically the role of Liënor in the romance--are the essays by Krueger, Kay, Rey-Flaud, De Looze, Solterer, Durling, and Psaki.

The *Roman de la Rose* is eminently suited to analysis using a feminist approach. Issues of gender and representation are vividly engaged, for example, in the figure of Liënor, fixedly absent throughout most of the tale, whose appropriation and misrepresentation by the seneschal raise disquieting questions about the representations of her by Jouglet, Conrad, Guillaume, and most particularly by the author himself. Jean Renart's adoption of Liënor as a figure for textuality establishes that textuality as specifically male and thus remains problematic. Roberta Krueger, in a deservedly influential article, concludes in part that Jean Renart ultimately "reaffirms cultural norms" and that the narrator, while using Liënor to demystify "courtly ideology," "remystifies her": he participates in the process he reveals to the reader (44).

I disagree with Krueger's contention that by reinserting Liënor (or having her reinsert herself) into the position that Conrad and Guillaume had prepared for her, Jean Renart is reinscribing courtly ideology intact. Like the *Roman de Silence*, whose revolutionary

premise devolves into a conventional narrative resolution, the *Roman de la Rose* circles back into a storybook ending, seeming to abandon or disown its own challenge to the literary and factual status quo. But to think so is ultimately to think rather literally. I doubt that these authors understood the dramatic rebellion of the female personae to have been annulled with a brisk tidying-up of the narrative stage at the end. Such rebellion cannot be undone; it can only be accommodated within a new, demystified understanding of human complexity. The rupture may be closed, but the seam is still clearly visible, and we will not be so naive again as to take the stability of the status quo as an ontological given. Krueger's work is too sophisticated to be nostalgic for a "really feminist" ending, an ending in which Liënor either deposes Conrad and rules the Empire herself or dispenses with him altogether to open an orphrey-shop with her mother in Mainz. Krueger's objection is no facile modernist demand that medieval personae behave like modern ones eager to earn the title of feminist. But she may downplay the extent to which Jean Renart challenges and unveils an epistemological, literary, historical, and ideological *displacement* of women, though he can do nothing within his representational schema to redress it.

The *Roman de la Rose* stands out from its predecessors in the romance genre in that its standard octosyllabic rhymed-couplet form is interrupted by forty-six lyric insertions, or interpolated fragments of various lyric genres. This generic hybridism is Jean Renart's most visible departure from the taxonomy of the romances which preceded his, but it is by no means the only one. In addition to the lyrics, he imports, for examples, persons from his own time; the beginning of an inset narrative, which is transformed into the romance itself; a robe embroidered with the history of Troy; a scene from a *chanson de geste*; and a multitude of subtle commentaries on the romance's construction. The romance's explicit intertextuality and its resulting self-referentiality as a work of literature establish it as a fundamental text in the history of modern authorship. Focusing on the self-referential aspects of the romance as "a romance about literature" are the studies by Jung, Baumgartner, Zink, Lacy, Dragonetti, Huot, and Callahan.

Michel Zink's *Roman rose et rose rouge* is one of the first critical studies to examine this text's literary components and their function within the economy of the romance. His influential reading of the *Rose* as an extended meditation on how literature can signify and what it can say reveals the "substitutions and displacements" (62) of the

work:

Narrative logic... is replaced by an abundance of particular signs, born of exploded and displaced elements, giving to the romance a meaning which is not generalizable and which is no longer based on narrative organization. One could say... that the functions of the tale are shattered in favor of romance indices... [to] offer the public a new reading of the romance of adventure, whose *conjointure* no longer yields the *sens*. (67-68) *A la logique du récit... se substitue un foisonnement de signes particuliers, nés de ses éléments éclatés et déplacés, donnant au roman un sens qui n'est pas généralisable et qui n'est plus fondé sur l'organisation narrative. On pourrait dire... que les fonctions du conte sont brisées au profit des indices romanesques... [pour] offrir une lecture nouvelle au public des romans d'aventures, dont la conjointure ne livre désormais plus le sens.*

Zink credits the marked presence of other literatures in the *Rose* with foregrounding the necessary indirectness and metonymy of literary discourse, but is this all Jean Renart meant to achieve? What is the purpose of embedding lyric into the narrative (or clothing the lyric in a narrative)? What changes result in each from the association with the other?

The *Roman de la Rose* transgresses narrative boundaries, breaks the narrative frame, to invoke other literary forms, other aesthetic worlds and other modes of delivery and reception. The juxtaposition of lyric and narrative forms does not yield a balanced and static hybrid. Particularly in light of Jean's insistence on its originality and effect, we must not underestimate the immediate and visceral impact on his contemporary audience of this unexpected intrusion of one form into another. Rather, the joining of lyric and narrative in this poem must be seen as a dynamic union, producing an explosive opening-out of perceptual and semantic possibilities. The collision of art-forms creates formal and generic tensions which, in their turn, yield a mutual commentary on the genres in question, a deformation and transformation of them. I believe that Jean Renart's goal is an expanded text, a romance which bursts out of the boundaries of the genre as he found it by encompassing other literary forms (lyric, *chanson de geste*, etc.) and by pointing outside its verbal frame to artforms perceived in other, non-literary modes (music, painting, dance). These imports interact among

themselves, forming (as M.-R. Jung says) a *sous-conversation* which structures the work and extends its meanings.

Early critics who faulted the *Rose* for its narrative thinness were conditioned by the genre conventions of twelfth-century romance; they were looking for a recognizable (and male) protagonist, an intensifying series of knightly adventures, a touch of the Breton *merveilleux*, and they did not find them here. Thus they made a value judgment of an observation: the narrative structure of the *Rose* is slight by romance standards. More than a romance, it is in fact an inquiry into lyric conventions, an incorporation and interrogation of the typically static, reflective lyric moment. The emotive moment of lyric pause, conventionally expressed in the first person, is here expanded--or, better, translated--into a third-person narrative which takes place at a court.

The incorporation or contextualization of the lyric world requires an observance of the conventions of that world in order to keep the whole from degenerating into nonsense or parody. Thus we see Conrad falling in love with Liënor by report alone and from a distance. Jean postulates Liënor as the perfect woman, universally so acknowledged. The emperor acts out the well-defined role of the poet-lover of the courtly *chanson* (Baumgartner, 263). Also present in the story is the specter of the *losengier*, who ruins the love out of jealousy and spite (although, less typically for the lyric than the romance, the object of his slander is the lady rather than the lover). Even the familiar motif of the need for secrecy and of the threat of disaster if the love should become known, not usually an element in the romance world, fits into the story. Jean occasionally smiles at the more implausible conventions of the lyric as, for example, when he has one knight ask another if a mutual friend, who at last report was dying of love, is to be at the tournament; the friend answers that in fact he will be present, God having resuscitated him for that very purpose (2101-06).

Of course, the *Rose* does also feature conventions of courtly romance. The idealization of the court, with its Maytime array of entertainments and elegances, is reminiscent of idealized court settings at the openings of *Le Chevalier au Lion* and the Provençal *Flamenca*. The list of Conrad's perfections, both personal and political, recalls the putative perfection of Arthur. Conrad's desire for valiant knights to enhance his court and do him credit and the tension between this all-male dynamic and the love relationship are also familiar from romance. Finally, the comic resolution and renewal in which political stability and

personal happiness are effected simultaneously through a timely and integrative marriage is a romance feature from *Erec* on, although it is less usual for the king himself to be the protagonist. This resolution entails ultimately the end not only of lyric (the *grand chant courtois* is predicated on stasis and suffering) but also of narrative (the romance depends on continually new conflicts and obstacles), and lyric and narrative together fade out at the end: the poems and story stop together.

Thus the stance of the encircling narrative toward the literary worlds it borrows from is one of mingled respect and ironic distance; the very blending of lyric with narrative entails discarding both the atemporal, ahistorical space of the first and the traditional adventure itinerary of the other. The single largest adjustment the narrative makes to the lyric world, however, is precisely the attenuation of action in favor of emotion and discourse as generative forces and focuses in the tale (Zink, *Roman rose*, 23; Lacy, 780).

Focusing on language, the romance paradoxically moves beyond language in its narrative modalities. It is a tale embellished by musical performances or evocations of them, performances whose topic is nearly always love. Its slight narrative movement is suspended time and again for a rich, lush, almost excessive description of visual beauty (in itself a paradox), and its resolution depends on the thwarting of word with word. Jean Renart joins word, sound, and image, widening the perceptual and semantic field of the work by evoking areas of sensual immediacy beyond the spoken word, which is the romance's mode of reception. This widening of sensory appeal is not unprecedented in romance by any means; word-painting of the vivid aspects of aristocratic life has always added color and brilliance to the courtly romance. But the extension of this range of sensory appeal to include music, dance, and lyric poetry suggests that Jean was attempting to represent experience more completely, in greater detail and variety, than his predecessors in the genre. By importing music into his work, he increases not only its generic self-awareness but also its modes of perception (or illusions of modes of perception). By opening a window onto lyric poetry and music (the distinction is a later one), he admits not only the view immediately glimpsed out of it (the intercalated verse itself) but also the frame of reference of that verse and the common store of lyric poetry in his audience's memory. The ultimate paradox of this suggested remedy to an implied inadequacy on the part of the

spoken word is, of course, that it is effected solely through the spoken word, as the unique manuscript of the *Rose* is neither notated nor illustrated.

The songs are inserted into almost every situation in the poem, suspended only during three (rare) sections of heightened narrative activity, and never for more than 500 lines. Three types of song are most frequently represented: the *rondeau*, the *chanson d'histoire*, and the courtly *chanson*; their function of internally recapitulating the surrounding narrative situation creates a "hall of mirrors" effect (Limentani 1980, 312). The *rondets de carole* are sung by young, happy, courtly people who with Conrad's help have eluded the jealous old bores and are enjoying outdoor dancing and flirtation. The entire context is reprised in the texts of the songs themselves: the flowers, fountains, greenery; the motifs of hoodwinking the jealous husband, dressing up for a lover, and suffering from lovesickness; and the restorative meeting "down there, beneath the bough" are all present both in the narrative and in the songs the characters sing. The insertions thus duplicate and actualize, in fixed lyric form, the settings in which they occur.

Each of the sixteen inserted *rondeaux* echoes not only the surrounding text but also the earlier occurrences of the genre. The couplets of the *rondeaux* are astonishingly uniform throughout the romance, beginning either "Main se leva bele Aeliz" [Fair Aeliz rose up early], or "La gieus, desoz la raim" [Down there, beneath the bough], or some slight variation thereon. All sixteen are essentially versions of the same woodland theme, with a level of lexical repetition which makes each forcibly recall the others. The several *chansons d'histoire* or *chansons de toile* sung in the romance work similarly to reflect their contexts and to link separate textual moments. In their room, as they are interrupted at their sewing, Liënor's mother sings the first, about Aude and Doon, and Liënor herself sings the second and third, "Siet soi bele Aye" [Fair Aye sits] and "La bele Doe siet au vent" [Fair Doe sits in the wind]. Although Liënor does not yet have a lover, these songs "partially reflect, variously refracting" their context and suggest implications for her future (Limentani 1980, 313). They reflect her narrative situation only potentially and incompletely, presenting an inexact but suggestive reflection of her and serially reinforcing the association of Liënor with a lover in a lyric genre.

The longest *chanson d'histoire* (and the longest insertion in the

poem), "Bele Aiglentine," is sung not by a woman but by a knight from Normandy, accompanied by Jouglet on the vielle. Instead of a partial reflection of the immediate context, as when Lïenor and her mother sang, while sewing, about ladies who sat and sewed, in "Bele Aiglentine" we have a prospective reflection of the whole narrative crux in which Lïenor effectively forces her lover to marry her (Limentani 1980, 313). The refrain to the story of this intrepid heroine, "Or orrez ja / comment la bele Aiglentine exploita" [Now you will hear / how fair Aiglentine managed], neatly foreshadows Lïenor's inventiveness and determination. Together the *chansons d'histoire* form an intensifying series which presents a telescoped and kaleidoscopic version of Lïenor's story, collapsing present and future narrative developments into a composite (fractured) present. Thus linear temporality is undercut in another textual strategy modifying the familiar modes of romance.

The insertion of any lyric text into a narrative one, as a deliberate reflection of the latter, "contextualizes" the lyric, ties it to a specificity and a narrative movement it does not normally encompass. Clearly the reverse is also true: the intruding form lyricizes the context, allowing a forum for emotional expression which the courtly romance may not often provide. The inserted lyric gives us not only a more elaborate exposition of a character's feelings but also, when he himself decides that the lyric expresses his emotional state, a view of his perception of those feelings. Of the thirteen courtly *chansons* inserted fragmentally into the *Roman de la Rose*, eleven are sung either by Conrad or for him at his request. The self-conscious lyricism of what Dragonetti christened the *grand chant courtois* is reserved almost exclusively for him, and only of him is it explicitly said to represent or at any rate suit his emotional state at the time of singing.

Conrad's *chansons* provide an entire web of perspectives on his emotional state; and since he (unlike Lïenor in the *chansons d'histoire*) expresses his own feelings through his songs, they reveal his determined self-definition as a courtly lover. Their demanding form and strict commonality of theme--formally and circumstantially incongruent with the narrative setting--point less to future development (as was the case for Lïenor) than to Conrad's possible "self-imprisonment in courtly codes."⁵ The fact that he falls in love with a description of distant unknown perfection, itself a topos of the lyrics he sings, argues that his paralysis within courtly conventions is of his own choosing; his joy, like his suffering, is of his own creation. He embraces a poetic scenario

which does not exist at all, which never develops in the course of the romance; and our realization of this calls his pose seriously into question.

Conrad sings a series of five *chansons courtoises* which share common motifs and themes. Like most lovers who relate their own sufferings to a song, he sees connections which are actually tenuous at best. When he sings, for example, "Li noviaus tens" [The new season] by the Châtelain de Coucy, the song's initial narrative parallel with Conrad's plight degenerates into complete incongruity by the end of the stanza; the crusade-song has little to do with his scenario. Gace Brulé's "Contrel tens" [Despite the weather] rings even more hollow: the winter introduction in the text's springtime setting, the complaint that love punishes him because he has been too faithful and devoted (this, from the emperor whose battle cry is not "As armes!" [To arms!] but "As dames!" [To the ladies!]), the lament that he has lost his love, make this lyric notably incongruous with its narrative setting.

Conrad's lyrics occur throughout the body of the romance (ll. 486-4140) and present the plot as Conrad would like to imagine it. The lyrics function on two levels, both to depict his ideal image of himself and his lady and to highlight the disjunction between this depiction and the narrative we are reading. Conrad consistently tries to link his own situation to a pre-fabricated scenario which never does come about. His series of lyric self-representations culminates in the May Day celebration which immediately precedes Liënor's arrival and her resolution of the crux. That celebration ends by recalling, I think explicitly, Conrad's first lyric, "Quant flors et glais et verdure s'esloigne" [When flowers and gladiola and greenery depart, 846ff.]. Thus the series of parallel lyrics, which define the possible worlds of Conrad's adoption of the poet/lover role, is closed off and recalled for the reader. We now have good reason--quite apart from Liënor's determination and the general air of celebration--to think that something will happen to free the courtly lover frozen inside his inflexible but somehow inappropriate lyric conventions.

Some critics have seen Conrad's pose as bespeaking an immobility and helplessness which Liënor must reverse with her truer and more physical lyricism (Baumgartner, 263; Jung, 44). For Jung, falsehood and fiction emanate from the court and from courtly literature, while truth is linked to the manor where Liënor and her family live (46). I find this to be far too inflexible an allegorization of

the lyric genres in play. Rather than correcting Conrad's courtly-lyric illusions with her Maytime lyricism, Lienor complements them, and the various illusions coalesce. Thus her arrival is not "the moment in which truth replaces fiction" (Jung, 37) but only the moment where the scattered fictions of the text are collected into a whole. The inclusion of other worlds, other poetic frames of reference, in the expanded text represents the valorization of all the partial truths which add up to reality, but no one of which represents it adequately. The dissolution of generic borders in the *Roman de la Rose* is thus a positive value; it offers a hope of enhancing the incomplete representational capacity of language.

Sources and Influences

Lejeune notes that Jean Renart has broken with the subject matter of the romance up to his time; he abandons the Matter of Britain and the *romans d'antiquité* to produce a romance from a traditional tale for which we have many attestations (1935, 51). Although we have analogues for the tale he retells, however, we have no obvious source texts for him to have taken it from. The *Roman de la Rose* tells of a woman whose virtue is maligned and who is ultimately proven innocent. Gaston Paris identified the tales sharing this plot as "the wager cycle," including *Le Roman du Comte de Poitiers*; *Le Roman de la Violette*; *Le Roman du roi Flore et de la belle Jeanne*; *Le Miracle d'Oton, roi d'Espagne*; Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*; and Boccaccio's *Decameron* II.9. In these works two men make a bet--one that his wife is faithful to him, the second that he can seduce her. The latter presents falsified "evidence" of the wife's disloyalty which for a time persuades her husband, but the villain is ultimately found out and the wife restored to her husband's favor.

While the *Roman de la Rose* follows this plot in its broadest outline, Jean Renart suppresses the motif of the wager itself; the arch-courtly emperor Conrad and his new favorite Guillaume make no such vulgar bet. Instead, an envious seneschal takes it upon himself to impugn Lienor's virtue. Moreover, the woman whose purity is in question is Guillaume's sister, not his wife, and the object of Conrad's marital ambitions. Finally, it is Lienor herself who clears her name and

wins her imperial husband. Thus with all the changes which Jean Renart has worked on the tale-type, we cannot say that his use of it is automatic or naïve.

If there is a source for the tale, we know of no source for the use either of songs or of living personages in the romance (Lejeune 1935, 52, 83 ff.). The romance introduces the Emperor Conrad as having lived "jadis" [in the past], but the tale goes on to mention and to feature names and titles of quite unmistakable contemporaneity. A series of noble extras--the Duke of Mainz, the Count of Savoy, Michel de Harnes, Eude de Ronquerolles--consort with the imaginary figures of the Emperor, Guillaume, Jouglet, and Lienor, and this fashion caught on. During the course of the thirteenth century the so-called "roman réaliste" became more diffuse than either the romances of Arthur or those of antiquity; representative titles include *Galeran de Bretagne*, *Le Roman de l'Escoufle*, *Joufroi de Poitiers*, *Jehan et Blonde*, *Le Roman du Comte d'Anjou*, and *Manekine*.

The term "réaliste" stands in some need of definition; Jean Renart's realism lies more in setting a chivalric romance in the present or near past than in representing that setting exactly. Rita Lejeune lists the following characteristics of the "roman réaliste": the recourse to verisimilitude, if not to reality; lengthy and detailed descriptions of characters, clothing, settings, and objects; precise geography; a pseudo-historic hero of a recognizable French family; frequent interruptions of the story by the author; an interest in psychology and moral conflicts; dialogues modeled on actual conversational style; the inclusion of a broad social spectrum; and an authorial distance from the material signaled by numerous personal comments (1974, 439-40). Thus where *Meraugis de Portlesgues* features locations such as the Cité sans nom, Lindesores, and Cavalon, the *Roman de la Rose* is set in Maastricht, Mainz, and Cologne. Where the protagonists of *Le Bel Inconnu* bear such patently invented names as Guinglain, Blonde Esmerée, and la Fée aux Blanches Mains, the hero of the *Joufroi de Poitiers* is set up as the son of Count Richier of Poitiers and Queen Aliénor and travels to the court of King Henry in England. Where the plot of *Le Chevalier au Lion* takes its impetus from a supernatural adventure, the plot of *Le Comte d'Anjou* takes its impetus from the moral dilemma of a daughter whose father nourishes an incestuous love for her.

The "roman réaliste" thus has nothing to do with nineteenth-century realism and everything to do with a rapprochement between the

"real" world and the much freer world of literary invention. As Jean Renart himself notes in his prologue to *L'Escoufle*,

*...mout voi conteors ki tendent
a bien dire et a recorder
contes ou ne puis acorder
mon cuer, car raisons ne me laisse;
car ki verté trespasse et laisse
et fait venir son conte a fable,
ce ne doit estre chose estable
ne recetee en nule court;
car puis que mençoigne trescort,
et vertés arriere remaint... (10-19)*

[I often see storytellers in the habit of expertly narrating and telling stories which my heart just can't accept, for reason won't allow it; for when a man abandons and violates truth and turns his story into nonsense, then that shouldn't be accepted as reliable, or recited in any court; for when the lie runs on ahead, then truth remains behind...]

Jean Renart asks for a story which he can reconcile with his intelligence, not a story which actually happened yesterday. Thus *Galeran de Bretagne* takes Marie de France's *Le Fresne* and expands it to romance length within a recognizable setting. Plots still make unabashed use of wild coincidence, as in *Manekine*, when the much-abused heroine, her loving husband, and her unworthy father all converge simultaneously on Rome for a recognition and reconciliation scene. In the *Roman de la Rose* itself, Patricia Terry and Nancy Vine Durling note Liënor's "improbable knowledge of the seneschal's own secrets, and ... his unforeseeable insistence on a trial by ordeal" (5). Such adventures may strain our notion of verisimilitude, let alone of reality, but they remain infinitely more plausible than magic fountains, perilous beds, and sword-bridges.

Moreover, there is substantial observation and description of contemporary life in these romances, even if it is fantastically exaggerated. The "good life" is represented with nearly caricatural hyperbole; if we count the number of times tablecloths are laid and

removed in this romance we might imagine that no one had time to do anything but eat. The image Jean Renart paints of the gaiety, courtliness, beauty, honor, talent, and capital (literal and symbolic) circulating in Conrad's court can never have been intended to be a "realistic" portrayal of any court in any period. This is a lushly embellished vision of reality, in which nothing is impossible; Lecoy points out the unrealistic economics of this wish-fulfillment fantasy (1980, 19-20). But among the hyperbole we also see scenes and sketches of everyday life, the way meals were served and letters carried, hunts conducted and tournaments concluded, carols danced and *chansons d'histoire* sung, lodgings taken and equipment commissioned. These scenes observed from daily life were tremendously influential, imitated in writing which is not technically "romance" at all. We recognize in *Le Tournoi de Chauvency* a descendant of the tournament of Saint-Trond and in the political satire of the *Roman de Fauvel* a development of Jean Renart's vehement views on court preferences and inherited nobility.

The other great influence which Jean Renart had upon his successors is, of course, his insertion of lyric fragments into his romance. Especially in French, an extraordinary number of works reprise this signal innovation.⁶ As Rita Lejeune notes, Jean Renart himself remains oddly obscure; he is never cited, referred to, or quoted, but he is very widely imitated (1974, 444). Indeed, it was for the presence of those lyric insertions that the *Roman de la Rose* was first seriously studied in the nineteenth century. Its closest and probably first imitator was Gerbert de Montreuil's *Roman de la Violette*, which shares the calumniated woman plot and transforms the rose on Liënor's thigh into a violet on Eurïaut's breast. Its forty lyric fragments also declare its debt to the *Rose*. Works which "use" their lyric fragments in ways analogous to those of the *Rose* include *Méliacin ou le cheval de fust*, *Le Tournoi de Chauvency*, and the *Roman de Flamenca*; the lyrics are spoken or sung by various characters within the tale. Innovations upon Jean Renart's hybridizing innovation occurred early on, however; in *Le Roman de la Poire*, the *Prison Amoureuse*, and the *Panthère d'Amours*, the lyrics are spoken or sung by the narrator, the lady he loves, or allegorical figures for him. The *Roman du Castelain de Coucy et de la Dame de Fayel* includes the lyrics of the historical trouvère the Châtelain de Coucy, setting them into contexts which purport to explain their composition. There is a tremendous variety among the works

influenced directly or indirectly by the *Roman de la Rose*, and the scope of the subject is too vast to treat adequately here.⁷

The presence of the lyric fragments in the romance has stimulated medievalists to imagine various possibilities for its telling. How might such a romance have been "performed"? Jean Renart himself tells us that "s'en vieult l'en i chante et lit" [if you want you can sing and read it, 19], and that those "qui chanter et lire l'orront" [who hear it sung and read, 22] will never tire of it. Is it likely that someone reading aloud from the manuscript would have continued to read the inserted lyrics as though they had never been associated with music? Is it possible that the romance might have taken on the contours of a theatrical performance? Maria Coldwell notes that "viewing the romances as group efforts opens up... the use of different performers to read the lines of different characters in the romances. A little mime could arise spontaneously..." (69). There is, I suspect, considerable "performance nostalgia" involved in reading the *Roman de la Rose*; more than with any romance without lyric insertions, it is tantalizing to speculate on the format in which its audiences heard it and almost impossible to visualize it without some musical component.⁸

The recent appearance of a video performance of the *Roman de la Rose* featuring the Folger Consort and starring Peter Becker, Mark Bleeke, and Andrea Folan shows one way in which the romance might be "read and sung."⁹ This lively version is intended primarily as a teaching tool rather than as a reconstruction of performance practice in the thirteenth century. Indeed, from what we know of how romances were received, I suspect that the *Roman de la Rose* was never in fact either acted out or, as in the modern musical, interrupted by full-fledged performances of entire lyrics or even of the stanzas which are copied out in the text. The manuscript which transmits the *Rose* gives us no clues about a musical performance at all, beyond the slight suggestions of the prologue, and these could merely refer to the reader or reciter, who might choose to sing the lyric fragments. There is neither musical notation in the manuscript nor any provision or room for any. The romance is bound with three other romances which have no particular connection to music at all; it seems to have been considered a romance to be read or recited aloud in the usual fashion.

The inclusion of music to match lyric insertions in narrative seems to have begun toward the mid-thirteenth century; certainly it would seem a logical extension of Jean Renart's lyric-narrative hybrid.

Manuscripts containing the *Roman de la Poire* and the *Prison d'Amours*, both from around the middle of the century, have musical notations attached to their insertions in some manuscripts, as do the rather later *Renart le Nouvel*, the *Court de Paradis*, and the *Roman de Fauvel*. I would look for such formal experimentation as musical performance several decades after the *Roman de la Rose*, and not at the very first systematic conjoining of lyric and narrative in vernacular romance.

Editorial Policy for This Text and Translation

The *Roman de la Rose* has come down to us in only one manuscript, Vat. Reg. 1725. This late thirteenth-century parchment manuscript came into the possession of the Vatican library with the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden after her death in 1690.¹⁰ Now bound in red leather, it measures 287mm by 191mm and consists of 130 folios, written in two columns of approximately 46 lines each; but it is possible that it earlier contained another fifty or so folios.¹¹ It contains four romances, Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrette* (1r-34r) and *Chevalier au Lion* (34v-68r), the *Roman de la Rose* (68v-98v), and Raoul de Houdenc's *Meraugis de Portlesguez* (98v-130v). The script is clear and legible, making limited and consistent use of abbreviations; the letters sit above the traced lines, and the body of each column sits two spaces to the right of the first letter of each line, presenting a neat and orderly appearance overall. The manuscript contains no illuminations, but there are many ornamented initial letters in red with blue hairlines or vice versa. The scribe makes a very limited use of punctuation, occasionally indicating pauses with a "bullet" set slightly higher than a period would be; to indicate both questions and exclamations he uses a single sign which resembles a period with a rounded check mark set above it.

The *Roman de la Rose*, as I have noted, has had a variegated reception history in the last one hundred years. It has been considered too wooden, too slow, too mannered, too unlike its predecessors, too realistic; it is now praised as subtle, self-referential, polysemous, slyly aware of epistemological and interpretative conundra, and even, in recent years, feminist. As the agendas of medieval literary study change,

it should not be surprising that the procedures and goals of text editing are also changing, attracting a renewed interest even on the part of those medievalists previously happy to rely on printed editions. The post-structuralist focus on the marginal, the indeterminate, the repressed and the plurivocal has challenged the familiar criteria of printed editions of medieval texts, and the habits of mind which underlie them. The belief that there is an original text to be reconstructed through the film of variants and scribal errors is beginning to look dated, and there is a new tendency toward an old (specifically Bédierist) reluctance to intervene drastically in manuscript evidence.

Just as our preoccupations and questions regarding medieval literature are no longer what they were, we might now consider revising the form in which we are accustomed to seeing medieval texts. I would suggest that we might profitably consult medieval texts in a drastically less inflected form than the standard critical editions we have known best, with their cargo of emendations, interpretations, and contextualizations which delimit and fix the medieval artifact. While I recognize that no two editors would agree on what constitutes a proper critical edition, most would include: word and sentence division; quotation marks, and hence dialogue attribution; internal punctuation; rendering in typescript with modern letter forms; expansion of abbreviations; and indication, if not outright correction, of "patent" scribal errors. Our familiarity with, and even dependence on, these adaptations generally cause a counterproductive alienation from the material existence of the text when finally we encounter it in manuscript.

The disjunction between the original artifact in the manuscript and the tidied, deciphered, and (metaphorically at least) pre-translated and interpreted versions we take for granted, typically provokes a case of manuscript shock. This shock is not merely, or even primarily, a function of the script; it is also a function of letter forms, undivided words, unfamiliar abbreviations, blocks of text unpunctuated, aleatory spelling, and the absence of any crutch, annotation, guide, glossary, or solid ground beneath one's feet. Can it be an entirely good thing for us to be so dramatically alienated, so dependently disconcerted, when we come face to face with our own objects of study? An illustrative parallel would be an art historian who has never worked even from slides or photographs of medieval painting and sculpture but only from nineteenth-century watercolors of the originals, done in nineteenth-century style. If the notion of meaning as inhering in expression, of