NATURE AND DIVINE LOVE IN LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE

NATURE AND DIVINE LOVE IN GUILLAUME DE LORRIS AND JEAN DE MEUN'S LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE

By

DEBORAH ANGELA VAN VELDHUIZEN, B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

MASTER OF ARTS (1997) McMaster University
(English) Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Nature and Divine Love in Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's
Le Roman de la Rose

AUTHOR: Deborah Angela Van Veldhuizen, B.A. (Carleton University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Anne Savage

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 86

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between nature and divine love in Guillaume de Lorris (c. 1200-1240) and Jean de Meun's (c. 1235-1305) Le Roman de la Rose. My approach contextualizes the allegorical representations of nature and divine love in the religious, historical, and cultural milieu of the poem.

The introductory chapter foregrounds the poem in two ways: first, in the theologization of 'nature' by the thirteenth century; second, in terms of a vernacular theology about Christ's Incarnation and Passion being for and about everyone because they redeem the human body and soul. Chapter Two introduces natural and cupidinous love, the framework in which the philosophical discussion of the redemption of the human body and soul occurs. The third chapter compares and contrasts Nature and Genius, the allegorical representations of nature and divine love in the poem. Chapter Four, through an examination of the Park of the Lamb, the garden of *Deduit* and the hierarchy of 'worlds' presented in the Roman, reveals how it is possible for humankind to live according to God's purpose.

Having examined these features of the poem, I arrive at the conclusion that a multiplicity of views are put forth in the Roman, suggesting the necessity of an upheaval of medieval institutions which would, if followed, result in a more equitable way of living. Through the figure Nature, it is revealed to humankind that our humanity is

redeemed through God's grace and love and is, consequently, in accord with God's purpose.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is my pleasure to thank Anne Savage for her help and valuable insights on Le Roman de la Rose during the completion of this thesis. I would also like to thank Alvin Lee for his assistance on particular points.

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues at McMaster University for their enlightenment and moral support, especially Sarah Brophy, who offered valuable suggestions and patiently listened.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to Bernard Van Veldhuizen for his support and encouragement throughout the process, and to my family.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Introducing Le Roman de la Rose

> *Now I wish to tell this dream in rhyme, the more to make your hearts rejoice, since Love both begs and commands me to do so. And if anyone asks what I wish the romance to be called, which I begin here, it is the Romance of the Rose, in which the whole art of love is contained. Its matter is good and new; and God grant that she for whom I have undertaken it may receive it with grace. It is she who is so precious and so worthy to be loved that she should be called Rose.*[1]

The recent surge of critical interest in Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's Le Roman de la Rose has given rise to several new manuscript studies and fresh perspectives on this thirteenth-century poetical dream-allegory. The authors, who wrote more than forty years apart, both originated from near Orleans, France: Guillaume was apparently born in the village of Lorris and wrote his portion of the Roman from 1230-35; Jean, who wrote in about 1275, was born in Meung-sur-Loire. It is generally assumed that Guillaume was less educated than Jean, who, it is believed, was connected somehow with the University of Paris; as well, Jean's vast knowledge of classical writers, from Ovid to

---

[1] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose, p. 31. All citations refer to Charles Dahlberg's Modern English translation, The Romance of the Rose (1995) The poem will henceforth be referred to as the Roman. All English quotations from Dahlberg's text will be glossed in the footnotes in Old French from Ernest Langlois's edition of Le Roman de la Rose (1914; in five volumes).
Langlois, lines 31-44
"Or vueil cel songe rimeier Por voz cuers plus faire esgaier,
Qu'Amors le me prie e comande. Et se nus ne nule demande
Coment je vueil que li romanz Soit apelez que je comenz,
Ce est li Romanz de la Rose, Ou l'art d'Amors est tote enclose
La matire en est bone e nueve; Or doint Deus qu'en gré le recueve
Cele por cui je l'ai empris; C'est cele qui tant a de pris
E tant est dine d'estre amee Qu'el doit estre Rose clamee".

Boethius and several others, is revealed in his portion of the Roman. Jean wrote several works and translations[2], including a translation of Aelred of Rievaulx's On Spiritual Friendship and one of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, the influence of which can be seen in the Roman[3].

Ostensibly a romance in the form of a dream-allegory, the poem relates the tale of a Lover who overcomes all sorts of difficulties to have sex with his 'rose'; the Lover's quest is placed in a context of the philosophical question of the reconciliation of the human body and soul. Upon entering a paradisal garden called *Deduit*[4], the Lover is enthralled with the joyful abandon going on around him. After looking in the well of Narcissus, he falls in love with a rose; from this point on cupidinous love overtakes the Lover. He becomes a vassal of the God of Love and receives commandments from him in the name of 'pure love'. The rest of the poem tells the story of the Lover's journey to his rose, the difficulties he encounters, and the friends and foes he meets along the way. Reason, Jealousy, Shame, Fear, Foul Mouth, and Resistance are all against the Lover's cause whereas Friend, the God of Love, Venus, Nature and Genius all support him. Although Reason, Nature and Genius are generally considered authority figures in the

---

[2] Other works commonly attributed to Jeun de Meun include various translations of the letters of Abelard and Heloise, Vegetius's De re militari, which Jean de Meun translated as L'art de chevalerie, and the Testament.

[3] For Aelred's notions of friendship and natural love, see Chapter Two, page 24. The influence of Boethius's Consolation is evident in Nature's Confession (the Roman, lines 15891-19438), particularly Nature's discourses on cosmology and on predestination and free will; see Chapter Three, pp. 36-39.

[4] French. Diversion, Mirth, Delight, the garden in which the poem is set; also the masculine personification of the owner of the garden

poem, none can be called 'the voice of the poet'. Nature confesses to Genius, her priest, who takes to the barons her plea to humankind to procreate in order to serve Nature well and thereby live according to God's purpose. Genius contrasts the artificiality of the garden of *Deduit* with the clarity of the Park of the Lamb, God's reward for those who avoid vice and live according to his purpose. After hearing Genius's sermon the barons assemble and lay siege on the castle; they are then joined by the God of Love and his mother Venus. The forces on the side of love win and the Lover finally consummates his relationship with Rose; at the end of the poem the Dreamer awakes.

Editorial work on the over two hundred surviving manuscripts of the Roman is a rapidly growing field; this type of inquiry yields much about the social, cultural and historical milieu of the poem and its medieval audience: "It is no accident that recent studies which emphasize the importance of the poem's ironic technique are also those that for the first time have revealed the importance of manuscript illustrations" (Dahlberg 22). One such study has been done on the 'Tournai *Rose*', Gui de Mori's MS 101 (c. 1330) of the Municipal Library of Tournai: "the program of illumination presents variations on well-known iconography of the *Rose* besides introducing elements not found elsewhere"[5]. The planner of the manuscript has provided a commentary both on Gui de Mori's text and on the modifications made by the anonymous editor, which indicate that Gui made several changes to the text of the Roman which were incorporated

[5] From Lori Walters, "Illuminating the Rose. Gui de Mori and the Illustrations of MS 101 of the Municipal Library, Tournai", from Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot, Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception (1992), p 167.

into the manuscript illustrations. First, he added Pride to the original list of ten anticourtly vices and made it the focus of his entire system; as a result, the planner of the manuscript ensured that "both the male suitor and the female object of desire are not prideful in love" (Walters 167). Second, Gui made several adjustments that indicate a religious or mystical reading of the allegorical narrative; for example, he makes reference to Hugh of St. Victor's mystical treatise De arra animae in the preface he added to Guillaume's prologue; iconographic illustrations reflect these changes, such as the miniature of the Virgin Mary heading the table of contents. Third, Gui added his authorial signature to the manuscript in several places and, following Jean de Meun, he became a character in his own manuscript: "Gui presents himself as a cleric whose ecclesiastical vows are sometimes at odds with his role as servant of love" (Walters 168). In addition, Gui added his own prologue, made the text more 'Christian' by deleting several 'pagan' mythological references, changed the structure to unify the Roman into "a more clerkly and didactic art of love" (Walters 171), changed the focus of the poem to be against prideful love, and, most importantly, added marriage "as a way for the laity to resolve the apparent contradictions between Genius's call to procreate in an indiscriminate manner and Christian doctrine" (Walters 181). Gui's heavy moralization of the text works in opposition to Jean de Meun's satirical aim of refuting the obvious solution of marriage. Walters believes that Gui de Mori's manuscript was produced in a workshop in Tournai that had close ties with the Benedictine Monastery of St. Martin de Tournai, and was likely made to celebrate the wedding of someone closely associated with the monastery.

The Roman was well received in both France and England for more than a century after it was composed; however, in about 1402 the now infamous 'Quarrel of the Rose' began, considered to be "the first known literary debate in the French language"[6]. The debate was in the form of a series of letters written by Jean de Meun's supporters, Jean de Montreuil and the brothers Gontier and Pierre Col, who were secretaries attached to the royal chanceries; and de Meun's detractors, Christine de Pisan, the first professional woman writer in France, a widely-known figure in the literary world, and Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris. Christine found the poem offensive because of its immodest language, Genius's message to go forth and multiply, and the misogyny in the speeches of the Old Woman and the Jealous Husband, whereas "the supporters of the *Roman* praised the scholarly, philosophical and theological knowledge which Jean de Meung displayed in his work and delighted in his successful manipulation of poetry, satire and allegory" (Hill 242). The result of the debate was a standoff that ended in stagnation: "Since there was virtually no common ground between the two sides no compromise was possible; it was therefore inevitable that the debate should end with its participants in the same entrenched positions as they had been at its inception" (Hill 242). An example of the comments that sparked the debate, and Christine's response, are shown in these excerpts from an exchange between Pierre Col and herself:

> After I had heard people speak of your high understanding, your clear intellect, and of your melodious eloquence, I desired very greatly to see your letters and other small things of like kind. Thus after great care in seeking them, there has come into my hand a certain letter of yours... In

[6]Jillian M.L. Hill, The Medieval Debate on Jean de Meung's Roman de la Rose: Morality Versus Art (1991), p vii.

> this letter you make an effort to reproach the very devout Catholic and very excellent theologian, the most divine orator and poet and most perfect philosopher, Master Jean de Meun, in some particular parts of his book of the *Rose*. Yet I myself scarcely dare to open my mouth in praise of this book, lest I should set my foot into an abyss. For as we read of Herod, he did more good to the Innocents through hatred by having them killed than he could possibly have done through love. Perhaps it will be the same for you and others who strive with you to impugn this most noble writer Jean de Meun.
>
> Pierre Col to Christine de Pisan, mid-1402[7]

> You say that he is good; I say that he is evil. Now show me which of the two is right. And when you and your accomplice, in your subtle ways, have been able to change evil into good, then will I believe that the *Roman de la Rose* is good. But I know well that this book is suitable for those who desire to live in wickedness and are more concerned with selfishly protecting themselves than others. For those, however, who desire to live in virtuous simplicity, and not embroiled in worldly desires, deceiving none, nor being deceived, this book has little to offer.
>
> Christine de Pisan to Pierre Col, 2 October 1402[8]

This debate still continues today as the two parts of Genius's speech work in opposition to each other and misogynistic elements of the poem cannot be reconciled or 'explained away'; in fact, this may in part account for the attention the Roman has received in the past twenty-five years: several feminist readings of the text have emerged. For nearly three hundred years following its composition, the poem was widely read in France and England, perhaps in part because of the scandal produced by the Quarrel; interest in the

---

[7] From Pierre Col's letter to Christine de Pisan (mid-1402) (letter 13); from J.L. Baird and J.R. Kane, La Querrelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents (1978), pp. 92-144; quoted in Maxwell Luria, A Reader's Guide to the Roman de la Rose (1982), p.183.

[8] From Christine de Pisan's letter to Pierre Col (2 October 1402) (letter 14); from Baird and Kane, La Quarrelle (see footnote #7 for complete reference); Luria p. 202

poem declined after the sixteenth century, once allegory "came to be regarded as a somewhat simplistic, arbitrary vehicle for pious works" (Dahlberg 1).

Renewed interest in the Roman began earlier this century, starting with C.S. Lewis's The Allegory of Love (1936); the next major work on the poem was Alan M.F. Gunn's The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of 'The Romance of the Rose' (1952). Following this was a work that would prove to be very important in Roman scholarship: D.W. Robertson Jr.'s A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (1962). The Robertsonian school, which includes John V. Fleming and Charles Dahlberg, have argued that the poem is an allegory of the Fall. In the last two decades critical research has expanded into several areas, including: manuscript studies; the medieval audience's reception of the poem and the fifteenth-century 'Quarrel of the Rose'; theories of allegory and Macrobian dream-allegory; the unity of the two parts of the poem; narrative structure and authorial voice; interdisciplinary investigations; irony in the work, and sources and influences[9]. As well, there have been several recent translations of the poem both into French (Lecoy 1965, Poirion 1974, Strubel 1992) and English (Horgan 1994, Dahlberg 1995); several guides to the poem have been published (Arden 1987, Luria 1982) and a comprehensive annotated bibliography is now available (Arden 1993)[10].

---

[9] Amongst the major works that are generally considered as sources of the Roman include Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, Cicero's Somnium Scipionis, Prudentius's Psychomachia, Andreas Capellanus's The Art of Courtly Love, Ovid's Metamorphoses and Art of Love, Alain de Lille's The Complaint of Nature and Bernard Silvestris's Cosmographia. Influences usually cited include several of Chaucer's works, the Fiore, and Dante's Commedia.

[10] See Works Cited or Consulted.

Any critical undertaking of the Roman must necessarily consider the two authors and the unity of the poem. My perspective views the poem as a unified whole in which Guillaume's romance lays the foundation for Jean's lengthy philosophical digressions: in the poem the God of Love tells us that Guillaume began the poem but died before he had finished it, after which

> will come Jean Chopinel with gay heart and lively body. He will be born at Meung-sur-Loire; he will serve me his whole life, feasting and fasting, without avarice and envy ... He will be so fond of the romance that he will want to finish it right to the end, if time and place can be found" (187-88)[11].

Several studies, such as C.S. Lewis's The Allegory of Love, submit that the two authors are opposed in intent and treatment:

> the earlier part, by Guillaume, [is] a joyous celebration of 'courtly love,' fresh and lyrical, and the longer second portion, by Jean de Meun, [is] an 'anti-Guillaume,' a brilliant, but encyclopedic and digressive, denunciation of the ideals of courtly love and a celebration of a naturalistic doctrine of a sort of philosophical libertinism (Dahlberg 3).

More recent critical work, however, has tended to suggest that the poem is unified (Gunn 1952, Tuve 1966, Fleming 1969):

> Gunn argued that the poem was unified as a treatise on love, that Jean de Meun understood Guillaume's purpose, and that he fulfilled it in a greatly amplified continuation, an extended *psychomachia* or 'grand debate' in which the various personifications reflect the poet's conflicting attitudes on the subject of love (Dahlberg 3).

---

[11] Langlois:
" vendra Johans Chopinel, Au cueur joli, au cors inel,
Qui naistra seur Leire a Meun, Qui a saoul e a jeun
Me servira toute sa vie, Senz avarice e senz envie (lines 10565-70)
. Cist avra le romanz si chier
Qu'il le voudra tout parfenir, Se tens e leus l'en peut venir" (lines 10584-86).

This view does not at all suggest that Jean's part of the poem is 'better' than Guillaume's; rather, it indicates that Jean built on Guillaume's romantic structure and included elements of satire and irony that give a fuller exposition of the subject matter at hand: the 'art of love' and its philosophical ramifications.

Relevant to my inquiry is the question of whether any of the figures of authority, notably Reason, Nature and Genius, are truly the voice of authority in the poem or, perhaps, the voice of the poet; in Chapter Three (see page 51) I will argue that although none of these figures is the authoritative voice in the poem, the 'last word' is given to Genius, who has just presented a 'solution' to the problem of cupidinous love, albeit one fraught with complications. However, Jean de Meun presents a multiplicity of views in the poem, partly through the use of irony, thereby not leaving the reader with any one voice in particular. The impossibility of arriving at just one point of view is compounded by the various levels of irony in the poem which result in the reader sometimes being several narrative levels away from the poet: for example, the Jealous Husband's tirade is told through Friend, who is speaking through the Dreamer, who is in turn speaking through the author's persona, the result of which is that it is almost impossible to establish the author's perspective. The play of ironies in the poem is directed "more simply in Guillaume's case, more elaborately in Jean's, toward the revelation of the Lover's headstrong folly in his pursuit of the rose-sanctuary-*con*" (Dahlberg 10). The use of irony and questions regarding the unity of the poem can best be understood in the context of a principle of literary decorum, that is, of the humblest things being treated in a sublime style and the most elevated in a simple style which

> arises from the Christian conception of the fusion of the humble and sublime in *Christ's Incarnation and Passion*, a fusion which confounds traditional categories and establishes a mode of discourse that affected Christian literature throughout the Middle Ages[12].

On one level the Roman is an erotic dream but it must be remembered that love is also a central doctrine of Christianity; while the poem advocates a natural love that can lead upwards to charity or downwards to cupidity, it is quite obvious which way the Lover is heading:

> Taken literally, the Lover's desire for the rose is the classic form of cupidity, a love of an earthly object for its own sake, rather than for the sake of God. The linear progress of that desire through the poem follows the pattern of cupidinous love, the love inspired by Cupid, the poem's God of Love (Dahlberg 15).

This cupidinous love

> includes and depends upon dimensions of love – natural love, fortune, amity, and the charity that is the source and goal of the other forms ... The poetic development gives form to the idea that cupidinous involvement grows in stages of increasing gravity; proceeding by means of irony, the poem presents these stages in terms of increasing levity until we reach the dream's conclusion. The defiant joy of the Lover over the possession of the rose gives way to the light of day, and the dream vanishes (Dahlberg 22).

That cupidity is redeemed in the poem is evident in Genius's sermon on procreation and, therefore, sexuality as a greater good: "Plow, for God's sake, my barons, plow and restore your lineages" (324)[13]; however, Genius also tells the barons that to reach God's reward of the Park of the Lamb one must avoid all of the vices: he cites the garden of

---

[12] Dahlberg 11; from Erich Auerbach, Mimesis (1957), pp. 131-32.

[13] Langlois, lines 19701-02.
"Arez, pour Deu, baron, arez, E voz lignages reparez".

Deduit as an artificial paradise, and, therefore, something to avoid. The two parts of Genius's message are at odds with one another because marriage, which is not mentioned, would have made the Lover's passion acceptable.

* * * * * * * * * *

The triple unity in this simple trinity, the sovereign deity clothed in a human skin, is God who is called Creator. He created man's understanding and in making it, gave it to man. For [man's] deceit my Lord received His death when, without me, He took on human flesh to remove the wretch from his suffering . I was deeply amazed when for wretched man He was born in the flesh of the Virgin Mary and afterward was hanged in the flesh. It could never be through me that anything might ever be born of a virgin. In former times this Incarnation was foretold by many prophets, Jewish and pagan, so that we might better calm our hearts and strive to believe that the prophecy might be true.

From Nature's Confession, Le Roman de la Rose[14]

---

[14] The Romance of the Rose, p. 316.
Langlois, lines 19141-54
" .. la trine unité En cete simple trinité,
Ne la deité souveraine Afublee de pel humaine,
C'est Deus qui crierres se nome. Cis fist l'entendement de l'ome,
E en faisant le li dona; E cil si li guerredona
Come mauvais, au dire veir, Qu'il cuida puis Deu deceveir,
Mais il meismes se decut, Don mi sires la mort recut,
Quant il, senz mei, prist char humaine, Pour le chaitif oster de peine."

> *Besides the universal grace whereby all things are what they are, there is the grace that is proper to Christians, the grace of Jesus Christ, which is of such vital importance to us that we reserve the name for it alone; this is not the grace which is in nature, but the grace which saves nature.*[15]

> *We are told that the Incarnation redeems humankind from hell, releases us from the monster of time and death in the order of nature. How much of humankind can be redeemed? ... The Bible insists there is something redeemable in humankind. But it is not human nature ... It is 'humanity' that adds the spiritual to the animal and physical. It is the death of Christ that separates humanity from animal nature.*[16]

By the thirteenth century, much had been written in Latin that theologized nature, from Boethius's The Consolation of Philosophy, written in the fifth century, to Alain de Lille's The Complaint of Nature and Bernard Sylvestris's Cosmographia, both written during the twelfth century. From these and other works developed a theology around Christ's Incarnation and Passion,[17] a movement that validated and even exalted the physical side of humanity, while the basic division between body and spirit remained a foundation for Christianity. 'Nature' as a concept, variously personified and engaged in debate, is the conduit for philosophical reconciliation of the human body and soul. That

---

Lines 19157-68
"... Ainz fui trop forment esbaie Quant il de la vierge Marie
Fu pour le chaitif en char nez, E puis penduz touz encharnez;
Car par mei ne peut ce pas estre Que riens puisse de vierge naistre
Si tu jadis par maint prophete Cete incarnacion retraite,
E par juis e par paiens, Que meauz noz cueurs en apaiens,
E plus nous efforciens a creire Que la prophecie seit veire".

[15] Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy (1991), p. 379.

[16] Dr. Alvin A. Lee, 'The Book of Job', class notes, Department of English, McMaster University, November 1996.

[17] The Incarnation: "the embodiment of God in human form as Jesus Christ (p. 414);" The Passion: "the sufferings of Christ on the Cross (p. 613), The Oxford Reference Dictionary (1986).

divine love is the motive for the Incarnation of Christ is made explicit in the Gospel of John: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17, King James Bible). The notion that divine love holds the universe together was an idea that had originated in the classical period and later became Christianized to reflect the idea that the body of Christ is *in every created thing*; Boethius, much acclaimed in the medieval period[18], had expressed this in verse in The Consolation of Philosophy:

> All things that He with motion stirs to go
> He holds and when they wander brings them back;
> Unless He call them home to their true path,
> And force them back their orbits to perfect,
> Those things which stable order now protects,
> Divorced from their true source would fall apart.
> This is the love of which all things partake,
> The end of good their chosen goal and close:
> No other way can they expect to last,
> Unless with love for love repaid they turn
> And seek again the cause that gave them birth.[19]

---

[18] The twelfth century has often been called the Age of Boethius; The Consolation of Philosophy was translated by Jean de Meun and Chaucer, amongst others in this period. The twelfth century has also been referred to as the Age of Ovid; Boethius and Ovid together are credited with shaping much of the thought and philosophy of the Middle Ages.

[19] Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy (1969) Book IV, Section VI, pp. 141-42.
The following Middle English translation of The Consolation by John Walton, Canon of Oseney (1927), is based on Chaucer's version and the Latin original:
"For thing that flitteth ever to and fro, Bot if that he establischeth it so,
Compellynge it to mouen into rounde, It moste nedes fayle fro his grounde,
And fro the ordire whiche they now obseruen, This loue commyn to euery creature
Coueiteth for to kepen and conseruen The ende of good that ground is of nature;
For other wyse ne myght there noght endeure, Bot loue retorne hem in to vnite
Of god on hyhe that causeth theym to be"

In The Consolation, which is written in alternating sections of verse and prose, the allegorical personification *Philosophy* comes to console the imprisoned Boethius, and eventually shows him the way back to God and self-knowledge; this 'ascent' of the soul reflects Platonic and Neoplatonic concepts. Jean's characters Reason and Nature have elements of the character *Philosophy* in them.

Chaucer, like Jean de Meun, had been greatly influenced by The Consolation; not only did he translate the work as well but also alluded to it in many of his works; for example, his *Nature* in The Parliament of Fowls is based on Boethius's *Philosophy*. Chaucer's Boece "is an attempt not merely to translate Boethius accurately but to fuse with it, in an effort to provide a definitive guide to the work, both Jean de Meun's French translation and the Latin commentary tradition"[20]. Of particular relevance to my inquiry is this expression of the reason of nature:

> Ryght so is it here, that the thinges that God hath present, withoute doute thei shollen ben. But some of hem descendith of the nature of thinges (as the sonne arysynge); and some descendith of the power of the doeris (as the man walkynge). Thanne seide I no wrong that, yif that thise thinges been referred to the devyne knowynge, thanne ben thei necessarie; and yif thei ben considered by hemself, than ben thei absolut fro the boond of necessite. Right so as alle thingis that apiereth or scheweth to the wittes, yif thou referre it to *resoun*, it is universel; and yif thou loke it or referre it to *itself*, than is it singuler (Chaucer, Boece 468).

Alain De Lille's The Complaint of Nature is also considered to be an important influence on the Roman; Alain, a Latin poet, lived from circa 1116 to 1202; The Complaint follows the tradition of Boethius: an allegorical poem in alternating sections

---

[20] Chaucer, The Riverside Chaucer (1987), p 396.

of prose and verse. Although there are many similarities between Alain's Nature and Jean's Nature, their Genius figures differ as Alain's Genius excommunicates those sinners who engage in 'unnatural' sex and other vices while Jean, satirizing this, has his Genius extol the virtues of sexual intercourse and excommunicates those who practice chastity. Therefore, while some critics have seen Jean as simply copying Alain's ideas, others have seen it as an overturning of them, or both:

> Though the *Roman* departs from the pattern provided by the *de Planctu* at certain significant junctures, and finally abandons it altogether, the former work is present as a more or less constant index to Jean's intention – an intention neither so outrageously hedonistic nor so simplistically orthodox as certain critics of divergent persuasions have suggested[21].

Alain's Nature points to 'wisdom' and its connection with reason as the way for mankind to validate his existence:

> But wisdom alone surpasses every possession. Though this noble property be scattered abroad, it reunites; though spent, it returns; though confiscated, it gains an increase. Through it the splendid treasure of science is produced in the mysterious secret places of the mind, and the enjoyment of internal delight is acquired. It is the sun from which the mind becomes the day in the midst of shadows; it is the eye of the heart, the rapturous paradise of the spirit. *It turns the earthly into the heavenly by the power of godlike change, the perishable into the immortal, man into God.* It is the true cure for error, the only solace for human misfortune, alone the morning-star of the night of humanity, the special redemption from thy misery ... Although among those who are like brutes in bestial sensuality it sickens by reason of their gross vice, yet among

---

[21] Winthrop Wetherbee, "The Literal and the Allegorical: Jean de Meun and the de Planctu Naturae", Medieval Studies 33 (1971), p 266 Wetherbee considers Jean's Reason and Nature to reflect aspects of Alain's Natura, while Jean's Genius is a more complex and ambiguous reading of Alain's character; I would suggest that Jean's Genius is an ironic version of Alain's. Rosemund Tuve suggests in Allegorical Imagery Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (1966), that Le Roman de la Rose is a direct reply to Alain's The Complaint of Nature.

> those who have raised the spark of *reason* into its original fire it does not lack the favor of sounding fame[22].

The rise of the significance of the figure Nature in the twelfth century is well documented; in the Introduction to his translation of Bernard Silvestris's Cosmographia[23], Winthrop Wetherbee notes that "Nature, the protagonist of the cosmic drama, is in many respects a discovery of the twelfth century" (Wetherbee 1973, 6). He goes on to explain how 'Nature' became the way to both understand and justify many things – human behavior, astrology, and inexplicable happenings that might previously have been claimed to be God's miracles or, from the twelfth century onwards, might be explained by science:

> Man, like the universe, lives and moves through the interplay of rational and irrational forces; his affinity with nature imposes upon him the responsibility of self-government, as the rational firmament governs the wandering stars, and the measure of his integrity is the extent to which he can achieve in his own life the stability and regularity of the universe at large (Wetherbee 1973,12).

Bernard's Nature, along with *Noys*, the divine mind, after creating man, the 'microcosm', end by celebrating the male reproductive organs: "Blood sent forth from the seat of the brain flows down to the loins, bearing the image of the shining sperm. Artful Nature molds and shapes the fluid, that in conceiving it may reproduce the forms of ancestors"[24];

---

[22] Alain de Lille, The Complaint of Nature, Prose VI, p. 63

[23] Winthrop Wetherbee, The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris (1973).

[24] Bernard Silvestris, Cosmographia, 'Microcosmos', p. 126.
The following Latin translation is from Peter Dronke's edition of Bernardus Silvestris' Cosmographia (1978), 'Microcosmus', section XIV, ll. 167-70:
"Defluit ad renes, cerebri regione remissus, Sanguis, et albentis spermatis instar habet.
Format et effingit sollers Natura liquorem, Ut simili genesis ore reducat avos".

once again, Nature ensures the continuation of the species and justifies the act of sexual intercourse. The influence of the Cosmographia was enormous: "The poetic world created by Bernardus was to provide the framework for an increasing range of literary exercises as the vernacular literatures of the Middle Ages emerged" (Wetherbee 1973, 59).

* * * * * * * * *

> *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*
>
> Luke 24:39, King James Bible

A *vernacular theology* started to develop in the twelfth century; largely a result of the general feeling that Christ's Incarnation and Passion were for and about everyone because they revealed a devotion to the body of Christ, it lent itself to the idea that there is something sacred in every thing that God has created. The late medieval period was a time in which representations of Christ's *humanity* were such that "the terms, images, rituals, and ideas of holiness become the object of unprecedently *public* and *vernacular* contestation in England"[25]. This reconciliation of the human body and soul was

[25] David Aers and Lynn Staley, The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture (1996), p 4

celebrated and portrayed variously in "a body of vernacular writing which was more and more aware of, anxious to shape, and in turn shaped by the needs of lay readers"[26].

The feast of Corpus Christi, which celebrated Christ's body regarding the Eucharist, began in the thirteenth century as a result of twelfth-century theology which had "emphasized the real, substantial presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the sacrament, even apart from the activities of the Mass"[27]. The feast became a general celebration starting in about 1275; in Cologne "the procession of the 'body of Christ' became an occasion for the whole community to proceed triumphantly throughout the town and even into the countryside. By 1350 the custom of a full procession was widespread and threatened to overshadow the Mass itself" (Dictionary, p. 608). As "[l]ate medieval piety and society attached great importance to the feast of Corpus Christi, ... [l]iturgical dramas staged on that day evolved into great pageants covering the history of the world from creation to Last Judgment, as seen in the English Corpus Christi plays of York and Chester" (Dictionary 608). The Corpus Christi plays told of "the tale of sin and redemption encoded in the eucharist"[28], and were performed in the vernacular around the time of the feast of Corpus Christi, between 21 May to 24 June. Although some towns or villages developed full biblical cycles, others had only one play, for

---

[26] Nicholas Watson, "The Gawain-Poet as a Vernacular Theologian", in A Companion to the Gawain-Poet (1997), p. 294. In his article, Watson refers to a period of late-medieval English religiosity, particularly from about 1350 on; although the Roman had been composed a century before this, it is part of the larger context to which Watson refers.

[27] Dictionary of the Middle Ages (1983), Vol 3, p. 608.

[28] Miri Rubin, Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture (1991), p. 272.

example, the 'Play of the Children of Israel'; while this was largely determined by factors such as community structure or availability of funds, the purpose of the plays was to offer a tale of possible redemption, for example of marriage, through the celebration of the humanity of Christ (Rubin 273).

In William Langland's Piers Plowman, completed between 1370-1386, there is evidence of a debate similar to the one in the Roman. At the beginning of Passus IX, a connection is made between the soul, the physical body, and reason. Will is told of a castle called Caro[29], which means 'soul in body', or man's physical nature; the castle has been made by Kind, who is God, out of the four elements, earth, air, wind and water. Kind has enclosed his loved one Anima, who is the soul as life-principle, inside the castle. Anima resides mainly in the heart and is connected with the emotions; the castle is guarded by Inwit, who resides in the head and is associated with the rational aspect. Inwit's five sons are the five senses, or the right use of the senses; this reflects both the moral and physical concern with the body: the implication of this is that Inwit's offspring, the five senses, come from rationality and look after the soul. In Passus XI, Kind takes the Dreamer to a mountain called Middle Earth to teach him how to love his creator by seeing everything in nature that God has created. In Passus XVIII, reconciliation of the body and soul is announced when the angels sing after the resurrection: "*Culpat caro, purgat caro, regnat Deus Dei caro*"[30]; this hymn is "sung at

---

[29] Piers Plowman, Passus IX, lines 1-59

[30] Piers Plowman, Passus XVIII, l. 409 Note, p 323, l. 409: "Flesh sins, flesh frees from sin, / As God now reigns, God flesh within (*Aeterne rex altissime*, stanza 4, Roman Breviary, Matins Ascension Hymn)."

the vigil and matins of Ascension Day, emphasizing once again Langland's profound faith in the mystery of the Incarnation"[31].

Similarly, in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Gawain can be seen as a vernacular theologian whose task is to provide instruction on "religious teaching in the vernacular to an audience of lay (and perhaps primarily male) aristocratics [sic]" (Watson 294) who saw themselves embodied in the figure of Gawain. Nicholas Watson suggests that Pearl, Cleannesse, Patience and Sir Gawain "represent one of the most interesting of all the fourteenth-century attempts to direct religious instruction at the laity in general and the aristocracy in particular" (Watson 294). Much of the writing of this period displays a new respect for the laity and the images commonly found are those of communality. In Sir Gawain, the Green Knight acts as a medieval Christ figure, set against the moral code of Christian chivalry, who comes to correct an imbalance between humanity and nature. This balance is shown by "[t]he Green Knight, [who], as archetypal Green Man, is asserting that humans are both fleshly and intellectual beings, within and without whom both elements must be stewarded, or balance is destroyed"[32].

---

[31] Piers Plowman (1992, Modern English translation), p. 341 It has been noted that Langland "refuses to think of the Incarnation in terms which isolate the Passion from creation, from the prophetic ministry, from the resurrection and from salvation history" because Will's quest with Abraham and Moses,in faith and hope, is the only answer to his questions about salvation, charity, and the good life (see Piers Plowman, Passus XVI 167-17 356). From Aers and Staley, The Powers of the Holy, p 69

[32] Tara Ford, "The Green Knight and Bazarov: Green Men in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Fathers and Sons*", pp. 10-11 McMaster University, Department of English, January 1997

* * * * * * * * * *

Jean de Meun's early vernacular approach with its secular focus was an understandable philosophical and theological preoccupation, therefore, but with many puzzling dimensions. Much of the Roman centers upon nature and divine love as a way to make the cupidinous desire of the Lover acceptable. Genius's contrast of the garden of *Deduit* and the Park of the Lamb evokes earthly and heavenly parallels that reveal God's love and present procreation as an example of His grace. The Lover is in turn the battleground for the conflicting forces of erotic and divine love in relation to human will, yet in the end he is promised divine salvation. Genius's message to procreate is unnecessary since chastity was deemed appropriate in the medieval period for those who prayed, while having sexual relations within marriage or even a committed relationship was also accepted[33].

I propose that although the human body and soul are reconciled in Le Roman de la Rose, this is presented satirically and ironically, not as a serious philosophical argument. Perhaps Jean de Meun is suggesting that because of the greatness of God, the question of the reconciliation of the human body and soul cannot really be understood by humankind. Or he may be suggesting the opposite – that God's love is so infinite and so obvious that humankind belabours this question far too much – that we need to get rid of

---

[33] "Patristic writers assumed, as Roman law did, that consent made marriage." James A. Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe (1987), p 92 See Conclusion, pp 80-81, for a discussion of what constituted legal marriage in the Middle Ages

the guilty feelings we have about sex and be content with the life God has given us. In attempting to find an answer to this question, I will examine the Roman from the following perspectives: in my second chapter, I will consider the theme of love in the poem; in my third chapter I will look at the relationship of Nature and Genius; and, finally, in my fourth chapter I will consider Genius's comparison of the garden of *Deduit* and the Park of the Lamb, as well as the hierarchy of worlds presented in the poem. I will conclude by relating all of this to the reconciliation of the human body and soul through nature and divine love as presented in the poem.

CHAPTER TWO

The Theme of Love

While the poem is ostensibly a dream-allegory, love and sex simultaneously gloss the text of Le Roman de la Rose in which the "whole art of love is contained" (31)[1]. A lover's desire and subsequent success in having sex with his 'rose' provides the framework for, amongst other things, the philosophical and religious debate about the reconciliation of the human body and soul via Nature. The Lover hopes that "she for whom I have undertaken it [the Romance of the Rose] may receive it with grace. It is she who is so precious and so worthy to be loved that she should be called Rose" (31)[2].

While it is clear that the Lover's love is of the cupidinous sort, 'love' as a concept in the Roman has multiple meanings and implications, including ironic ones. A 'solution' of natural love is put forth in the poem; however, this solution would be unnecessary and superfluous within the bonds of marriage or a committed relationship.[3]

---

[1] Langlois, line 38: "Ou l'Art d'Amors est toute enclose".

[2] Langlois, lines 42-44: "C'est cele qui tant a de pris
E tant est dine d'estre amee Qu'el doit estre Rose clamee"

[3] Marriage is mentioned in the poem, but negatively, in Friend's discourse on the decline since the Golden Age and the tirade of the Jealous Husband (154-78). Friend suggests that in the Golden Age before men tried to own women, land, and possessions, there was an equal partnership between men and women; however, since the decline following the Golden Age, men have attempted to own women and this has resulted in women committing adultery and men abusing their wives. Much of Friend's speech is misogynistic, for example: "It is through you, lady slut, and through your wild ways, that I am given over to shame, you riotous, filthy, vile, stinking bitch" (165).
Langlois, lines 9123-25·
"C'est par vous, dame pautoniere, E par vostre fole maniere,

Critics generally agree that the concept of *amor* in the poem comes from Boethius, Aelred of Riveaulx[4] and Augustine: a natural love which can move upward to charity or downward to cupidity; this reflects the idea of love as a central doctrine of Christianity found in much medieval poetry[5]. However, "the idea that the love of God is natural and that it begins in just such a natural love is of great antiquity and was given a special impetus in the twelfth century by Saint Bernard and his Cistercian followers" (Dahlberg 13). Certainly, the 'romance' of the poem owes much to the tradition of courtly love in twelfth century romances as well as to didactic works that exemplified the code of behavior for the courtly lover, like Andreas Capellanus's The Art of Courtly Love (De arte honeste amandi). Jean also seems to have been aware of Ovid's Art of Love and misogynistic texts that date back to antiquity, including works by Juvenal and Saint Jerome[6].

The various kinds of love are introduced to the Lover by Reason, who, in a mounting series of oppositions, says "love is a sin touched by pardon but a pardon stained by sin" (95)[7]. Reason talks about Alain de Lille's type of love in The Complaint of

---

Ribaude, orde, vil, pute lisse".

[4] "Aelred's conception of friendship and natural love parallels that offered by Jean through the character Reason" (Dahlberg 2).

[5] Alain de Lille in Distinctiones dictionum theologicalium, defines *amor* "as cupidity, but also as charity, as the Holy Spirit, as Christ, and, most importantly, as 'natural affection'" (Dahlberg 12-13)

[6] Ovid's Art of Love is basically a seduction manual. Saint Jerome wrote Adversus Jovinianum (Against Jovinian), based on Theophrastus' lost satire on marriage; Saint Jerome Christianized this to show the higher virtue of virginity over marriage The Latin satirist Juvenal in his sixth satire suggests reasons why a man should not marry, many of which can be found in Friend's speech, especially in the Jealous Husband's tirade.

[7] Langlois, lines 4315-16:

Nature as well as that of Andreas Capellanus in The Art of Courtly Love, that is, of natural versus cupidinous love. Reason contrasts cupidity with "the legitimate wish to continue one's divine self through propagation by taking the delight that Nature has implanted in order to ensure the continuation of the species"[8]; an irony immediately apparent here is that this 'legitimate wish' to procreate is generally preceded by passion, perhaps the 'delight' mentioned here. *Cupiditas*, or sexual love, is the type of love felt by the Lover and all of those in the garden of *Deduit*, regardless of the fact that the God of Love calls love in the garden that of "pure lover[s]" (59)[9]. Reason then explains other types of love to the Lover, and, not surprisingly, is unsuccessful in her attempt to convince the Lover to abandon passionate love; "some see her [Reason] as the Lover's rational will and the Lover as a sinner who will not heed, and others argues that she is the allegorical representation of a kind of rationality which does not know how to 'reason' with a lover" (Arden 55). Reason is incapable of understanding nature because her theological limitations prevent her from understanding man's nature since the Fall:

> What *Raison* cannot understand, although it is ironically implicit in her speech, is a depravity such as to make man incapable of responding to her love. In her ignorance she sees no contradiction between the fact of a powerful *Amors* for which the only remedy is flight, on the one hand, and the necessity of procreation in obedience to Nature on the other.[10]

"Entechiez de pardon pechiez, De pechié pardons entechiez".

[8] Dahlberg 13; Augustinian parallel: De genesi ad litteram, XI. 32. 42: "Once [Adam and Eve] had given up the condition [in which they had existed before the Fall], their bodies took on a diseased, death-bringing quality, which exists naturally in the flesh of beasts; and in order that births might succeed deaths, their bodies also took on that same impulse that brings about in beasts the appetite for copulation" (Dahlberg 375, n 4403-21).

[9] Langlois, line 2042: "fins amanz"

[10] Winthrop Wetherbee, "The Literal & the Allegorical: Jean de Meun and the 'de Planctu Naturae' in

Reason tells the Lover that the only legitimate aim of love is procreation and the maintenance of the species, so that he must abandon passion; she adds the merits of *amicitia*[11] but neglects to mention that if everyone engaged only in this type of relationship the species would die out; Genius later tells us this: "It seems certain that these disloyal creatures work great evil, because if all men together wished to avoid their tools for sixty years, *men would never engender*" (323)[12]. Reason then discourses on justice and charity, using the vagaries of fortune as an argument against passionate love. In a supremely unreasonable move, once Reason realizes that she cannot convince the Lover with reason, she offers herself to him flirtatiously as an *amie*. The Lover leaves, having ignored Reason's advice, and states at the end that he "didn't remember Reason, who gave me a lot of trouble for nothing" (354)[13] since he does not suffer in any way by ignoring her; however, the possibility of eternal damnation for the sin of lechery is not mentioned as a consideration in the poem.

Reason's function in the poem is to be heard but ignored by the Lover, who must be seen coming face to face with Reason and openly rejecting her advice:

Medieval Studies, Vol. 33 (1971), p 271.

[11] Dahlberg notes that "Aelred's conception of friendship and natural love parallels that offered by Jean through the character Reason (4686 ff., 5763 ff.)" (Dahlberg 2). Jean de Meun apparently translated Aelred of Rievaulx's On Spiritual Friendship, although the manuscript did not survive.

[12] Note this parallel in Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles, III, 136: "If it is good that one be continent, it is better that many, best that all be so But from this it follows that the human race may dwindle away. Therefore it is not good that a man be entirely continent" (Dahlberg 417 n. 19583-628).
Langlois, lines 19583-86:
"Mout euvrent mal, e bien le semble, Car, se trestuit li ome ensemble
Seissante anz foir les voulaient, Jamais ome n'engendreraient".

[13] Langlois, lines 21760-62:

> *Amor*'s true contrary, insofar as it is expressed in the narrative, is Reason, that quality which apparently does not live in the garden and which opposes all of the Lover's efforts – opposition not in the sense of refusal but rather of a supernal kind that calls into question *the very presence of the Lover in the garden.*[14]

The Lover's presence is called into question by Reason's attempt to make him question his motives; reason is necessary to combat passion but the Lover has chosen not to be 'reasonable'. Although some critics have claimed that Reason is the voice of authority in the poem[15], she can only be seen as subservient to Nature and as having 'lost' where Nature has 'won': Part II of the Roman is called "The Overthrow of Reason". In terms of plot, when the Lover and the barons assembled in the name of cupidinous love 'win' over Reason by winning the battle, this is the climax of the interior action of the poem, at least in a literary if not a philosophical sense. While the final act of consummation is the climax of the entire poem, it can also been seen as anti-climactic, once the battle has been won.

The Roman has been seen as following the pattern of the Fall: "suggestion,

---

"Mais de Raison ne me souvint, Qui tant en mei gasta de peine."

[14] David F. Hult, Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First Roman de la Rose (1986), p. 236.

[15] In Reason and the Lover (1984), John V. Fleming argues, unsuccessfully, for the centrality of the figure Reason in Le Roman de la Rose. Fleming emphasizes that "Reason's teachings accord with theological truth" (23) and that it is the Lover's irrationality with regard to sex that is the problem; the way to deal with this, Fleming suggests, is Reason's solution of 'rational sexuality', which can be attained "by being reasonable, or, in the dramatic terms of the *Roman de la Rose*, by believing, following, and loving, Reason" (24); however, this is an impossible task for a lover. As well, Fleming says that "Reason belongs to a realm above that of Nature, that is, a supernatural realm. Reason in no wise depends, as the Ithacans claim, upon the authority of Nature. On the contrary, Nature herself explicitly states her powerlessness over Reason's realm" (29). On the contrary, I would suggest, Reason is powerless in the face of nature, that is, human nature, as well as that of animals, plants and weather Fleming suggests that Reason is Divine Sapience, and therefore the voice of authority in the poem; although she is obviously very important, Reason is not the ultimate authority in the poem.

delightful thought, and consent or passion"[16], the three steps associated with Satan, Eve and Adam respectively. However, the world presented in the dream occurs in a post-lapsarian world; the Lover has the ability to reason and is aware of his surroundings and sexuality in the way that Adam and Eve were after they gained the knowledge of good and evil. He admits that he is aware of being trapped when looking in the well of Narcissus:

> It is the perilous mirror in which proud Narcissus gazed ... Whoever admires himself in this mirror can have no protection, no physician, since anything that he sees with his eyes puts him on the road of love .. Out of this mirror a new madness comes upon men (52)[17].

Even on an allegorical level, then, the world of the dream in the Roman is not 'Eden before the Fall' but 'Eden after the Fall', and, indeed, after the Golden Age[18].

Although the Roman cannot be interpreted simply as an erotic dream, the Lover's sexual pursuit of his 'rose' is what the poem is about on the surface; yet the obvious

---

[16] D.W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (1962), p. 84 Robertson's patristic theory suggests that the Roman is an allegory of the Fall and the process inherent in any act of sinning, especially lechery. Critics of this theory call into question the idea that "there was a single, common medieval religious mentality" (Arden 99). The fact that the thirteenth century saw "such diverse thinkers as Saint Bonaventure and Siger de Brabant" (Arden 99) questions the notion of what a 'Christian' work is For example, although the character Reason represents some Christian thinking of the time, she does not and perhaps cannot represent all of it; for example, she fails to mention the option of marriage to the Lover.

[17] Langlois:
"C'est li miroers perilleus, Ou Narcisus li orguilleus (lines 1571-72).
... Qui en cel miroer se mire Ne puet avoir garant ne mire
Que tel chose a ses iauz ne voie Qui d'amer l'a tost mis en voie (lines 1575-78).
.. Ci sort as genz novele rage, Ici se changent li corage". (lines 1583-84).

[18] The world presented in the dream is not the same as the garden of Eden before the Fall because the innocence and purity of Eden is not evident in *Deduit*; rather, it has been replaced with illusion and deceit. As well, there is no reason to assume that a medieval work about cupidinous love must necessarily be an allegory of the Fall The Roman may be an allegory of carnality but it does not necessarily follow that the poem allegorizes the Fall. Alternately, the poem may be seen as an allegory of spiritual education or of the essential nature of man and his place in God's world

sexual symbolism of the rose "has its place as one of the kinds of love" (Dahlberg 4) in a Macrobian concept of dream-allegory. Blatant metaphors of the rose as female genitalia serve to heighten the intensity of the erotic aspects of the dream: "it glowed with a colour as red and as pure as the best that Nature can produce ... the sweet perfume that rose from it [the bud] filled the entire area" (53)[19]. In illustrated manuscripts, the rose, "the major symbol of the poem, is a recurring iconographic device that subsumes the two points of view ... those of the Lover in the poem and of the poet or reader outside"[20]. The imagery associated with the consummation at the end of the poem is quite humorous and serves to erode the seriousness of the actions taking place; for example, when the Lover insists that Rose is a virgin: "no one had ever passed there; I was absolutely the first. The place was still not common enough to collect tolls" (352)[21]. While the description lends itself to humour, there is recognition at the same time that the rose is truly beautiful and special: the Lover, after shaking the rosebush, declares that he "did not know how otherwise to possess this *gift*, for which my desire was so strong" (353)[22].

---

[19] Langlois.
"Car une color l'enlumine Qui est si vermeille e si fine
Con Nature la pot plus faire (lines 1659-61)
. . La soautume qui en ist Toute la place replenist" (lines 1669-70).

[20] Dahlberg 23. Figure 64 (Dahlberg) shows the rose's association with carnality: the picture is of the Lover picking the rose and of two lovers in bed: it shows "both the literal and symbolic action of plucking the rose", in Figure 57 "the lady of the sanctuary wears a rose-chaplet, and the Lover's 'sack' bears rosette decorations." In Fleming's The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography (1969), Figure 42 shows the Lover kissing the rose and putting his staff inside her 'entrance'!

[21] Langlois, lines 21656-59·
"Nus d'i avait onques passé;
Car j'i passai touz li prumiers; N'encor n'iere pas coustumiers
Li leus de receveir paages"

[22] Langlois, lines 21717-18

While the rose is in one sense a gift from God, the religious metaphor of the sanctuary being violated by the pilgrim's staff adds to the irony. The suggestion of pregnancy is subtle but significant:

> Finally, I scattered a little seed on the bud when I shook it, when I touched it within in order to pore over the petals ... As a result, I so mixed the seeds that they could hardly be separated; and thus I made the whole tender rosebush widen and lengthen (353)[23].

The ending of the poem yields no surprises; it is exactly what the Dreamer promised at the beginning about the art of love: "Before I stirred from that place where I should wish to remain forever, I plucked, with great delight, the flower from the leaves of the rosebush, and thus I have my red rose. Straightway it was day, and I awoke" (354)[24]. While the rose imagery in the last passage "maintains and heightens the bizarre sense of mingled excitement and detachment that comes to a humorously anticlimactic close with the last line"[25], the reader is aware that the poem has been about something quite

---

"Qu'autrement aveir ne savaie Ce don si grant desir avaie".

[23] Langlois:
"A la parfin, tant vous en di, Un po de graine I espandi
Quant j'oi le bouton eslochié, Ce fu quant dedenz l'oi tochié
Pour les fueilletes reverchier ... (lines 21719-23)
Si fis lors si meller les graines Qu'eus se desmellassent a peines,
Si que tout le boutonet tendre En fis eslargir e estendre" (lines 21727-30).

[24] Langlois, lines 21775-80:
"Ainz que d'ileuc me remuasse, Ou, mon vueil, encor demourasse,
Par grant jolieté coilli La fleur dou bel rosier foilli.
Ainsinc oi la rose vermeille. Atant fu jourz, e je m'esveille".

[25] Dahlberg 420-421, n 20704-21780

grandiose, that is, the greater philosophical questions under discussion, while at the same time knowing that he or she has been 'fooled': the result is more equivocation.

CHAPTER THREE

The Relationship of Nature and Genius

Personification allegory involves a character who represents an abstract idea being used to present a moral[1]; however, since abstractions are by nature difficult to limit, pinpointing the character of a particular allegorical figure is not without its own complications. In the case of Nature and Genius, so many meanings have been attached to these figures as to make any attempt at clarification impossible; therefore I will examine them according to their function in the poem, their allegorical relationship to each other, and, most importantly, their representation of nature and divine love. Nature, whose charge is to create new beings, identifies herself as God's "chambermaid ... constable and vicar" (282)[2]. Genius's identity is more elusive and he must be viewed at least in part as an ironic character; he is a "priest" (275)[3] who has often been called the spirit of regeneration. Unlike Reason, who is unable to reason with the Lover, Nature and Genius provide the Lover with justification for his actions: "the development of the poem places these figures [Nature and Genius] at the service of the Lover's self-seeking interpretation of the function of natural love" (Dahlberg 13).

Much of the debate about the figure Nature centers upon whether she acts as God

---

[1] For definition of 'allegory', see Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (1974), pp. 12-15.

[2] Langlois: "chamberiere (line 16772) ... conestable e ... vicaire (line 16782)"

[3] Langlois, line 16272: "prestre".

wishes her to or according to her own rules, and even possibly against God's purpose. I would argue that Nature in Le Roman de la Rose represents the rational order, not the blind procreative urge as several critics have argued. Nature's apparent irrationality has been used as an excuse to justify certain types of behavior: for example, Andreas Capellanus argued, in The Art of Courtly Love, that sins committed under the compulsion of Nature could be cleansed through easy atonement[4]. As well, Nature has sometimes been accused of acting against God's purpose:

> Some popular writers of the period described sex as a manifestation of the forces of nature, which they personified as a subordinate female deity who operated in her own way according to rules that did not necessarily conform to those of the Creator – this view surfaces plainly in the *Roman de la Rose*, for example, especially in the continuation of the poem by Jean de Meung (d. ca 1405).[5]

This argument suggests, as well, that Nature, being associated as she is with the classical world, cannot be part of a Christian framework. Yet, as I pointed out in Chapter One (page 13), Nature was later Christianized and served the purpose of reconciling man's fallen nature. Humankind, however, does not follow Nature's directive; therefore, Venus, as the personification of sexual delight, "represents an element which, since the Fall, comes from Nature"[6]: *cupidity is not Nature's fault but it does originate in fallen man's*

---

[4] Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, p. 20 (Book 1, eighth dialogue): "I believe, however, that God cannot be seriously offended by love, for what is done under the compulsion of *nature* can be made clean by an easy expiation. Besides, it does not seem at all proper to class as a sin the thing from which the highest good in this life takes its origin and without which no man in the world could be considered worthy of praise."

[5] James A. Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe (1987), p. 243

[6] D W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (1962), p. 199

nature. Several critics have gone too far in suggesting that Nature acts outside God's instructions to her: "neither reason, morality, nor religious orthodoxy and ceremony concern her, provided her law is observed. Perhaps Jean thought that such a limitation on her character made her a more striking, concentrated allegorical figure" (Economou 110-11); yet, this same critic acknowledges that Nature "is herself a reflection of the mirror of God" (Economou 114). I would suggest that irrationality, if it exists in this context at all, is humankind's, not Nature's, and that Nature's concerns are precisely to fulfill her mandate to God.

Interesting for my purposes is the fact that one of Nature's roles in medieval literature is as procreative principle and, I would stress, reconciler of the human body and soul; she is often associated with Venus, who acts as her lieutenant; this is evident both in the Roman and in Alain de Lille's The Complaint of Nature: "This function of Nature associates her with physical desires and with feelings, thereby opposing her to Reason" (Arden 58). In the Roman, Nature's directive is accepted by the Lover precisely because she understands the passionate feelings of humans, although she makes it clear that she does not like them! Nature, Venus and the God of Love are all allied with the procreative urge and therefore with the passion that precedes it; Nature even refers to Venus as "my friend, the lady Venus" (319)[7], while Reason has no capacity to understand the feelings of a Lover.

Moreover, Nature is essential to humankind in the Roman because her work

---

7 Langlois, line 19343 ". dame Venus m'amie"

"continuously re-creates His (God's) original act of goodness that was the creation of the world" (Arden 59): procreation of the species is God's gift to humankind. Yet in Nature's confession she says that she regrets having created man because unlike all the other creatures she has created,

> man alone, for whom I had made all the benefits that I knew how; man alone, whom I create and ordain to carry his face on high toward the heaven; man alone, whom I shape and cause to be born in the very form of his master; only man, for whom I struggle and labor, acts worse toward me than any wolf. He is the end of all my labor, and except for what I give him, he has nothing that is worth a pomander as far as his body is concerned, either in the whole body or in the limbs, nor in fact as far as his soul is concerned, except for one thing only. From me, his lady, he has received three powers, of body or of soul, for I can indeed say without lying that I make him exist, live and feel. (314-15)[8].

Man, who has been so favored by Nature that he understands, "with the angels" (315)[9], and has been given three powers, two associated with the body, to exist and to live, and one, 'to feel', associated with both reason and passion. Fallible humankind has been given the chance to redeem themselves over and over yet does not take the opportunity offered: "He is a new little world, and he acts worse toward me than any wolf" (315)[10].

---

[8] Langlois, lines 19021-38:
"Mais seus on, cui je fait avaie Trestouz les biens que je savaie;
Seus on, cui je faz e devis Haut vers le ciel porter le vis;
Seus on, que je fourme e faz naistre En la propre fourme son maistre;
Seus on, pour cui peine e labeur, C'est la fins de tout mon labeur,
N'il n'a pas, se je ne li done, Quant a la corporel persone,
Ne de par cors ne de par membre, Qui li vaille une pome d'ambre,
Ne quant a l'ame vraiement, Fors une chose seulement:
Il tient de mei, qui sui sa dame, Treis forces, que de cors que d'ame,
Car bien puis dire senz mentir: Jou faz estre, vivre e sentir".

[9] Langlois, line 19050: "avec les anges".

[10] Langlois, lines 19053-54:
"C'est uns petiz mondes nouveaus. Cist me fait pis que nus louveaus".

Nature states that she has worked on behalf of man without any results: "I have labored for man; it is for this wretch that I take this trouble" (317)[11].

Although Nature's confession has been seen as a parody of religion, "a spectacle of Nature making a 'confession' which is not a confession of a 'sin' which is not a sin to a 'confessor' who is not a confessor"[12], a 'confession' in this context can mean a revelation of character rather than a confession in the religious sense; in fact, the worst 'sin' that Nature admits to is this: "I repent very much of having made man" (317)[13]. Nature begins her confession by stating that her role is that of God's chambermaid, constable and vicar; she forges "individual creatures to continue the species. For individuals make the species live so that Death cannot catch up to them, no matter how much she runs after them" (270)[14]. Nature tells Genius that God created the world and put her in charge of the four elements. Humans, who have reason, free will, and emotions, are the only creatures who do not obey Nature's laws, especially the law of procreation.

The cosmology administered by Nature reveals the place of human love in God's

---

[11] Langlois, lines 19193-94:
"Ai je pour ome labouré; Pour le chaitif cet labour ai"

[12] John V. Fleming, The *Roman de la Rose*: A Study in Allegory and Iconography (1969), p. 207.

[13] Langlois, line 19210:
"Mout me repent don ome fis".

[14] Langlois, lines 15896-901
"Ou toute s'entente metait
En forgier singulieres pieces, Pour continuer les espieces;
Car les pieces tant les font vivre Que Mort ne les peut aconsivre,
Ja tant ne savra courre après".

scheme of things[15]. Nature speaks about the planets and how the celestial bodies can do nothing contrary to Reason; this is a mixture of science and belief as we now know it. For example, she uses refraction as a way of explaining why the moon is dark in some places and light in others, creating day and night. She talks about the planets and heaven, noting that the sun is central to the planetary scheme, saying that heaven turns and takes 36,000 years to come back to the point where God created it. Nature speaks of the superiority and perfection of Nature to Art because Art "may work as long as she lives and never catch up with Nature" (272)[16].

What follows her confession is a discussion of the reconciliation of necessity and free will[17]. Nature notes that "predestination and free will accord very well together" (287)[18]. While "people do good or evil freely through their will alone" (289)[19], the omnipotence of divine knowledge has nothing to do with necessity; that is, God knows what people's actions will result in but does not impose any constraints on humans. She notes that Reason helps control emotions so that humankind acts appropriately and according to Nature's desires: "there is nothing outside of themselves that may make their will choose in such a way that they cannot take or leave it, if they wished to use

---

[15]Much of this comes from Alain's The Complaint of Nature.

[16] Much of the art-nature relationship in the Roman is "clearly consistent with a hierarchical concept of the universe" (Dahlberg 407 n. 16016-148).
Langlois, lines 16071-72: "Euvre tant come ele vivra, Ja Nature n'aconsivra".

[17]Much of this comes from Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy

[18] Langlois, line 17112:
"... eus [predestinacion e la devine prescience] s'entreseufrent bien ensemble".

[19] Langlois, lines 17261-62.

their reason" (289)[20]. From this it is evident that Reason is subordinate to Nature and is one of her tools or forces: *because we have reason we are responsible for our own follies.* Therefore, because man has reason he is responsible for his sexual misadventures but if it is unavoidable in his nature then he can claim that it is not his fault: "For the soul moves and carries the body; if it did not exist, the body would be a dead thing" (295)[21]. Therefore, our real essence is our souls and our bodies are merely containers for our souls. What distinguishes man from animals is his ability to reason:

> But it is true that the animals' ignorance comes from their nature. However, if a *reasonable* creature, whether mortal man or divine angel, all of whom should give praise to God, is foolish and does not know himself, this defect comes to him from his vice, which troubles and fuddles his sense, for *such a creature can indeed follow reason and use free will*; there is nothing that can excuse him from doing so (297-98)[22].

Since it is reason that distinguishes man from animals, reason is in a sense the *cause* of human sinfulness because humans have the choice to act reasonably, a notion found in Boethius's Consolation as well:

> You could say that someone who robs with violence and burns with greed

---

"Ainz font bien ou mal franchement Par leur vouleir tant seulement".

[20] Langlois, lines 17263-66:
"N'il n'est riens fors eus,. . Qui tel vouleir leur face eslire
Que prendre ou laissier nou poissent, Se de raison user vousissent".

[21] Langlois, lines 17709-10
"Car ele meut le cors e porte; S'el ne fust, il fust chose morte".

[22] Langlois, lines 17860-17870
"Mais veirs est que cete ignorance
Leur vient de leur propre nature; Mais raisonable creature,
Seit morteus on, seit devins anges, Qui tuit deivent a Deu loanges,
S'el se mesquenoist come nice, Cist defauz li vient de son vice,
Qui le sen li trouble e enivre, Car el pot bien raison ensivre
E pot de franc vouloir user, N'est riens qui l'en puisse escuser."

> is like a wolf. A wild and restless man who is forever exercising his tongue in lawsuits could be compared to a dog yapping ... The timid coward who is terrified when there is nothing to fear is thought to be like the hind ... And a man wallowing in foul and impure lusts is occupied by the filthy pleasures of a sow. So what happens when a man abandons goodness and ceases to be human, being unable to rise to a divine condition, he sinks to the level of being an animal.[23]

It is significant that Nature then discourses on the properties of mirrors, noting that they are ingenuine, deceitful and illusory, like the fountain in *Deduit*,[24] and like dreams and visions, because the entire Roman is a dream and an illusion. The problem with optics or mirrors is that by using them one is trying to create illusions or fool Nature; this of course would be considered unnatural and anything unnatural would be against God's purpose. Nature moves from speaking about man's artificial creations, such as mirrors, to illusions within human nature: she suggests the connection of the human body and spirit in people who dream, hallucinate, and sleepwalk; for example, she notes that if people are angry they dream of quarrels and say that what they have seen has

---

[23] Boethius, The Consolation, Book IV, Section III, p. 125. The following Middle English translation is by John Walton, Canon of Oseney, Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae (1927), p. 234-35:

Whose lustes brennen all in coueitise
And reuen men theire good be violence, I-lyk a wolf thou myght hem wel devise.
He that is so fiers and spareth none offence, Ne what he seith, that hath no conscience
To make stryues and discencioun, He is an hound as be comparisoun. (654)

He that is ferd and fleeth withouten need, An hart thou myght hym calle, it is no drede; (655)

And he that ledeth his lyf in lecherye, A swyn thou myght hym calle skilfullye. (656)

It semeth than that he wiche hath forlete The lyf of vertu and [of] honeste,
To ben a man in that he [ha]th forfete,
And skilfully forlorn that dignite; And there he myghte a god in manere be,
Or like to god in lyuynge atte laste, Now is he chaunged to a rude beste. (657)

[24] For a detailed analysis of the significance of the illusory powers of the fountain, see Chapter Four

come "through their souls" (306)[25]. Nature emphasizes the soul's superiority to the body: "the soul that is severed from the body is clearer, wiser, and cleverer than when it is joined to the body. With the body, it follows the body's disposition, which clouds the soul's aim" (306)[26]. That the human body and soul are separate is evident: "the human body is a dead thing as soon as it does not carry its soul" (306)[27]. The body is suggested to be messy and impure but unfortunately necessary.

The fact that the entire poem is a dream may be partly ironic because the Roman is both real and illusory at the same time; the reader knows that he or she is being deceived yet the vivid, encyclopedic descriptions make it seem very real. The author admits as much in the opening line of the poem: "Many men say that there is nothing in dreams but fables and lies, but one may have dreams which are not deceitful, whose import becomes quite clear afterward" (31)[28]. These words are echoed later when Genius says that the difference between the Garden and the Park are as a fable to truth. This implies that the importance of the dream, The Romance of the Rose itself, will become clear afterwards; however, we are never told the 'truth' about the dream. The notion of

---

[25] Langlois, line 1843: "Ainz sont leur ames qui labeurent".

[26] Langlois, lines 18478-82:
"Ame dessevree de cors
Plus est aperte e sage e cointe Que quant ele est au cors conjointe,
Don el suit la complexion, Qui li trouble s'entencion".

[27] Langlois, lines 18451-52
"Car cors humains est chose morte Si tost con s'ame en sei ne porte"

[28] Langlois, lines 1-5·
"Maintes genz dient que en songes N'a se fables non e menconges;
Mais l'en puet teus songes songier Qui ne sont mie mencongier,
Ainz sont après bien aparant"

spring as a time of rejuvenation, birth, rebirth, and when a young man's thoughts turn to love, helps to justify the Lover's dream: "I dreamed that I was filled with joy in May, the amorous month, when everything rejoices, when no one sees bush or hedge that does not wish to adorn itself with new leaves" (31)[29].

Nature's discourse on Fortune has class implications; she says that everyone has free will and one's actions are what determines true nobility: "The body of a prince is worth not one apple beyond that of a plowman, a clerk, or a squire, for *I make them all alike*, as it appears at their birth" (308)[30]. This goes against the medieval hierarchy of the Great Chain of Being and the belief in, for example, the divine right of kings, which suggested that a king's birthright was predetermined by God; Nature, on the other hand, claims the following: "I have put it [natural freedom] into everyone equally, along with the *reason* that God gives them and that is so wise and good that it makes them like God and the angels, if it were not that death made them different" (312)[31]. Nature admits that she "never made anything eternal; whatever I create is corruptible" (315)[32]. Since her

---

[29] Langlois, lines 47-52.
"Qu'en mai estoie, ce sonjoie, Ou tens amoreus, plein de joie,
Ou tens ou toute rien s'esgaie, Que l'en ne voit boisson ne haie
Qui en mai parer ne se vueille E covrir de novele fueille"

[30] Langlois, lines 18592-96:
"... leur [li prince] cors ne vaut une pome
Outre le cors d'un charruier, Ou d'un clerc, ou d'en escuier;
Car jes faz touz semblables estre, Si come il apert a leur naistre"

[31] Langlois, lines 18873-79:
"Qui a non naturel franchise, Que j'ai seur touz egaument mise,
Avec raison que Deus leur done, Qui les fait, tant est sage e bone,
Semblables a Deu e aus anges, Se mort nes en feist estranges,
Qui par sa mortel difference".

[32] Langlois, lines 19061-62

role is limited to the corporeal, she cannot be responsible for the Incarnation or a miracle such as the Virgin Birth, although she would have created Mary's body: "It would never be through me that anything might ever be born of a virgin" (316)[33].

Nature sees one of her duties as trying to resolve humankind's two natures: the tainted body of man, which comes from Nature, with his soul, or the reason and understanding which he has been given by God. After noting that man "is such a stupid wretch that he is slave to all the vices, and harbors them all within himself" (317)[34], Nature says that man will suffer as a result of his sins "until I am well revenged on him" (318)[35]. After admitting to having bad thoughts about man and wishing she had never created him, Nature devises a way to give humans one more chance; she tells Genius to go the God of Love:

> Tell him that I send you there to excommunicate all *those who want to work against us*, and that I send you to absolve the valiant ones who work with *good heart* to follow strictly the rules that are written in my book, those stalwarts who strive mightily to multiply their lines, and who think about loving well (319)[36].

"Onques ne fis rien pardurable, Quanque je faz est corrompable".

[33] Langlois, lines 19161-62:
"... par mei ne peut ce pas estre Que riens puisse de vierge naistre".

[34] Langlois, lines 19235-37.
"... tant est chaitis e nices Qu'il est sers a trestouz les vices,
E trestouz en sei les herberge".

[35] Langlois, line 19314:
"Tant que j'en serai bien venchiee".

[36] Langlois, lines 19378-87:
"Dites li que la vous envei
Pour touz ceus escomenier Qui nous veulent contrarier;
E pour assoudre les vaillanz Qui de bon cueur sont travaillanz
Aus regles dreitement ensivre Qui sont escrites en mon livre,
E forment a ce s'estudient Que leur lignages monteplient,

Nature, offering procreation as the only hope for man to redeem himself, asks Genius to give a full pardon and a *tabula rasa* to those who are at least trying to love well. Then, "the valiant priest Genius absolved her and gave her a penance that was suitable and good, one that accorded with the magnitude of the fault that he thought she had committed" (320)[37]. Nature's 'penance' is "to remain within her forge and labor as she was accustomed to do when she had no sorrow; ... to perform her service in this way until the King who can arrange everything and make and destroy everything might give other counsel" (320)[38].

Genius then leaves to carry out Nature's wishes, saying that he will "go off very quickly to bring help to pure lovers" (320)[39]; this is an echo of the words of the God of Love when he told the Lover that he would give him an unguent to heal his wounds if he "fulfill[s], night and day, the commandments that I [the God of Love] prescribe for pure lovers" (59)[40]. Both Genius and the God of Love speaking about 'pure love' is ironic for

---

E qui pensent de bien amer".

[37] Langlois, lines 19414-18:
"Li vaillanz prestres Genius
Tantost l'assout e si li done Penitence avenant e bone,
Selonc la grandeur dou forfait Qu'il pensait qu'ele eust forfait".

[38] Langlois, lines 19419-26:
"Enjoinst li qu'ele demourast Dedenz sa forge e labourast
Si come ainz labourer soulait Quant de neient ne se doulait,
E son servise adès feist Tant qu'autre conseil i meist
Li reis qui tout peut adrecier E tout faire e tout depecier".

[39] Langlois, lines 19429-30:
"... plus que le cours, Pour faire aus fins amanz secours".

[40] Langlois, lines 2040-42:
"... tu acompliras
Nuit e jor les comandemenz Que je comant as fins amanz".

two reasons: firstly, both are really interested in fighting for cupidinous love, and, secondly, because sexual intercourse was acceptable for those who were married or who had committed to a relationship.

Genius, unlike Nature, must be seen as an ironic figure who does not represent true religion but is, rather, a prophet doing someone else's bidding: he justifies the opposition of natural, that is, Nature's directive, and unnatural, that is, man's behavior. In one way he is wholly responsible for the final impression that the reader is left with as he is the last 'voice of authority' who speaks; yet it must be remembered that he is just *one* of the voices in the poem. While arguments have been made which suggest that Genius is the voice of Jean de Meun, and at least one critic has seen him as 'rewriter' of Guillaume de Lorris[41], others have seen Genius as: "the inclination of created things to act naturally. Hence Genius is, as it were, the 'conscience' of Nature" (Robertson 200). Another theory suggests that Genius is the Holy spirit, the informing spirit, and the engendering spirit; this leads to the notion of a Trinity within the poem, with Nature being Christ. This works on the allegorical level of the Holy Spirit reconciling God with Nature being both Christ and humankind. While the Genius figure has always been associated with male procreation, Genius, as "god of generation, and tutelary spirit or moral guide" (Arden 63), his representation in literature and philosophy evolved:

> the individual man's genius came to represent his rational soul, then his unique qualities, given to him at birth by his stars. Finally, there

[41] See Kevin Brownlee, "Jean de Meun and the Limits of Romance: Genius as Rewriter of Guillaume de Lorris", in Romance: Generic Transformation from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes (1985), pp. 114-134. Brownlee suggests that once Nature is introduced in the Roman, the poem passes beyond the limits of Guillaume's romance, further, he suggests that Genius "provides the final and most explicit instance of Jean de Meun's expansion of the generic limits of romance" (130)

> developed the modern concept of great mental capacity or inventive ability, especially great and original creative talent. This evolution shows a clear pattern of intellectualization that moves from virility to higher and higher mental gifts, as if sexuality and intellectual ability were ultimately linked (Arden 61).

Genius is the most problematic figure in the Roman; the first part of his message to the barons telling them to procreate followed by his suggestion to live virtuously as the way to enter the Park of the Lamb, makes one wonder if the name 'Genius' is totally ironic. The only other way to accept Genius's strange message without considering it ironic is to believe that he felt the need to over-emphasize the virtues of procreation to get his point across because of humankind's feelings of guilt about sexuality since the Fall: he has to reject continence outright to get his point across that the species will die out. Yet, since according to church doctrine chastity was appropriate for those who prayed, this seems wholly unnecessary; in fact, the procreative act can be seen as a metaphor for God's grace[42]. Accepting the fact that Genius extols the virtues of procreation by discrediting the positive points of chastity rests on the assumption that he is an ironic and satirical figure whose hyperbole works to ensure that the barons will help the Lover and act according to Nature's directive.

Genius bringing Nature's pardon to the barons is an allusion to the people of

---

[42] This sentiment is expressed beautifully in Cleanness, lines 697-708:
"I compast hem a kynde crafte and kende hit hem derne, And amed hit in myn ordenaunce oddely dere,
And dyght drwry therinne, doole alther-swettest; And the play of paramores I portrayed myselven,

And made therto a maner myriest of other. When two true togeder had tyyed hemselven,
Bytwene a male and his make such merthe schulde come, Welnyghe pure Pardys moght preve no better

Elles thay moght honestly ayther other welde, At a stylle stollen steven unstered wyth syght,
Luf-lowe hem bytwene lasched so hote That alle the meschefes on mold moght hit not sleke."

Nineveh in the Book of Jonah, who were given another chance by God once Jonah brought his message to them, and they accepted it[43]. In the first part of his sermon, Genius excommunicates the enemies of procreation and encourages the others to procreate, saying that Nature excuses the sins of those who take the trouble to live and multiply the species:

> By the authority of Nature, let all those disloyal apostates, of high rank or low, who hold in despite the acts by which Nature is supported, be excommunicated and condemned without any delay. And let him who strives with all his force to maintain Nature, who struggles to love well, without any base thought, but with lawful labor, go off to paradise decked with flowers. As long as he makes a good confession, I will take on me all his deeds with such power as I can bring to them, and he will never have to bear the smallest pardon for them (322)[44].

Sex is simultaneously a necessary evil, for the purpose of procreation; yet, it can also be seen as a metaphor for God's grace, because it allows for cupidity and the fact that one might have to have sex several times in order to ensure pregnancy. In the second part of his sermon, Genius urges the barons to 'live virtuously' and avoid living like those in the

---

[43] Jonah went to Nineveh to inform the people that their city would be overthrown in forty days because of their wickedness. The people of Nineveh put on sackcloth and fasted; the king proclaimed that everyone should "cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." (King James Bible, Book of Jonah, 3:8) The people of Nineveh repented of their wicked ways and received God's forgiveness: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not." (King James Bible, Book of Jonah, 3.10) God explains to Jonah that he has done this because: "should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (King James Bible, Book of Jonah, 4 11)

[44] Langlois, lines 19528-42:
"Li desleial, lie renié,
E condanné senz nui respit, Qui les euvres ont en despit,
Seit de grant gent, seit de menu, Par cui Nature est soutenue.
E cil qui de toute sa force De Nature garder s'efforce,
E qui de bien amer se peine, Senz nule pensee vilaine,
Mais qui leiaument I travaille, Flouriz en paradis s'en aille;
Mais qu'il se face bien confès, J'en preing seur mei trestout son fais

garden of *Deduit* in order to enter the Park of the Lamb where Jesus is the Good Shepherd, spring reigns eternal, and the weather is even more beautiful than during the much-acclaimed Golden Age. That the two parts of his sermon are incompatible with each other is obvious; the implications of this, which are somewhat more difficult to understand, are discussed in Chapter Four, with particular reference to the hierarchy of worlds in the Roman.

Genius seems to be suggesting that engendering is the only power that humans really have because then the species will continue and part of us lives on in our children. Genius's concern is stated quite humourously: "if all men together wished to avoid their tools for sixty years, men would never engender" (323)[45]; in fact, the metaphors of tools and plowing leave nothing to the imagination: "Plow for God's sake, my barons, plow and restore your lineages" (324)[46]. There are class implications to the fact that Genius's directive is to the barons; although Nature has stated that everyone is the same at birth, it is implied that continuing royal rather than common lineages is optimum. The sexual imagery at the end of Genius's speech blatantly suggests that women are the key to the need to procreate; Genius

> threw down his candle on the spot, and its smoky flame spread among everyone. There is no lady who might protect herself from it, so well does Venus know how to spread it, and the wind caught it up so high that all

---

De tel poeir con jou puis prendre, Ja pardon n'en portera mendre".

[45] Langlois, lines 19584-86:
" . se trestui li ome ensemble
Seissante anz foir les voulaient, Jamais ome n'engendreraient".

[46] Langlois, lines 19701-02
"Arez, pour Deu, baron, arez. E voz lignages reparez"

> living women have their bodies, their hearts and their thoughts permeated with that odor (338)[47].

This acknowledges that the passion of both men and women is necessary for procreation to occur, but the text is not any less misognynist as a result. The passionate conclusion to Genius's sermon has been interpreted as Genius being duped by Venus and the God of Love:

> The priest of procreation [Genius] has unwittingly become the priest of Love, and his message and promise of paradise become the means by which Venus and Cupid inspire the barons to begin their victorious assault on the castle. The natural inclination for sexual reproduction is made to serve a cause that has as object only the act of love and not its proper end (Economou 123).

The result is that Nature and Genius team up with Venus and the God of Love for the Lover's cause but each pair's concerns are different; their relationship is one of co-dependency: Nature and Genius need Venus and the God of Love to put the 'spark' of desire in a person, and Venus and the God of Love need Nature and Genius to justify that desire because "the God of Love and his mother depend on that *natural urge* over which she [Nature] presides not only for their ultimate success but also for their initial enchantment of the Lover when he feels the first stirrings of love for the rose" (Economou 124). If there is a conspiracy at work, the God of Love and Venus are using Nature and Genius and vice versa; as well, all four are ultimately using the Lover and the

---

[47] Langlois, lines 20670-78:
"Lors giete le cierge en la place,
Don la flambe toute enfumee Par tout le monde est alumee.
N'est dame qui s'en puist defendre, Tant la sot bien Venus espandre,
E la cuilli si haut li venz Que toutes les fames vivanz
Leur cors, leur cueurs e leur pensees Ont de cete oudeur encensees".

barons to accomplish their joint purpose. While the connection between those on the side of passion with those on the side of nature is obvious, the Lover and the barons are not complaining either; when Genius finishes reading the document, "the barons were moved with joy" (338)[48], and the Lover will be able to have sex with Rose.

The second part of Genius's sermon explains how to avoid Hell and enter the Park of the Lamb; he notes that there are twenty-six vices which should be avoided: "The lovely *Romance of the Rose* explains them to you quite briefly; please look at them there so that you may guard against them better" (327)[49]. These vices are found in Nature's condemnation of man's behavior:

> He is a proud, murderous thief, cruel, covetous, miserly, and treacherous. He is desperate, greedy, slanderous, hateful, and spiteful; unfaithful and envious, he lies, perjures himself, and falsifies; he is foolish, boastful, inconstant, and senseless; he is a quarrelsome idolator, a traitorous, false hypocrite, and a lazy sodomite; in short he is such a stupid wretch that he is slave to all the vices, and harbors them all within himself (317)[50].

The actions of those in the garden of *Deduit* are included amongst these vices; the irony is that while Genius is telling people not to sin in these ways if they want to enter the

---

[48] Langlois, line 20684: "Li baron, de joie esmeu"

[49] Langlois, lines 19881-84:
"Assez briement les vous espose Li jolis Romanz de la Rose;
S'il vous plaist la les regardez, Pour ce que d'aus meauz vous gardez"

[50] Langlois, 19225-38:
"Orguilleus est, murtriers e lierres, Fel, couveiteus, avers, trichierres,
Desesperez, glouz, mesdisanz, E haineus, e despisanz,
Mescreanz, envieus, mentierres, Parjurs, faussaires, fos, vantierres,
E inconstanz, e foleiables, Ydolatres, desagreables,
Traitres, e faus ypocrites, E pareceus, e sodomites;
Briement tant est chaitis e nices Qu'il est sera a trestouz les vices,
E trestouz en sei les herberge. Vez de queus fers li las s'enferge".

Park of the Lamb, he is also telling them to have sex. It is mainly for this reason that Genius's advice must be seen as ironic: the two parts of his sermon are at odds with one another.

While both Nature and Genius are allegorical personifications, they are also literary characters and archetypes of recognizable figures, involving both an image and a concept of a human person. It is Nature who understands human nature and Genius who shows the way to the Park of the Lamb; together, they cause the reconciliation of the human body and soul to occur in the Roman: "Jean's Nature and Genius know why and how they serve God, and they sincerely try their best to do so. Raison, too, knows their purpose; but she also knows that it can be perverted and misused and that the greater danger to Natura's purpose is not man's chastity but man's cupidity" (Economou 124). This suggests that in terms of medieval Christianity's view of the human soul, cupidity is still far more dangerous than chastity; while it is true that if everyone practiced chastity the species would die out, chastity is always a *virtue*. Accepting cupidity, on the other hand, even with the justification of it resulting in procreation, can lead downwards towards the lechery, sloth and artificiality found in the garden of *Deduit*; the experience and knowledge gained from cupidity is far closer to the sinfulness of Adam and Eve after the Fall than their innocence before the Fall.

The relationship of Nature and Genius reconciles nature and divine love; as allegorical personifications in the poem, Nature represents humankind's fallen nature while Genius is the natural inclination of humankind. The discourses of the three authority figures, Reason, Nature and Genius are "ostensibly ... part of the 'allegorical'

action of the poem, the conflict between the Lover's aggressive libido and the lady's other-directed reluctance; but they soon come to overshadow this action, and even to eclipse the reader's interest in Guillaume's protagonist" (Luria 46). Genius, having the last word as he does, redeems the Lover's act. The weight and complexity of Genius's sermon coupled with the overthrow of Reason serve to overshadow the Lover's sexual consummation with Rose. It is as if the reader is being told that with the comparison of the Park of the Lamb with *Deduit*, we already know what it is we need to know to ensure our salvation.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Garden, the Park, and the Hierarchy of Worlds

A hierarchy of worlds[1] is presented in Le Roman de la Rose, the purpose of which is to provide a moral lesson: to remind us of our insignificance and of our need to try harder to live according to God's purpose. The hierarchy is set out as follows from ascending to descending order: the Park of the Lamb or Heaven, the ideal which is unattainable on earth but is the reward for those who live according to God's purpose and follow Nature's directive about procreating; Eden, paradise on earth before the Fall; the Golden Age, the idealized reign of Saturn where man was less sinful than in the world of the dream; the present, which is the fairly base world presented in the dream; the garden of *Deduit* wherein devotion to worldly pleasures has run rampant and become sinfulness; and Hell, where the black sheep are corralled, the Classical and Christian conception of a demonic resting place for sinners who have not lived according to God's purpose while on earth.

Although the main purpose of this chapter will be to compare the garden of *Deduit* with the Park of the Lamb, the relevance of this comparison must be seen in the

---

[1] A hierarchy encompassing four levels was generally assumed "[f]rom the early Christian centuries down to at least the end of the eighteenth century" (Northrop Frye, Words With Power, 1990), p. 168 The hierarchy was based on the cosmos having four levels: Heaven; Eden and the Golden Age on one level; humankind's physical environment, and the demonic world of death and hell I have made the following changes to this traditional hierarchy for my purposes· I have put the Golden Age as a separate 'world' below Eden before the Fall; humankind's physical environment is the world of the dream; and I have added the garden of *Deduit* below the world of the dream For the hierarchy envisioned in diagrammatic form, see

context of the heavenly and earthly parallels presented in the Roman. All of these worlds except for Hell are pastoral, which implies that they are beautiful, tranquil places; yet, there is a large discrepancy in the actualization of these places. In fact, they evoke a series of opposites: innocence versus experience, knowledge or sinfulness; the eternal versus the temporal; pure beauty versus artificiality; pure love versus lechery or base desire; and that created by God versus that created by humans. What is presented in the poem positively is innocence, the eternal, pure beauty, pure love and that which is created by God, whereas what is presented negatively is experience or knowledge, the temporal, artificiality, lechery and that which is created by humankind.[2] What is presented negatively in the hierarchy of worlds are the vices that people are guilty of; these vices were listed by Nature in her condemnation of humans[3] and Genius had warned the barons to avoid them in order to enter the Park of the Lamb:

> Fight against the vices that Nature, our mistress, has just told me about today at my mass. She told me them all, and I never sat down afterward. You will find twenty-six of them, more harmful than you think ... I would tell these vices to you, but to do so would be an excessive undertaking. The lovely Romance of the Rose explains them to you quite briefly; please look at them there so that you may guard against them better (327)[4].

---

page 75.

[2] For the paradigms of 'worlds' in diagrammatic form, see page 76.

[3] For Nature's condemnation of man, see Chapter 3, page 49

[4] Langlois:
"Contre les vices batailliez
Que Nature, nostre maistresse, Me vint ui conter a ma messe.
Touz les me dist, onc puit ne sis; Vous en trouvereiz vint e sis,
Plus nuisanz que vous ne cuidiez (lines 19866-71).

Ces vices conter vous voudraie, Mais d'outrage m'entremetraie.
Assez briement les vous espose Li jolis Romanz de la Rose,

Reason's discourse to the Lover suggests that humans have the ability to avoid these vices if only they would use reason; however, it is evident that in the world after the Fall people have become less and less able to resist sinfulness.

The Park of the Lamb is a place of innocence where the lambs follow Jesus the Good Shepherd, indulge in acts of goodness and live happy, fulfilling lives. The Park is a pastoral paradise which has been created by God as a reward for those who have lived according to his purpose and from which the black sheep are prevented from entering:

> [i]ts flocks live idyllic lives under the care of the Good Shepherd ("*Dou bon pasteur*"), who is most likely based on the shepherd in Christ's first parable in Luke 15[5], in this blissful paradise where time stands still, glorious day endures forever, and it is always spring."[6]

In the Park there is "no temporal measure, the day that is so fair, that lasts forever and smiles with present brightness" (329)[7]: earthly concerns of time running out and certain death are irrelevant here. The lambs who live here are eternally happy and live in *amicitia*; there is no *cupiditas* here as there is neither the need nor the desire for it; as well, there is no need for procreation as everyone has eternal life. The allegorical value of the Park of the Lamb is expressed here by Rosemund Tuve:

S'il vous plaist la les regardez, Pour ce que d'aus meauz vous gardez" (lines 19879-84).

[5]'The Parable of the Lost Sheep', Luke 15, 1-7 and Matthew 18, 10-14, King James Bible, reveals that God's love for each individual soul is like that of the shepherd who, having lost one of his hundred sheep will leave the other ninety-nine in the wilderness until he finds the missing one: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." (Luke 15.7, King James Bible)

[6] George D. Economou, The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature (1972), p. 113.

[7] Langlois, lines 20025-28:
"Turs n'I ravra jamais presence, Tant est d'estable parmanance;
Car li solauz resplendissanz, Qui tourjourz leur est parissanz"

> The image of the *parc* of the White Lamb ... shows Jean using the allegorical mode most subtly and powerfully. It is an unmixed straight Christian symbolical image of the Heavenly Paradise, deliberately traditional, to be read *mystice*, an anagogical figure in the direct stream of Christian religious allegory; it is solely its use in the piece that provides the ambiguity and the irony.[8]

Everything in the park is pure, innocent and without artificiality. The fountain in the Park, a metaphor for God's everlasting forgiveness and love, is trinitarian: it stems from three springs, each of which "is so close to the other that they all form one, so that when you see them all, if you want to take the time to count them, you will find both one and three in them" (335)[9]. The fountain is the fountain of all holiness, "issues from itself" (335)[10] and has divine powers: "No man who could drink once of that fountain would die" (334)[11]. Unlike the fountain in *Deduit* which is artificially constructed by man, this tripartite fountain "needs no marble stone nor the covering of a tree, for the water, never ceasing, comes from a source so high that no tree can grow so tall that the height of the water is not greater" (335)[12]. As in the story of Noah,[13] here the olive tree

---

[8] Rosemund Tuve, Allegorical Imagery (1966), p. 329.

[9] Langlois, lines 20471-74
"Si sont si près a près chacune Que toutes s'assemblent a une,
Si que, quant toutes les verreiz, E une a treis en trouverreiz".

[10] Langlois, line 20480: "... ele sourt de sei meismes".

[11] Langlois, lines 20403-04.
"Ne jamais nus on ne mourrait Qui beivre une feiz en pourrait".

[12] Langlois, lines 20487-92.
"N'a mestier de pierre de marbre, Ne d'aveir couverture d'arbre,
Car d'une souse vient si haute L'eve, qui ne peut faire faute,
Qu'arbres ne peut si haut attaindre Que sa hautece ne seit graindre".

[13] For the story of 'Noah and the Ark', see Genesis 6, 9-22; 7 & 8, King James Bible. After the flood, Noah sent

is a symbol of hope for humankind's redemption through God's forgiveness: on the tree "hangs a small scroll with little letters on it, saying to those who read them as they lie in the shade of the olive tree: 'Here runs the fountain of life beneath the leafy olive tree that bears the fruit of salvation'" (336)[14]. In the fountain is the carbuncle[15], which becomes "an eternal sun and a trinitarian symbol"[16], having three facets, each of which "is worth as much as the other two, such are their powers between them" (336)[17]. The carbuncle is a metaphor for God's love that emanates outwards: "No other sun shines within but this glowing carbuncle. This is the sun that they have within, a sun that abounds more in splendor than does any sun in the world" (336)[18]. The sun's power purifies the lambs so that "the rays of that sun do not confuse or weaken or dazzle the eyes of those who look

---

a dove from the ark to determine whether the water had abated. On the first day, the dove returned as it could find no resting place; seven days later Noah sent the dove forth again: "And the dove came in to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth." (Genesis 8:11, King James Bible)

[14] Langlois, lines 20517-23:
"Si pendent a l'olive, escrites En un rolet, letres petites,
Qui dient a ceus qui les lisent, Qui souz l'olive en l'ombre gisent:
'Ci cueurt la fontaine de vie Par desouz l'olive foillie
Qui porte la fruit de salu'".

[15] Dahlberg notes that the image of the carbuncle (as a ruby) is found in Augustine's De doctrina christiana (II.xvi (24), "who emphasizes its virtue of light" (Dahlberg 420 n. 20525-96) and in de Alain's De planctu "as a stone in Nature's diadem, one of seven that represent the seven lowest spheres of the Ptolemaic heaven; as fourth of the seven, it 'bears the image of the sun.'" (Dahlberg 420 n. 20525-96)

[16] Dahlberg 420 n. 20525-96.

[17] Langlois, lines 20537-40
"Si sachiez que chascune quierre, Teus est la vertu de la pierre,
Vaut autant con les autres deus, Teus sont entr'eus les forces d'eus"

[18] Langlois, lines 20554-58.
"Autres solauz laienz ne raie
Que cil carboncles flambeianz. C'est li solauz qu'il ont laienz,
Qui plus de resplendeur abonde Que nus solauz qui seit ou monde"

at them, but they strengthen, make joyful, and reinvigorate their sight by means of their beautiful clarity" (337)[19]. The truth-giving qualities of the fountain ensure that the lambs "see all things in the park and understand them rightly, themselves as well. After they have seen themselves there, they become such wise masters that they will never be deceived by anything that can exist" (336-37)[20]. Not only does this emphasize the purity in the Park of the Lamb but it indirectly points to the artificiality of the world of the dream and the garden of *Deduit*.

The garden of Eden before the Fall symbolizes a lost paradise, superior to anything on earth; yet, "whoever saw the form and matter of the park could say that in former times *Adam was not formed in so beautiful a paradise*" (337)[21]. Although the description of Eden before the Fall is idyllic:

> And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,[22]

---

[19] Langlois, lines 20580-86:
"Que de cetui soleil li rai
Ne troublent pas ne ne retardent Les eauz de ceus qui les regardent,
Ne ne les font essaboir, Mais renforcier e resjoir
E revigourer leur veue, Par sa bele clarté veue".

[20] Langlois, lines 20572-78
"Toutes les choses dou parc veient,
E les quenoissent proprement, E aus meismes ensement;
E puis que la se sont veu, Jamais ne seront deceu
De nule chose qui puisse estre Tant I devienent sage maistre".

[21] Langlois, lines 20592-96:
"D'un brief mot vueil qu'il vous souviegne
Que qui la fourme e la matire Dou parc verrait bien pourrait dire
Qu'onques en si bel paradis Ne fu fourmez Adans jadis"

[22] Genesis 2:8-9, King James Bible. For the full description of the garden of Eden, see Genesis 2.4-14.

Genius says that the Park is far superior. The paradise of Eden was forever lost to Adam and Eve once the serpent, "more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made"[23], a symbol of temptation and innocence lost, used guile to convince Eve to sin. Innocence and pure beauty, although God's original purpose, were lost to Adam and Eve forever once they tasted the forbidden fruit, after which "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons"[24]. The paradise of Eden could have been eternal but as a result of Adam and Eve's sinfulness, it was temporal; the Old Testament relates the time after the Fall of those who slipped further and further into sinfulness. Once Adam and Eve lost *amicitia* and descended into *cupiditas*, their 'original sin', they lost the harmony they once had with each other and with nature; they lost pure love and descended into base desire, thereby losing innocence and gaining experience and knowledge.

The motif of the classical Golden Age is presented in the Roman as an idealized world in which men and women lived in harmony with animals, in a place free of artificiality which is superior to the world of the dream and the garden of *Deduit*. The Golden Age is also used as a contrast to reveal the Park of the Lamb's superior qualities: "For the shining sun always appears and establishes the day at a certain point such that no man ever lived in an eternal spring so beautiful and so pure, not even when Saturn

---

[23] Genesis 3 1, King James Bible

[24] Genesis 3:7, King James Bible.

reigned as ruler over the *ages of gold*" (329)[25]. This motif is used by Reason, Friend, the Old Woman and Genius:

> *Raison* [Reason] sees the end of the Golden Age as justice replacing love; *l'Ami* [Friend], as venality and conflict between the sexes replacing free love; *la Vieille* [the Old Woman], as male domination and marriage replacing women's freedom; and Genius, as unnaturalness in sex replacing naturalness ... Nature and Genius represent 'a point of view Jean de Meung is seeking to exemplify', an idealistic view in which both man and woman are 'to be liberated and to devote their love to the safeguarding of the human race'[26].

While humankind cannot get back to Eden because we have the knowledge that came with the Fall, perhaps with some effort we can attain a life like that of the Golden Age. During the Golden Age men and women *chose* to live in harmony with each other and nature; what has happened between the Golden Age and the world of the dream is that humans have ignored their reason and let passion and emotions rule them. In the Golden Age pure love still existed between men and women, resulting in the procreation of the species, and there was harmony between humans and animals; as well, it was unadulteratedly natural, a time before agriculture and modern inventions.

The relative innocence of the Golden Age allows for the possibility of the restoration of harmony after the Fall and an attainable ideal on earth; however,

---

[25] Langlois, lines 20027-33:
"... li solauz resplendissanz, Qui toujourz leur est parissanz,
Fait le jour en un point estable, Tel qu'onc en printens pardurable
Si bel ne vit ne si pur nus, Neis quant regnait Saturnus,
Qui tenait les dorez aages"

[26] F.W.A. George, "Jean de Meung and the Myth of the Golden Age," in The Classical Tradition in French Literature: Essays Presented to R C. Knight by Colleagues, Pupils and Friends (1977), p. 37, quoted in Heather M. Arden, The Roman de la Rose: An Annotated Bibliography (1993), p. 117.

humankind cannot go back to a time before knowledge. In the Roman, the classical Golden Age is Christianized; as well, several critics have suggested that Friend and Genius's use of the Golden Age motif is ironic because they are in the service of Venus; amongst these is Fleming, who points out that according to the First Vatican Mythographer, "'the birth of Venus was not a happy moment in the history of the human race,' and notes that the birth was coincident with the disappearance of the Golden Age"[27]. Jupiter castrated his father Saturn, thereby "doing Nature a great wrong in stealing the power of engendering" (330)[28]. Thus the Golden Age ended and the decline in human nature resulted in the Ages of Silver, Brass and Iron, the present age. Jupiter's reign was totally different to that of his father: he "gave general permission that everyone individually might do whatever he himself saw to be delightful" (330)[29], and "did for his body whatever pleased it" (330)[30]. The result was descent into all sorts of vice, the dissolution of common ownership and men attempting to own things, like property, women and animals; rather than living in harmony with nature, people attempted to control nature: "with the malice that torments men he [Jupiter] subdued the

---

[27] John V Fleming, "The *Roman de la Rose* and Its Manuscript Illustrations", Ph.D. dissertation, 1963, p. 288. Quoted in Dahlberg, The Romance of the Rose (1995), p. 379.

[28] Langlois, lines 20073-74:
"Qu'il a fait grant tort a Nature De li tolir s'engendreure".

[29] Langlois, lines 20103-04.
". chascuns endreit sei feist Quanque delitable veist".

[30] Langlois, lines 20111-12.
". . faisait A son cors quanqu'il li plaisait"

birds of prey" (331)[31]. The plowing of fields occurred for the first time during the reign of Jupiter; although agricultural practices can be seen as progress, and as at least somewhat positive, Genius sees it as only negative: "In short, when Jupiter set out to take the earth, he intended nothing other than changing the state of the empire from good to ill and from ill to worse" (331)[32]. Humans were given intellect and reason by God which they can use either for good or evil; Jupiter, desirous of power and pleasure, used his powers mainly for the advent of evil.

The world of the dream in the Roman uses Macrobian dream-allegory as a literary form[33]: "Guillaume's *Rose* is evidently the first time that a dream became the vehicle for amorous (as opposed to didactic) literature" (Arden 39), and as such he "immediately sets out to fulfill Macrobius's concept of the *somnium*, or engimatic dream, 'one that conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding'"[34]. The use of the dream vision in the Roman starts with the tradition of the *Somnium Scipionis* (The Dream of Scipio), known through Macrobius's commentary from circa 400 a.d.

---

[31] Langlois, lines 20145-46:
"Cist donta les oiseaus de preie Par malice qui genz aspreie"

[32] Langlois, lines 20185-88:
"Briement, Jupiter n'entendi, Quant a terre tenir tendi,
Fors muer l'estat de l'empire De bien en mal, de mal en pire."

[33] Macrobius's commentary on the Somnium Scipionis (The dream of Scipio) became a basic text in the medieval period Macrobius classified dreams into five types: *somnium* (the enigmatic dream), *visio* (the prophetic vision), *oraculum* (the oracular dream), *insomnium* (the nightmare), and *visum* (the apparition). See Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio (1952)

[34] Dahlberg 358 n. 37-44.

While "[t]he modern term 'dream vision' implies the extent to which medieval allegorical poems in the tradition of the *Rose* invoke the sense of sight"[35], the poem has sometimes been referred to as a "literary lie" (Dahlberg 6). Although sometimes called an example of Macrobius's *narratio fabulosa*, which intends to deceive the reader, all fiction is deceptive; therefore the Roman is really an illusion within an illusion.

The dream in the Roman is clearly the Age of Iron, a time when experience and knowledge have started to go to excess and innocence has been lost, in which the Lover, in search of *cupiditas*, has lost any aim for *amicitia*. However, there is still some hope as the world of the dream has not descended as far into artificiality as those in the garden of *Deduit*. The dream is temporal because worldly pleasures last only a certain amount of time after which one will live eternally in either Heaven or Hell. Artificiality in the world of the dream, such as the emphasis on Wealth as a way to get or keep a lover, is almost as prevalent as in the garden of *Deduit*. Lechery and base desire rule much of people's lives, as is evident in the tirade of the Jealous Husband and the Old Woman's speech. Although men and women are often at odds with one another, harmony and equality are still possible in the world of the dream. At one extreme, Friend presents women who have become lecherous and hate what they consider to be the chains of marriage, and men who have become jealous and abusive; free love and equality would be a better way to live but it is not the norm. At the other extreme, marriage as an equal partnership of husband and wife working together exists as a possibility; somewhere between is the Lover's relationship with Rose: he desires her sexually but marriage is not

[35] Sarah Kay, The Romance of the Rose, p. 73

presented as an option to him. It is possible that Jean de Meun is promoting equality of the sexes by showing that inequality does not work. The world of the dream portrays humans, such as the Jealous Husband, attempting to 'tame' nature, women and animals, and now the terrible results can be seen: worldly pleasures do not last forever and are rewarded with eternal damnation. The world of the dream is clearly temporal as it is declared to be over at the end of the poem: "Straightway it was day, and I awoke" (354)[36].

The garden of *Deduit* is the world of the dream gone too far, a temporal place whose worldly pleasures have become corrupted; experience and knowledge have gone to such an extreme that sinfulness has resulted. The images on the wall outside the garden, Hatred, Felony, Villainy, Covetousness, Avarice, Envy, Sorrow, Old Age, Pope-Holiness and Poverty, are associated directly or indirectly with sinfulness, particularly the Seven Deadly Sins, and are in opposition to the Ten Commandments; these images

> represent not so much the qualities that would exclude a lover from the garden and its activities as attributes that are complementary to those represented within. Youth in the garden leads to Old Age without; Wealth leads to Poverty, Love to Hatred, Openness becomes mingled with dissembling (Pope-Holiness), and so on (Dahlberg 359).

Wealth is described as being a necessary evil: "All hoped to serve her for the love of deserving well of her, and each one called her his lady, for everyone feared her: the whole world was in her power" (44)[37]. Since those inside the garden are not devoted to

---

[36] Langlois, line 21780. "Atant fu jourz, e je m'esveille".

[37] Langlois, lines 1027-1033.
"Tuit li graignor e li menor Portoient a Richece enor,
Tuit beoient a li servir Por l'amor de li deservir;

pure love but to diversion, artificiality, and lechery, *Deduit* comes to represent experience and a loss of innocence:

> Guillaume's use of Hatred for his first portrait may well suggest the state of discord that is characteristic of fallen man, the opposite of the harmony in the garden of Eden before the Fall. Far from suggesting anything more than a purely literal opposition between hatred and love, the figure suggests the close connection between the Hatred on the outside of the garden and the kind of love characteristic of the garden (Dahlberg 359).

The garden of *Deduit* is built upon the falsehoods and vanities of man, focusing on the artificiality of outward appearance, beauty, clothes and wealth rather than on anything of significance: "no man ever saw such joy or diversion as there was in that garden" (37)[38]. The Lover's use of superlatives to describe everything in the garden eventually becomes hollow from overuse; as well, although everything in *Deduit* is more beautiful and more fair than anything the Lover has ever seen before *on earth*, it becomes evident in Genius's comparison of the Garden with the Park of the Lamb that the Park is far superior. As well, the nature of things in the Park is of a different *type* than those in *Deduit*, so that when the Lover says of Diversion: "Never among men will you come upon any place where you will see a more handsome man" (41)[39], ironically, his 'beauty' will be irrelevant in the Park. Although the garden of *Deduit* sounds as beautiful as Eden before the Fall ("No place was ever so rich with trees or songbirds: there were three times

---

Chascuns sa dame la clamoit, Car toz li mondes la cremoit;
Toz li monz iert en son dangier".

[38] Langlois, lines 475-77:
"Car tel joie ne tel deduit Ne vit mais on, si con je cuit,
Come il avoit en cel vergier"

[39] Langlois, lines 802-03:

as many birds as in the whole kingdom of France" (37)[40]), it has a deceptive, cunning quality: "When I heard the birds singing, I began to go out of my mind wondering by what art or what device I should enter the garden" (37)[41]. The birds are apparently heaven-sent, described in a simile as having "sang a song as though they were heavenly angels" (39)[42]. As if they are sirens casting a spell over the Lover, he admits that "when I heard the song and saw the burgeoning green of the place, I was seized with joy; no one had ever been so happy as I became then, full of gaiety as I was over the garden's *delectable charm*" (40)[43].

Initially it appears as if pure love is the purpose of those in *Deduit*; however, it is lechery and an excess of worldly pleasures that have become rampant. This dichotomy of apparent innocence that masks sinfulness is the basis of the power over the Lover throughout the poem[44]. Everyone in the garden is associated with pleasure, including

---

"Jamais entre gent ne vendroiz Ou vos veiez nul plus bel ome".

[40] Langlois, lines 480-83
"Onc mais ne fu nus leus si riches
D'arbres ne d'oisillons chantanz, Qu'il i avoit d'oisiaus trois tanz
Qu'en tot le reiaume de France".

[41] Langlois, lines 497-500·
"Quant j'oi les oisiaus chanter, Forment me pris a dementer
Par quel art ne par quel engin Je porroie entrer ou jardin".

[42] Langlois, lines 663-64:
"Il chantoient un chant itel Con fussent ange eperitel"

[43] Langlois, lines 678-82.
" . quant j'oi le chant
E je vi le leu verdeier, Je me pris mout a esgaier,
Si n'avoie esté encore onques Si gais con je devin adonques"

[44] There is a similar dichotomy in Chaucer's The Book of the Duchess.

Idleness, who is beautiful and impeccably dressed but is one step away from the sin of sloth: "It certainly seemed from her array that she was hardly busy" (38)[45]. When Idleness informs the Lover that "The fairest people that you ever found anywhere, you know, are the companions of Diversion who leads and guides them" (39)[46], the Lover is immediately enthralled and desirous of seeing the rest of the garden: "I believe that this company is fair, courteous, and well instructed" (39)[47], he says. When the Lover finds the pleasure seekers, they appear to him as if they are angels, with Diversion at the center: "he enjoyed himself, and with him he had people so fair that, when I saw them, I did not know where people so beautiful could have come from, for, in absolute truth, they seemed winged angels. No man born ever saw such beautiful people" (40)[48]. Although they are outwardly beautiful, it becomes evident that those in *Deduit* are living in a world of temporality because over time their type of beauty will fade and they will descend bit by bit into vice and sinfulness.

---

[45] Langlois, lines 566-67:
"Il paroit bien a son ator Qu'ele estoit poi enbesoigniee".

[46] Langlois, lines 615-18:
"Les plus beles genz, ce sachiez, Que vos jamais nul leu truissiez,
Si sont li compaignon Deduit, Qu'il moine avuec soi e conduit."

[47] Langlois, lines 628-30:
".. car je cuit
Que bele est cele compaignie E cortoise e bien enseignie"

[48] Langlois, lines 720-26
"Deduiz illueques s'esbatoit;
S'avoit si beles genz o soi Que, quant je les vi, je ne soi
Don si trés beles genz pooient Estre venu, car il sembloient
Tot por voir anges empenez Si beles genz ne vit on nez".

Deduit has been created by man, is square and enclosed; although God provided the raw elements, it is far from natural. The endless encyclopedic description of the garden provided by the Lover implies Eden, for example the trees bore "quinces, peaches, nuts, chestnuts ..." (49)[49], and "winter and summer, there was always an abundance of flowers" (49)[50]; however, this paradisal beauty does not reflect the inner virtues of those who live in the garden. The dancing and caroling that so appeal to the Lover is simply diversion and results in base lechery, not pure love. The carol, complete with "fluters, minstrels, and jongleurs" (40)[51], is described as a joyous event by the Lover but is based on false pretenses. If the dancing is diversion and idleness, then making love under the shade of the trees after the dancing is sloth and lechery; however, the Lover sees only the immediate rewards: "What a good life they led! He who does not long for such a life is a fool. He who could have such a life might *dispense with a greater good.* Since there is no greater paradise than to have one's beloved at one's desire" (48)[52]. Being willing to dispense with a greater good suggests that the Lover would gladly give up eternal salvation for the temporary satisfaction of sexual pleasure.

---

[49] Langlois, lines 1348-49:
"... coinz e pesches, Chastaignes, noiz ..."

[50] Langlois, lines 1401-02:
"Qu'il I avoit de flors plenté Toz jorz e iver e esté".

[51] Langlois, lines 747-78:
" .. fleuteors, E menestreus e jogleors".

[52] Langlois, lines 1295-300:
"Deus! Com menoient bone vie! Fos est qui n'a de tel envie.
Qui autel vie avoir porroit De meillor bien se soferroit,
Qu'il n'est nus graindres parevis D'avoir amie a son devis".

The significance of the fountain in *Deduit* touches on all five points of comparison. The warning associated with the fountain is clearly evident to the Lover as he notes that on the stone it is written "there the fair Narcissus died" (50)[53], yet proceeds anyway because, he says, "It is the fountain of fountains; there is none so beautiful in all the world" (51)[54]. That the fountain is a metaphor for the well of Narcissus is revealed by the writing on the stone, the Lover admitting that he remembers Narcissus and stating that the fountain is perilous because: "Out of this mirror a new madness comes upon men: Here hearts are changed; intelligence and moderation have no business here, where there is only the simple will to love, where no one can be counseled" (52)[55]. Unlike Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection and pined away out of unrequited love, the Lover sees "great heaps of roses; none under heaven were as beautiful" (52-53)[56]; he falls in love with one of them which "was so very beautiful that, after I had examined it carefully, I thought that none of the others was worth anything beside it; it glowed with a colour, as red and as pure as the best that Nature can produce" (53)[57].

---

[53] Langlois, line 1438: "Se mori li biaus Narcisus".

[54] Langlois, lines 1528-29:
"De la fontaine c'est la fins: En tot le monde n'ot si bele".

[55] Langlois, lines 1583-87.
"Ci sort as genz novele rage, Ici se changent li corage,
Ci n'a mestier sens ne mesure, Ci est d'amer volenté pure,
Ci ne se set conseillier nus"

[56] Langlois, lines 1637-38.
"Des roses i ot granz monciaus, Ausi beles n'avoit soz ciaus"

[57] Langlois, lines 1656-61.
"Un si trés bel qu'envers celui
Nul des autres rien ne prisai, Puis que je l'oi bien avisé.

Driven by lechery and the rose's odour, the Lover admits that he "had no power to withdraw, but would have approached to take it if I had dared stretch out my hand to it" (53)[58]. This bears a resemblance to the illusory powers of mirrors referred to earlier[59]; the Lover, like Narcissus, is involved in a form of self-love. By so doing he is risking not only the loss of reason by falling into cupidity but also the sin of pride that goes along with self-love.

Hell in the poem is the consequence for those who live in the world of the dream or in *Deduit* and participate in worldly pleasures to the extreme. The description of Hell in the Roman combines both the classical and Christian perception of Hell where the gods in the hall

> have the black sheep tied up in their stable, from which they will never be released, the sorrowful black sheep, worn out, wretched, mortally sick, who do not want to go along the path that the white lamb offers, the path by which they would all have been freed, and their black fleeces made white, at the time when they took the large broad road by which they brought themselves to their dwelling there, in so plentiful a company that it occupied the whole road (331-32)[60].

Car une color l'enlumine Qui est si vermeille e si fine
Con Nature la pot plus faire".

[58] Langlois, lines 1672-74.
"Je n'oi talent de repairier,
Ainz m'aprochasse por le prendre, Se j'i osasse la main tendre".

[59] See Chapter Three, page 39.

[60] Langlois, lines 20209-20.
"Cis ront en leur teit estachiees, Don jamais n'ierent relaschiees,
Les neires berbiz doulereuses, Lasses, chaitives, mourineuses,
Qui ne voudrent aler la sente Que li blans aignelez presente,
Par quei toutes fussent franchies, E leur neires toisons blanchies,
Quant le grant chemin ample tindrent Par quei la herbergier se vindrent,
O compaignie si pleniere Qu'el tenait toute la charrier".

These "black animals" (332)[61], by not living according to God's purpose and refusing to follow Nature's laws about procreation while on earth, are excluded from the Park of the Good Shepherd and end up in Hell. Satan, the wolf who attempts until the last moment to prevent the white sheep from entering the Park, "seeks no other thing than that she [any lamb] stray from the path of the lamb intent on leading them. Then he will carry her off without a struggle and eat her alive, and nothing alive can keep him from doing so" (332)[62].

Hell is the punishment for all those who lived a life devoted to worldly pleasures and artificiality while on earth and did not care about God; in the poem it is the classical and Christian conception of eternal damnation. Genius warns of a horrible, wrenching classical perception of hell that is to be avoided at all costs: "For God's sake, my lords, do not go there" (327)[63]. He attempts to convince the barons that to avoid going to this hell they must procreate so that the species will not die out; outsmarting the Three Fates is the only way to fight against death: "You should know that Cloto, who carries the spindle, and Lachesis, who draws out the thread, are of great comfort to you. But Atropos breaks and cuts off whatever these two can spin. Atropos seeks to trip you. If

---

[61] Langlois, line 20246. ". beste neire"

[62] Langlois, lines 20259-66.
"Car bien set, se nule en desveie, Que li lous seulement la veie,
qui nule autre chose ne trace Ne mais qu'ele isse de la trace
A l'aignel qui mener les pense, Qu'il l'emportera senz defense,
E la mangera toute vive; Ne l'en peut garder riens qui vive"

[63] Langlois, line 19865· "Pour Deu, seigneur, que la n'ailliez".

you don't dig deep, she will bury your whole race ..." (325)[64]. Genius tells the barons that Alecto, Thesiphone, and Megara are waiting for them in hell:

> There, before the three provosts therein, sitting in full consistory, they bind those who committed crimes when they had life in their bodies, and beat them, switch them, hang them; they strike them, rain blows on them, skin them, and stamp on them; they drown, burn, grill, and boil them. By means of these tortures, the provosts wring from them the confessions of all the wicked things that they ever did from the time that they were born (326)[65].

Interestingly, the three provosts, Rhadamanthus, Minos, and Aeacus, were the sons of Jupiter; they became judges in Hell because they had meted out justice so well while on earth. Genius states that the only way to avoid the punishment of Hell is to avoid the vices and live according to God's purpose.

The connection of the hierarchy with Nature and Genius's relationship is that the possibility of the reconciliation of the body and soul is realized in the poem as the Park of the Lamb, God's reward for those who live according to his purpose. Those things that the Lover says are superior in *Deduit* to anything on earth are of no consequence in the

---

[64] Langlois, lines 19767-74.
"Sachiez que mout vous reconforte Cloto, qui la quenoille porte,
E Lachesis, qui les fils tire, Mais Atropos ront e descire
Quanque ces deus peuent filer. Atropos vous bee a guiler
Cete, qui parfont ne fourra, Touz voz lignages enfourra".

[65] Langlois, lines 19840-50:
"Ceus lient, batent, fustent, pendent,
Hurtent, hercent, escorchent, foulent, Neient, ardent, greillent, boulent
Devant les treis prevoz laienz, En plein consistoire seianz,
Ceus qui firent les felonies Quant il orent es cors les vies.
Cist par leur tribulacions Estortent les confessions
De touz les maus qu'il onques firent Des icele eure qu'il nasquirent".

Park of the Lamb, which Genius says is like comparing "a fable and the truth" (333)[66]. This fable, the poem, can, in turn, only gesture toward the truth, however. *Deduit* leads the others in the Garden to a life of diversion based on pretense whereas Jesus the Good Shepherd leads the lambs to enjoy simple, genuine pleasures. The fountain in *Deduit* is perilous and ensnares lovers whereas the one in the Park is pure and liberating. Although "the fountain has a traditional place in representations of paradise gardens" (Kay 83) and the dreamer describes the Garden as a *paradis terrestre*, since the fountain stems from artificiality, it is inferior to a fountain in a true paradise. Since the sensual perceptions of the Lover have provided the description of *Deduit* without the benefit of close analysis with the intellect, it is evident that the Lover's choice not to use his reason results in exaggerated perceptions of the Garden.

Genius's comparison of the Park with *Deduit* implies that it is obvious which is the best choice because what the Lover saw in the Garden is impermanent, has been falsely fashioned by humans, and "are trifles and bagatelles. There is nothing here that can be stable: *whatever he saw is corruptible*. He saw carols that will pass away; all those who dance will disappear, and so will all the things that he saw enclosed therein" (333-34)[67]. On the other hand, the Park contains things of eternal quality:

> All who divert themselves therein possess all things that are delightful, true and eternal. It is indeed right that it should be so, for all good things

---

[66] Langlois, line 20288: "de veir a fable".

[67] Langlois, lines 20352-58
"Ce sont trufles e fanfelues.
Ci n'a chose qui seit estable, Quanqu'il i vit est corrompable.
Il vit queroles qui faillirent, E faudront tuit cil qui les firent.
Ausinc feront toutes les chose Qu'il vit par tout laienz encloses".

> well forth from the same fountain, one that waters the entire enclosure; from its streams drink the animals who wish and deserve to enter there after they are separated from the black sheep (334)[68].

While the olive tree in the Park offers salvation through hope and faith, the pine tree in *Deduit* is base and common. Critics have traditionally seen the fountain as a reward: "The fountain of life, symbolic of true generation, is the future reward of those who are willing to drink from it, that is, to follow unstintingly the procreative urge given them by *Natura*, the *vicaria Dei* and *procreatrix* who reflects the mind and will of God" (Economou 115).

Genius tells the barons that the Garden brings one closer to mortality whereas the Park provides eternal life to all who deserve it: "The other makes the living drunk with death, while this fountain makes the dead live again" (337)[69]. Genius promises eternal life to the barons if they will only "Think how to honor Nature; serve her by working well" (337)[70], and

> Be loyal and compassionate, and then you will go by the delectable fields, following the path of the lamb, living eternally to drink from the beautiful fountain that is so sweet and bright and healthful that as soon as you drink its water, you will never die but go in gladness, forever singing motes,

---

[68] Langlois, lines 20383-93:
"Trestoutes chose delitables E veraies e pardurables
Ont cil qui laienz se deduisent, E bien est dreiz, car touz biens puisent
A meismes une fontaine, Qui tant est precieuse e saine
E bele e clere e nete e pure, Qui toute arouse la closture,
De cui ruissel les bestes beivent Qui la veulent entrer e deivent,
Quant des neires sont dessevrees".

[69] Langlois, lines 20625-26:
"Cele les vis de mort enivre, Mais cete fait les morz revivre".

[70] Langlois, lines 20637-38:
"Pensez de Nature enourer, Servez la par bien labourer"

> conductuses, and chansonettes on the flowers among the green grass, as you carol between the olive tree (337-38)[71].

By so doing, "you will never be prevented from entering the park of the lovely field where the son of the virgin ewe in all his white fleece leads his flock with him, leaping over the grass" (328)[72]. After Genius reads his document, "the barons are moved with joy" (338)[73] and hopefulness about the possibility of eternal salvation. The fact that "The principal point about Genius's solution is that it is *not* a solution, except from the Lover's point of view"[74] suggests that Nature and Genius conveniently serve the Lover's interests.

---

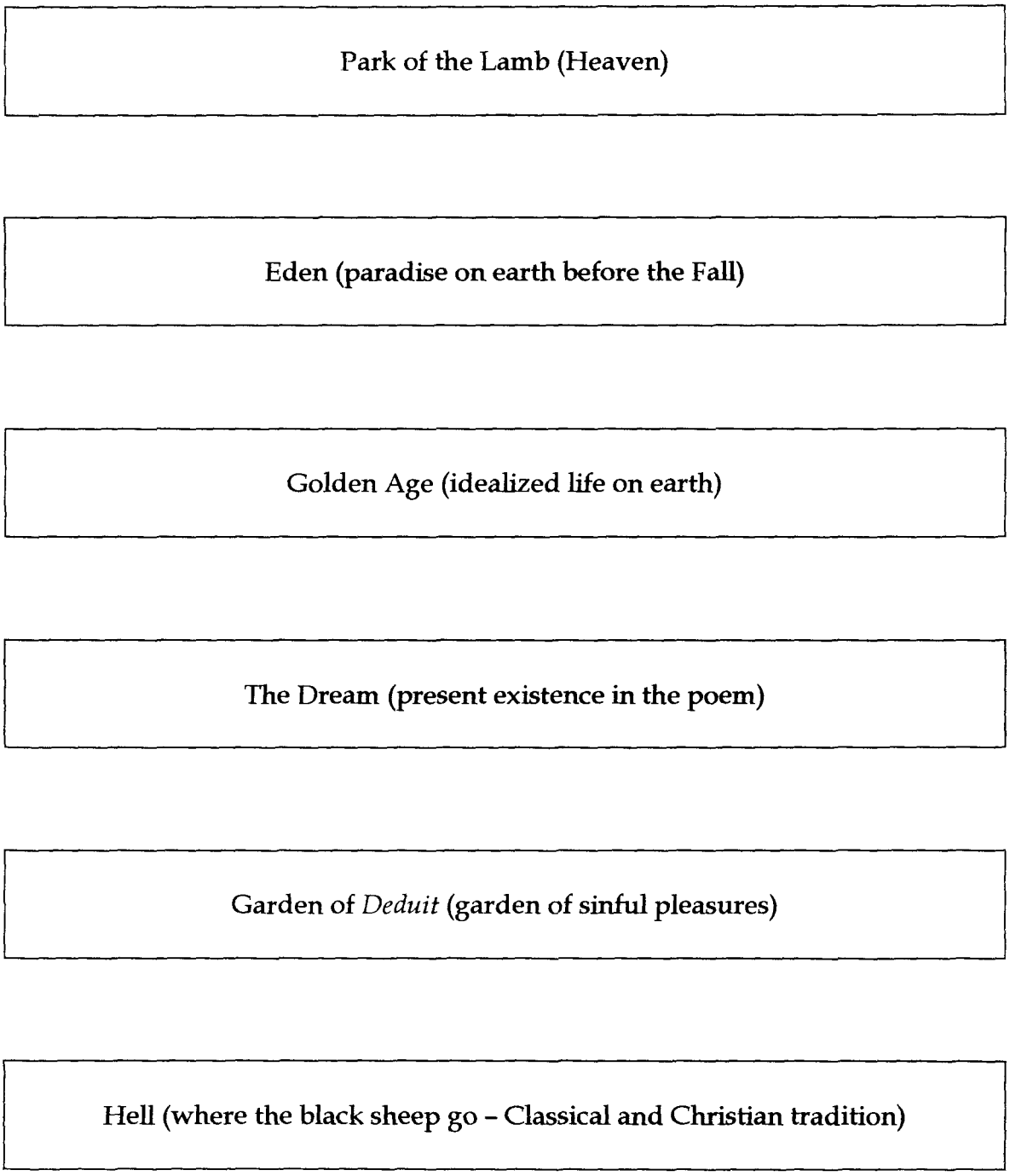
[71] Langlois, lines 20647-59:
"Seiez leial, seiez piteus, Lors ireiz ou champ deliteus,
Par trace l'aignelet sivant, En pardurableté vivant,
Beivre de la bele fontaine, Qui tant est douce e clere e saine
Que jamais mort ne recevreiz Si tost con de l'eve bevreiz,
Ainz ireiz par jolieté Chantant en pardurableté
Motez, conduiz e chanconetes Par l'erbe vert seur seur les flouretes,
Souz l'olivete querolant".

[72] Langlois, lines 19935-38:
"D'entrer ou parc dou champ joli Ou les berbiz conduit o li,
Saillant devant par les erbiz, Li fiz de la vierge berbiz"

[73] Langlois, line 20684:
"Li baron, de joie esmeu".

[74] Dahlberg 416, quoting D.W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer (1962), p. 201, goes on to explain that we are told that Genius's sermon and the events which follow it explain how "'if Nature is actually innocent,' she comes to be 'associated with lechery.' 'The sermon is an elaboration of the counsel of Gen. 1:28: 'Increase and multiply,' for this, in effect, is what Nature does and what Genius urges her to do " Yet we must remember that sexual intercourse, whether or not it is lecherous, is necessary for procreation which is part of Nature's mandate from God

HIERARCHY OF GARDENS/WORLDS IN LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE



PARADIGMS OF "WORLDS" IN LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE

INNOCENCE	EXPERIENCE/KNOWLEDGE/ SINFULNESS
Park of the Lamb	Dream
Eden Before the Fall	Garden of *Deduit*
Golden Age	Hell

ETERNAL	TEMPORAL
Park of the Lamb	Golden Age
Hell	Dream
Eden Before the Fall	Garden of *Deduit*

PURE BEAUTY	ARTIFICIALITY
Park of the Lamb	Dream
Eden Before the Fall	Garden of *Deduit*
Golden Age	Hell

PURE LOVE	LECHERY/BASE DESIRES
Park of the Lamb	Dream
Eden Before the Fall	Garden of *Deduit*
Golden Age	Hell

CREATED BY GOD	CREATED BY MAN
Park of the Lamb	Garden of *Deduit*
Eden Before the Fall	Golden Age
Hell	Dream

CONCLUSION

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's Le Roman de la Rose gradually reveals itself to be a mock secular instructional text on Christian values. While ostensibly a dream-allegory, a Lover's desire and subsequent success in having sex with his beloved, Rose, provides the framework for, amongst other things, the philosophical and religious debate about the reconciliation of the human body and soul via Nature. Although the human body and soul are reconciled in the poem, any discussion of philosophical questions must remain cognizant of Jean de Meun's abilities as a satirist which result in the poem being pervaded by irony and humour. In the duplicitous view put forth in Genius's sermon, the suggestion might be that the reconciliation of the body and soul is not something that is within humankind's power to understand. Or, perhaps the opposite is being suggested, that God's love is so infinite and obvious that humankind belabours this question far too much.

Not only is it the case that there are a multiplicity of views put forth in the Roman, but the hyperboles, extremes, mockeries and humour in the poem suggest that Jean is satirizing and being ironic much of the time. In the Middle Ages, 'satire' was often very straightforward criticism, with no irony or humour, in other words, very *obvious* satire; therefore, it is very strange that in this satire it is not clear whether the writer intends to commend or criticize. Subsequently, it appears as if the Roman, perhaps in part because it is the work of two authors, is a unique form of literature: "The

Roman de la Rose is evidently the first work in European literature to combine a love quest, an art of love, an allegory, and a dream vision" (Arden 20). Given the varying elements of the work, the irony and levity throughout, and the mocking of certain medieval institutions, including the Church and the mendicant orders, any attempt to find an unequivocal message behind the Roman, indeed if there is one particular message, cannot be definitive. At first it appears as if everything and anything in medieval society is satirized in the Roman. However, upon closer examination, one wonders whether what is really being satirized is the writing of satire, especially given that the two parts of Genius's sermon result in equivocation. As well, the seriousness of Church doctrine and the laxity of human behaviour are targets for de Meun's pen.

There is much misogyny in the Roman which suggests that all women are good for is procreation, both as an underlying theme and in particular passages. Genius blatantly suggests this in his advice to men: "Fly, fly, fly, fly, fly, my children; I advise you and urge you without deception or guile to fly from such an animal" (279)[1]. Then, he modifies his position because he will later suggest procreating with these same creatures: "However, I do not say, and it was never my intent to say, that you should not hold women dear or that you should flee from them and not lie with them. Instead I recommend that you value them highly and improve their lot with reason" (280)[2].

---

[1] Langlois, lines 16582-85:
"Fuiez, fuiez, fuiez, fuiez, Fuiez, enfant, fuiez tel beste,
Jou vous conseil e amoneste Senz decepcion e senz guile"

[2] Langlois, lines 16617-23.
"Si ne di je pas toutevie, N'onc ne fu l'entencion meie,
Que les fames chiere n'aiez, Ne que si foir les deiez

Genius then tells the barons to restore their lineages by procreating, and throws down his candle; Venus encourages the candle's "smoky flame" (338)[3] and odour to go amongst the women, which they apparently cannot resist. Passion, Genius acknowledges, must be felt by both men and women; however, this passion is only the means to an end: pregnancy. In fact, there is so much focus on procreation in the poem that it can hardly be considered accidental and without focusing on women's bodies. Although this does not necessarily lead to the reductiveness of women's purpose being only for procreation, several misogynistic passages, including Genius's advice about women, the Jealous Husband's tirade, and the Old Woman's speech implies this. Lines such as "Fair lords, protect yourselves from women if you love your bodies and souls" (279)[4], and Friend's advice to the Lover about putting up with women's deceitfulness so that you can have sex with them, lend themselves to this type of analysis. Although the problem of cupidity is resolved in the poem through nature and divine love, the misogyny in the poem suggests that there is still a problem: if women are such terrible creatures, why would men want to procreate with them? Although nothing can reconcile or explain away misogyny, a partial answer might be found in the fact that much of de Meun's portrayal of sex is ironic: "procreative sex is a metaphor for all the virtues in the *Rose*" (Arden 60). In all the twists of irony and satire perhaps procreative sex for the purpose of procreation is

---

Que bien avec eus ne gisiez; Ainz comant que mout les prisiez
E par raison les essauciez".

[3] Langlois, line 20671: "la flambe toute enfumee"

[4] Langlois, lines 16577-78:
"Beau seigneur, gardez vous de fames, Se voz cors amez e voz ames"

being mocked by Jean de Meun and an equal partnership between men and women, like that which existed during the Golden Age, is being suggested.

Since a marriage or partnership based on equality and pure love made passion acceptable in the Middle Ages and celibacy was institutionalized by the Church, Genius's extolling of the virtues of procreation is unnecessary. Legal marriage was a later concept of the Christian church; in a Christian context in the Middle Ages sexual union was considered acceptable between two consenting adults. The legality of marriage was less important than the agreement between two people to have an equal relationship:

> From the moment of the exchange of consent the couple were married. Subsequent intercourse was not necessary for the validity of the marriage; neither were publicity, witnesses or formal rites ... Marriage contracted solely by consent was sacramental, at least in some sense of that word, although the notion of sacramentality of marriage was slow to develop and did not begin to bear the meanings that modern theologians assign to it until the late medieval period.[5]

In fact, there were two major theories of marriage in the twelfth century, the consensual theory described above, and the coital theory:

> The *consensual theory* held that marriage as in was [sic] in essence a contract between two parties and that the sexual encounter, if any, between them was irrelevant or of secondary importance. The *coital theory*, on the other hand, held that sexual intercourse created a marital relationship between a man and a woman and that the intentions of the parties were of secondary importance in determining whether they were married.[6]

---

[5] James A. Brundage, Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages (1993), Chapter VII, p. 7.

[6] Brundage, Chapter IX, pp 61-62

According to the coital theory, therefore, the Lover's passion for Rose would be acceptable as it resulted in a sexual union that would create a common-law relationship within medieval law. In addition, the fact that pregnancy is hinted at towards the end of the poem ("I so mixed the seeds that they could hardly be separated; and thus I made the whole tender rosebush widen and lengthen" (353)[7]), makes this partnership acceptable to Nature.

In conclusion, in Le Roman de la Rose, through the media of irony and satire, the upheaval of medieval institutions is suggested which would, if followed, result in a more equitable way of living. Nature reveals to humankind that our humanity, exemplified in Christ's humanity and humility, is redeemed through God's grace and love and is, consequently, in accord with God's purpose.

---

[7] Langlois, lines 21727-30
"Si fis lors si meller les graines Qu'eus se desmellassent a peines,
Si que tout le boutonet tendre En fis eslargir e estendre"

WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

Editions of *Le Roman de la Rose* Cited and Consulted

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Le Roman de la Rose (edited by Ernest Langlois; five volumes). Paris: Didot, 1914.

----------. Le Roman de la Rose (edited by Felix Lecoy). Paris: Editions Champion, 1965.

----------. Le Roman de la Rose (edited by Daniel Poirion). Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1974.

----------. Le Roman de la Rose (edited by Armand Strubel). Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1992.

----------. The Romance of the Rose (translated into English by Charles Dahlberg). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

----------. The Romance of the Rose (translated into English by Frances Horgan). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Other Works Attributed to Jean de Meun Cited and Consulted

Jean de Meun. "Jean de Meun's Translation of the Letters of Abelard and Heloise: A Critical Edition, with Introduction, Notes and Glossary" (by Leslie C. Brook, Dissertation). Bristol: University of Bristol: 1968.

----------. "Boethius's *De Consolatione* by Jean de Meun" (edited by V.L. Dedeck-Héry), in Mediaeval Studies 14 (1952), pp. 165-275.

----------. "L'art de chevalerie: traduction du 'De re militari' de Végèce par Jean de Meun" (translated by Ulysse Robert). Société des Anciens Textes Français. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1897.

----------. "The *Testament* of Jean de Meung: Vatican MS 367" (by Aimee Celeste Bourneuf, Dissertation). Fordham University, 1956.

Other Works Cited and Consulted

Aelred of Rievaulx. Spiritual Friendship (translated into English by Mary Eugenia Laker). Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977.

Aers, David and Lynn Staley. The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.

Alain de Lille. The Complaint of Nature. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1908.

----------. Textes inédits (edited by Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny). Paris: Vrin, 1965.

Arden, Heather M. The Romance of the Rose. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987.

----------. *The Roman de la Rose*: An Annotated Bibliography. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1993.

Auerbach, Erich. Mimesis. Garden City: Doubleday, 1957.

Augustine, Saint. De doctrina christiana. De vera religione (edited by Joseph Martin). Turnhout: Brepols, 1962.

----------. On Genesis: Two books on Genesis against the Manichees; and, on the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book. Washington: Catholic University of American Press, 1991.

Baird, Joseph L. and John R. Kane. La Querrelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents. Chapel Hill: 1978.

Boethius. De Consolatione Philosophiae (translated into Middle English by Mark Science). Millwood: Kraus Reprint, 1981.

----------. The Consolation of Philosophy. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969.

Brownlee, Kevin. "Jean de Meun and the Limits of Romance: Genius as Rewriter of Guillaume de Lorris", pp. 114-34, in Kevin Brownlee and Marina Scordilis Brownlee (editors), Romance: Generic Transformation from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes. Hanover and New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1985.

Brownlee, Kevin and Sylvia Huot (editors). Rethinking *The Romance of the Rose*: Text, Image, Reception. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

Brundage, James A. Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

----------. Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages. Aldershot: Variorum, 1993.

Capellanus, Andreas. The Art of Courtly Love. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Riverside Chaucer (edited by Larry D. Benson). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. Somnium Scipionis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1883.

Dante. Il Fiore e Il Detto d'amore. Milano: A Mondadori, 1984.

Dante. La Commedia. Milano: Sonzogno, 1887.

Dictionary of the Middle Ages. Volume 3 (1983).

Economou, George D. The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972.

Fleming, John V. "The *Roman de la Rose* and Its Manuscript Illustrations". Princeton: Ph.D. Thesis, 1963.

----------. The *Roman de la Rose*: A Study in Allegory and Iconography. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

----------. Reason and the Lover. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Ford, Tara. "The Green Knight and Bazarov: Green Men in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Fathers and Sons*". McMaster University, Department of English, January 1997.

Frye, Northrop. Words With Power. Markham: Viking, 1990.

George, F.W.A. "Jean de Meung and the Myth of the Golden Age", pp. 31-39, in The Classical Tradition in French Literature: Essays Presented to R.C. Knight by Colleagues, Pupils and Friends (edited by H.T. Barnwell et al). London: Grant and Cutler, 1977.

Gilson, Etienne. The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

Gunn, Alan M.F. The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of 'The Romance of the Rose'. Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1952.

Hill, Jillian M.L. The Medieval Debate on Jean de Meung's *Roman de la Rose*: Morality Versus Art. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991.

The Holy Bible (King James Version). New York: American Bible Society, 1989.

Hugh of Saint Victor. Selected Spiritual Writings. London: Faber and Faber, 1962.

Hult, David F. Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First *Roman de la Rose*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Huot, Sylvia. The *Romance of the Rose* and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Kay, Sarah. The Romance of the Rose. London: Grant & Cutler Ltd., 1995.

Langland, William. Piers Plowman (translated into Modern English). Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

----------. The Vision of Piers Plowman. London: Everyman, 1995.

Lee, Alvin A. 'The Book of Job', class notes. McMaster University, Department of English, November, 1996.

Lewis, C.S. The Allegory of Love. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936.

Luria, Maxwell. A Reader's Guide to the *Roman de la Rose*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1982.

Macrobius. Commentary on Dream of Scipio (translated by William Harris Stahl). New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.

Ovid. Ars amatoria. The Art of Love and Other Poems (edited by J.H. Mozley). Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939.

------. Metamorphoses (edited by Frank Justus Miller). Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916.

The Oxford Reference Dictionary (edited by Joyce M. Hawkins). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986

Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (edited by A.C. Cawley). London and Melbourne: Dent, 1976.

Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics (edited by Alex Preminger). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Prudentius. *Psychomachia*, pp. 274-343, in Prudentius with an English Translation, Volume 1 (edited by H.J. Thomson; two volumes). Cambridge: Loeb, 1949-53.

Robertson, D.W. A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962.

Rubin, Miri. Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Silvestris, Bernard. Cosmographia (edited by Peter Dronke). Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978.

----------. The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris (translated into English by Winthrop Wetherbee). New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

Thomas Aquinas, Saint. The Summa contra gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas. London: Burns, Oates and Washburne, 1923.

Tuve, Rosemond. Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

Walters, Lori. "Illuminating the Rose: Gui de Mori and the Illustrations of MS 101 of the Municipal Library, Tournai", in Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot, Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

Watson, Nicholas. "The *Gawain*-Poet as a Vernacular Theologian", in Derek Brewer and Jonathon Gibson, A Companion to the *Gawain*-Poet. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997.

Wetherbee, Winthrop. "The Literal and the Allegorical: Jean de Meun and the 'de Planctu Naturae" in Medieval Studies. Vol. 33, pp. 264-291: 1971.