

## MDVL 302: ROMANCE OF THE ROSE: WEEK 2 LECTURE NOTES: 1

### TUESDAY: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Background to literary and intellectual debate in Europe (Raphael, [\*The School of Athens\*](#)):

- the Classical and Late Antique tradition:
  - philosophy, education, public speech (oratory, speeches in political assemblies, law courts)
  - ex. Socrates in the Athenian *agora*, Cicero in the Roman senate
- from the Late Antique to Early Medieval period onward:
  - commentary on sacred texts: on the Bible, Koran, and Torah
  - scholars and their materials circulate: from north-western Europe; around the southern Mediterranean; Byzantine Greece; the Caliphates of Andalusian (Muslim) Spain, North Africa, and the Near East; Persia.
  - discussion and debate continues: courts (which include a continuing legal side), the Church Fathers, Church councils discussing and fixing matters of doctrine and of Biblical interpretation
  - “native” forms of debate, criticism, and commentary in public *fora*: Althing, parliament, king's council, privy council
- textual commentary in education:
  - monastic and cathedral schools (and private tutors)
  - universities (late 12<sup>th</sup> c. on): Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Milan
  - public debates and disputations as free and popular entertainment: presentation of cases in courts (and their judgement), university debates

#### 2. Demonstration of what a “book” is and, perhaps, isn't.

### THURSDAY

#### 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE *ROMANCE OF THE ROSE*

##### Who & why:

- Guillaume de Lorris:
  - no further information available, beyond the reference to him in the Jean de Meun *Rose* (by Love: p. 162-4 in Jean's *Rose*)
- Jean de Meun: c. 1240s-1305. Other main works: translation (Latin to French) of Abelard & Heloïse's letters, and of Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*. References to political events at the University of Paris suggest activity there in the mid-1250s (Jean's *Rose* p. 182)
- intended recipient? Patron for whom the works are composed? Unknown. Reasonable conjectures may be made, based on known patronage patterns in other texts of the period. I made one in class: Guillaume's poem, written for a middle-aged gentleman in midlife crisis, who wishes to be reminded of his giddy youth: in a nostalgic and indirect way, though, not in a way that might make him envious, jealous, and threatened by a young derring-do protagonist.  
That is a hypothesis: no more, no less. Alas!

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But: as this is a literary work, it can be read in a literary way (and this is, after all, a literature class), so all hope is not lost. The work remains *readable* and things said by a first-person voice, “I,” still provide us with some information on authorial intent (ex. in Jean .)

What:

- a long verse narrative: that is, a poem that is also a narrative.
- octosyllabic rhyming couplets: standard form by this time for French romance, also for other verse narrative (shorter works such as *lais* and *contes*)
- a romance (Guillaume, p. 3, 32; Jean, p. 162, last 1/5 of page: and a reference to the inclusion of both parts as one whole work).  
**NB:** Further notes on romance further on in these lecture notes: I'll summarize the extra material added in class today.
- name: “the *Romance of the Rose*, in which the whole art of love is contained” (Guillaume, p. 3).<sup>1</sup>
- the *Mirror of Lovers* (Jean, p. 163): the *mirror* is another Medieval literary form. Some mirrors are also romances. Some are first-person voice lyric poems, often of a spiritual, contemplative nature. Many are instructional manuals (such as Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore*, which is alluded to in the “art of love” reference on p. 3)

When:

- manuscripts (320+): late 13<sup>th</sup> c. through 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>
- if Guillaume is writing 40+ years before Jean (p. 162), Jean is writing not before 1268 and not after 1285 (references to Manfred, Conradin, and Charles d'Anjou, p. 101-3), and Jean would have been at least 15-16 in 1255 (Paris University, Guillaume de Saint-Amour crisis: p. 182): then Guillaume's *Rose* = 1230s and Jean's *Rose* = 1270s.

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<sup>1</sup> The original Old French: *ce est li romanz de la rose / ou l'art d'amors est tote enclose* (l. 38): there is no systematic capitalization of proper nouns in this period, nor indication of titles as we have now; and this is a poem, so in common with other poetic works of the period—and other works too—words are used allusively, encompassing more than one sense simultaneously. Other elements here include:

- “this is the romance about the Rose”:  
the one that's about the Rose, as opposed to other romances. The full sentence incorporates an offhand joke about romances without names, or with unsuitable names, or with overly length ones: *et se nuls ne nule ne demande / commant je vueil qu li romanz / soit apelez que je coumanz* = more literally “and if any man or woman asks what I want this romance that I'm starting to be called.” Romances and other works would often bear no title in a manuscript, and may bear different titles in different manuscripts, in descriptive material outside the main text: in rubrication at the very beginning of a manuscript (“here begins the...”), at the very end (“here ends the ...”), inscribed at the top of the first or final page. There will be other jokes, and more serious comments, about names and naming in Jean's *Rose*: ex. Reason next week.
- “in which the complete *Art of Love* is contained/enclosed”:
  - Ovid's *Art of Love* (*Ars amatoria*): along with the *Amores* (love poems) and *Metamorphoses* (Narcissus), important intertextual references for Guillaume's *Rose*. Jean' *Rose* will expand the Ovidian catalogue “enclosed” within this romance.
  - Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore* (*The Art of Courtly Love*), 12<sup>th</sup> c.
  - the “art of Love” that is the ten commandments of the God of Love, which is “enclosed” in the structural and dynamic centre of the Guillaume poem, along with a key.
  - the art/manual/guide to love/loving: the definitive one?

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Where:

- France
- manuscripts, expansions and contractions, rewritings, translations, and other reworkings and refashionings spread throughout Europe. This is one of the most widely-read works of the European Middle Ages. It continues to be read, printed, and reprinted through the 16<sup>th</sup> century, has a short lull in the 17<sup>th</sup>, and will be one of the first Medieval vernacular—non-Latin—literary works to be the subject of a modern scholarly edition in the 18<sup>th</sup> c.

From where and what:

Source materials used in building the *Rose*:

- Classical Greek and Roman material. Greek mostly c/o Latin translations and adaptations, rather than directly
  - the *auctores* who are “the (great and only) authors (apart from The Creator),” “authorities,” “authoritative,” lend authority to argument, and give weight to conclusions, messages, moral guidance. *Auctores* may be abused too: name-dropping adds support to weak arguments, pulls the wool over the reader's eyes when cited at the end of an argument, and distracts the reader through know-it-all showing off:
  - love poetry, including (ex. Ovid, Horace, Virgil) didactic, educational, “how-to manual” materials
  - longer narrative poetry, including epic (ex. Homer, Virgil)
  - history and politics (ex. Cicero)
  - theorists, assorted (ex. Macrobius)
- French and other historical material:
  - including epic poetry (*chanson de geste*)
  - ex. Charlemagne, Charles d'Anjou
  - contemporary historical, political, and social elements: monks misbehaving, fat friars, scandals, rumours
- French, Occitan (also sometimes called “Provençal”: the “troubadours”), and Latin literature of the 10<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> c.
  - love-lyric (the Occitan *canço*, ex. by Bernart de Ventadour; the French *grant chant courtois*, ex. Thibaut de Champagne).
  - Lyric poetry = in verse, first-person-voice, from that first-person point of view, sung or chanted/declaimed; the usual subject-matter is love, though other aspects of individual inner life, emotions, and psychology also occur, not necessarily accompanied by amorous matters.
  - prayers, complaints, and other lyric poetry (this category often overlaps with love-lyric, as poems will often bear at least two simultaneous senses)
  - debate-poetry, often playful, sometimes frivolous or obscene (Occitan *tenso* and *partimen*, French *jeu-parti*)
  - shorter verse narrative (*lai*, *conte*, *fable*, *fabliau*), whether primarily sung or not, including a whole sub-genre around judgements in amorous casuistry, often in ridiculous hypothetical cases (*judici d'amors*, *castia gilós*)
  - in turn: this earlier French and Occitan poetry is connected to and weaves in lyric poetry in

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Arabic, Hebrew, and mixtures. Spain: Mozarabic poetry, often multilingual and including early proto-Spanish (*muwashshah*, 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> c.); Sicily (esp. 12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> c., and one of the routes for cross-fertilizations with sufi poetry); from contact with the Near and Middle East, c/o the Crusades and continuing trade (11<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> c.). This is a literary continuum, a melting-pot (albeit without its modern political liberal loading): borrowings, loans, thefts, and re-workings

- Classical to contemporary abstract, philosophical, spiritual, moral, and political material:
  - deities (ex. Venus), personifications of human attributes/qualities, allegorical figures, virtues and vices
  - these will shift around continuously throughout the text: a plain word in its common sense, Abstract Concept With A Capital Letter, personification/embodiment, more fully-fleshed character
- Older, recent, and contemporary works of ideas and scholarship: treatises, principally philosophy and science, ex. cosmology and linguistics (Jean's *Rose*)
- Last but not least:
  - the Bible
  - contemporary mores, conventions, norms, rules: many of them attached to Christian precepts

In both parts of the *Rose*, the following phenomena may be observed:

1. the insertion of material, embedded or “enclosed” (to use *enclose* (l. 38 in the original), translated as “contained,” p. 3) within the main body of the text. Some forms that this takes:
  - stories recounted by a character: for example, the retelling of Narcissus's tale in the Guillaume *Rose* (p. 23)
  - parallels and examples: you will meet many of these in the Jean *Rose*
  - anecdotes: ditto
2. material woven into the text:
  - translation and adaptation, without attribution: ex. Love's commandments (32-40) c/o Ovid
  - allusions: ex. to Charlemagne (p. 23), Kay and Gawain (p. 32)
  - popular sayings
  - loaded words: ex. “love,” “torment,” “imprisonment”: loaded through their heavy use in earlier lyric poetry, with a narrow vocabulary. Reuse of such words in later work includes a nod back to how and where they were used previously; often also playing on ambiguities and multiple senses. “Love” is a particularly fine example...
3. digressions!
  - less so in Guillaume's *Rose* than in Jean's
  - for aesthetic and rhetorical purposes: embellishment, rendering the work rich and ornate
  - this is a dream: it is only loosely subject to conventions in plot and momentum. While each of the poems (the first and its continuation) is a quest and adventure, and has a structural beginning, middle, and end:

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4. Both works are verse romances. Also, the work *as a whole* is a romance: with a first part and a continuation. Parallels: Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot* is left unfinished, and completed by Godefroy de Legny; worse, Chrétien's *Perceval or the Grail* is unfinished, and there will be three verse continuations in the early 13<sup>th</sup> c. (anon, Gerbert de Montreuil, Manessier) plus prequels (*Bliocadran*, *Perceforest*) and a whole prose cycle...
5. NBBB: They're *romances*: hence digression in class today. The main points on what romance is:
  - Primary and oldest sense, in the hard evidence of extant textual records (including inscriptions): *romans* refers to language.
    - ex. Guilhem de Peitieu/William IX (the first known Occitan troubadour), early 11<sup>th</sup> c.: *romans* contrasted with *lati* = a vernacular language of the Romance group vs. Latin. The term *en roman(s)* will be used in Occitan and French; eventually French will start using other more-French-looking words to refer to itself...
    - the Latin/non-Latin distinction is important: throughout our period (and the earlier one), Latin remains the major language of writing: literature, works of ideas, scholarship and science, law and theory, and all things good and serious. The (gradual) move is a significant one: from the earlier status of vernacular languages = lower status and truth-bearing stature: everyday, common parlance, for speaking, less formal, not meant to be written; writing is serious: it's for things that are true, and important, and it should be in Latin. The mere act of *writing* in a language that's not Latin is a giant leap.
  - Works that talk about themselves as being “in romance” demonstrate a larger sense of the primary, linguistically-descriptive one: translation. One text in one language, reworded in another: Virgil, for example, is a popular candidate.
  - Translation in a broader sense:
    - transposition, adaptation, reworking, changing some features that are irrelevant, incomprehensible, or contrary to contemporary life and audience. “Refashioning” can range from details such as clothing, to social/behavioural norms and background social structures.
    - details, episodes, characters, and whole sub-plots may be added
    - the general sense and message may be altered
  - Romance may mix, meld, fuse, conflate, and/or juxtapose material (stories, plots, plot-lines, details, characters) from various sources, origins, traditions: in any combination and permutation, in many ways, and to widely varying degrees:
    - the “matter of Rome” = Classical materials: ex. the foundation-narratives/myths of Greece and Rome, including Homer's and Virgil's versions of the Trojan War
    - the “matter of Britain” = Arthurian materials; “Britain/*Bretagne*” here being England, the British Isles, Wales, Cornwall, Scotland, Ireland, Brittany (in north-west France), or the area that used to be continuous land, way back in the day, linking what are now Cornwall, the southern English coast, the Channel Islands, and the northern French coast from Normandy to Brittany
    - the “matter of France” = French history. Mainly Charlemagne and his merry men, also other old noble families.

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- also: material from Byzantine Greece, Persia/Iran, northern India, and from what are now Turkey, Syria, the Lebanon, Egypt, and further afield in the Near and Middle East.

So: conflation + hybridity.

- The form/shape of romance is also a hybrid one, using and blending aspects of:
  - epic and/or history
  - other narrative forms: having plot, being told by a narrator (3<sup>rd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> person)
  - lyric poetry: especially individual, personal aspects: internal, psychology, motivation, reflection; and love
- In all the aspects of fusion, conflation, melding, etc.: romance may weave its elements together seamlessly, or demonstrate more clearly-defined distinct layers. Such layering isn't (just) meant to drive readers mad: it's for aesthetic purposes, to embellish and enrich the text. Like embroidery on textiles, ornate carvings in stone, musical flourishes, detailed gem-studded jewelry, and—perhaps most obviously—Gothic cathedrals.
  - Compare, for example, Guillaume's *Rose* to Jean's: in the latter, you'll see embedded inserted sections, tangents, digressions, examples from *The Authorities*, further examples, anecdotes, direct citations, etc.

### EPILOGUE

- While most romance of the 12<sup>th</sup> - mid-14<sup>th</sup> c., is French, there are other parallel kinds of writing elsewhere in Europe, some of them directly related (ex. in Welsh and German).
- Romance is catchy and spreads throughout Europe from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. French romances (including the *Rose*) are translated into other vernacular languages, including English; there will be a veritable boom in English romance in the 15<sup>th</sup> c. (starting with Chaucer and Gower back in the 14<sup>th</sup>.) The term “romance” changes: the elements of non-Latin vernacular language
  - + translation (narrow through to broad senses)
  - + narrative/lyric hybridremain: but the close association with “Romance-group language” goes.
- There are two other major shifts in the literary history of romance, both occurring in the post-Chrétiens de Troyes period: from the 1190s through to the 1230s.
  - experimentation and innovation: formal and structural, including many of the interesting formal elements in both parts of the *Rose*; witty cross-referencing across romances; parodies (ex. *Le Bel Inconnu*); continuations;
  - a move to prose: with rewritings (ex. the prose *Lancelot* and *Tristan*) and continuations (ex. the whole *Lancelot-Grail* cycle). Prose is supposed to be truer: the kind of writing used for legal, religious, and scholarly matters; appropriate for true things. Compare to the shift from Latin to the vernacular: similarly, an attempt to acquire higher status for this different—less serious, not true—kind of writing.

Welcome to literature.