

MDVL 302: ROMANCE OF THE ROSE: WEEK 3 LECTURE NOTES: 1

(The Rough Version: fuller-fleshed version will be posted at the end of the week.)

TUESDAY

1. Structure and construction of Jean's *Rose*

Models, maps

Non-linearity:

- construction from a centre outwards for the whole work, for each section (Guillaume/Jean), for each section (Reason, Friend, etc.).
- visualizing construction in circles, spirals, and loops
- embeddings, frames, Chinese boxes, *mise en abyme*
- a sense of the work *as a whole*. Remember: it's also a *book*, and one of the features of romances that distinguishes them from other kinds of literary work is that they have a physical identity as a book: occupying one or multiple volume(s), less likely to be fragmented and scattered around in collections and compilations (Montreal work)
- Jean's *Rose*: not just a continuation: also an expansion, a rewriting (taking each major figure in the Guillaume poem), a commentary on it, a critique of it, and—by the bye—a “super-book”, “meta-romance,” and encyclopaedia.

2. Reason as a case study

- structure of section and arguments
- pattern of arguments, evidence, tangents
- types of discourse and evidence: pure reason, Classical (Latin) authority, etc.

3. Commentary and criticism: links for and aft

- aft: Jean rewriting, continuing, elaborating, commentating on, and answering back to Guillaume's version of reason (compare passages) and Love's comments on decent, proper, courteous speech
- fore: the topic of decent, proper speech will be connected to other kinds of honesty; contrasted with the dishonesty of Friend's cynical manipulation and deceit; and building up towards False Semblance's section
- further fore: the problem of “improper” words; doubly wrong when used inappropriately: in the mouth of a woman (so to speak). One of the principal bones of contention in the early 15th century *Querelle du Roman de la Rose*.

4. The *Querelle*:

-Christine de Pisan and Jean Gerson vs. Jean de Montreuil, Bros. Gontier & Pierre Col. A first major literary debate in Europe¹: that is, about literature, by *littérateurs*

¹ An important precursor: literary debates in the form of exchanged poems, in the later 12th c, about the point and purpose of poetry: Raimbaut d'Aurenga and Guiraut de Bornelh, on *trobar clus* vs. *trobar leu*. Which sort is better: the “closed,” rich, complex, using sophisticated complicated words, where ideas are hidden, their secrets (often including code-words and in-jokes) to be unlocked by the (similarly sophisticated) intended clever audience? Or a poetry using simpler words, potentially clear to all, but with more complex ideas?

MDVL 302: ROMANCE OF THE ROSE: WEEK 3 LECTURE NOTES: 2

- some of the major issues:
- impropriety, obscenity, blasphemy
- misogyny + adding insult to injury: tarring all women with the same brush (fallacy from the particular to the general)
- reading, good reading / the right (and only) reading, truth
- literal vs figurative, metaphorical readings: allegory and exegesis
- authorial intention vs. audience reception
- authorial responsibility: whether or not a poet may be permitted to separate *his own views* (as expressed by a first-person narrative and/or commentating voice) from *the views of his characters*
- propriety and appropriateness: what it is “proper” and “fitting” for a character to say, and constitutes “behaving in character” for them
- judging, evaluating, and potentially condemning a book *as a whole*: even on the basis of condemning *certain parts*?

Key external texts:

- Aristotle, *Poetics*
- Aristotle, *Complete works* and problems around the teaching of Aristotle at Paris University in the 13th - 14th c.: ex. Étienne Tempier's 129 Articles of Condemnation, 1277.)

Intro/bridge: Friend

- narrative continuity
- different character and characteristics: chatty, charming
- light relief: use of changing styles to add texture and the “plotless” equivalent of pace

THURSDAY

More Friend:

- the Golden Age

Love:

- testing the Lover
- about the *Romance of the Rose*: key passage on authors, and the work itself

Faus Samblant

- fealty scene with Love, Love's barons, and in front of the whole Army: parallel to that of the Lover with Love, alone, in Guillaume's poem
- put to the question: interrogation, due legal process, argument, proof
- the special status of promises (however ridiculous they might look)
- Faus Samblant on hypocrisy, vice, and the End of the World (a.k.a. *Apocalypse Now*)
- but an odd sort of true love conquers all: FS and Constrained Abstinence defeat Evil Tongue by guile, deceit, and back-stabbing. This is the decisive moment that will lead the Army of Lovers to take the Castle (and free Fair Welcome and/or get the Lover to the Rose)

Criticism and commentary:

- contemporary social and political satire: criticism of greed, corruption, and hypocrisy

MDVL 302: ROMANCE OF THE ROSE: WEEK 3 LECTURE NOTES: 3

- attacks against monks, but also the (newer) mendicant orders (especially Franciscans). Tied to the Paris in 1255 Guillaume de Saint-Amour affair, via appointments at Paris: placed from outside; not chosen by the faculty, who operated by a guild-structure.

Problem of control and power: the guild that was the university c/o its members? Paris? The Bishop? The Pope?

- intellectual freedom: problem of control over the curriculum: especially the physical and metaphysical works of Aristotle, and dealing with conflicts with Christian doctrine (the Creation vs. Cosmology, for example); problem of the free circulation and discussion of heretical works: could they be safely studied (and potentially refuted and *intellectually* destroyed) by university scholars? Should they only be touched, with metaphorical gloves and at a safe distance, by the most pious and incorruptible clergy? Should they just be burned—*physically* destroyed?

- anti-fraternalism as a case in point of *how* criticism works:

---fair comment? Or caricature, and going too far?

---an attack on the whole Church? Is that overstepping the mark? Should everyone be equally fair game for criticism, or should certain individuals and groups be accorded special protected status, or indeed a privilege of immunity?

---on a whole religion? Blasphemy?

---an attack on a certain kind of human behaviour: misanthropy, with the monkish variety as just one species of the broader category?²

---on the whole of humanity?

SNEAK PREVIEW FOR WEEK 4:

The Old Woman:

Compare its misogyny (“anti-women” aspect) to that in Guillaume's poem, and to the treatment of Reason. This is another section of the *Rose* that will prove highly contentious in the 15th c. *Quarrel*.

Recap of the anti-fraternalist critical points:

---fair comment?

---permissible? Or impolite, discourteous, rude? Should women be protected and accorded special status, as the “fair and gentle sex”? Or would that be a discourtesy and unfairness in its own right?

---an attack on specific women, types of women, or all women?

---can misogynist critique be paired with misandrist (“anti-men”) criticism: that is, criticizing men for specifically *male/masculine* traits, failings, weaknesses? Pair the Old Woman's comments on men with those of Friend, for a cynical how-to manual, a user's guide to the human species. Can an argument be made for an idea of balanced misanthropy (“anti-human”): attacking *all human beings*--and a sense of “human being” as a bonus?

---or, again, is *any* attack on women an attack on all humanity? (There will be a sneaky trick here involving Eve and the Virgin Mary.)

---and should a whole work be condemned because of a part? Is this another element that gives us some idea of “a work” and “a book”: not just physically/materially, it is complete as it is a single and unified object?

² Subtle point/reading: Jean's *Rose* as a poetic, metaphorical contribution to questions of categories and knowledge: ongoing scholarly debate about Aristotle's *Categories* (part of the logical works, the *Logica vetus*, known and studied through the whole course of the Middle Ages).