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*The Rose, the Vergier, and the Pictured Surface:  
Representing the Garden in Textual, Visual, and  
Material Culture in France and Italy, c. 1170-1410*

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**Abstract:** This thesis investigates secular representations of gardens in textual, visual, and material culture in France and Italy between 1170 and 1410. The most important text is Guillaume de Lorris' seminal *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1230), which circulated widely and wielded an immense influence on later imaginary gardens. The structure of the poem's garden – a sequence of boundaries treated as ekphrastic set pieces – established a pattern of oppositions and constructions that would be refashioned by later poets and artists. The thesis is deeply concerned with boundaries, with enclosure, and openings, but it takes a novel approach in gathering varied forms of artistic expression from France and Italy, crossing material and disciplinary thresholds to place art and literature in direct contact. The thesis demonstrates that the garden emerged as the site *par excellence* for the exploration of self-reflexivity, working as a place where art and nature were bound together, and where it was possible to reflect metaphorically on artistic composition, textual and pictorial. Poetry of the period was intensely focused on the construction of literary artefacts, and on the text itself as artwork; in turn, visual and material culture was centred on and shaped by the 'multimedia' qualities of the codex, and intended for literate audiences that expected playful re-imaginings rather than straightforward illustration. The garden was key to these wider phenomena. Chapter one examines the richly ornamented outer limits of the garden in the *Rose*, both in the text and in the illuminated codex. Chapter two focuses on the fountain as a site of reflection and perception within the garden, showing how playfully this place was reinterpreted in and beyond the manuscript. The third chapter is dedicated to the secular painted gardens in the papal palace at Avignon, where the green places of romance were elevated to an extraordinary prominence.



Durham  
University

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

**The *Rose*, the *Vergier*, and the Pictured Surface:**

**Representing the Garden in Textual, Visual, and**

**Material Culture in France and Italy, c. 1170-1410**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Carthy

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Fig. 3.56. Historiated initial. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1320 – 1330, Meaux, Médiathèque Luxembourg de Meaux, Meaux BM 52, f. 1r.

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## **Introduction: Gardens and the Process of Creation**

This thesis is concerned with secular representations of gardens in art and literature in France and Italy during the medieval period, but particularly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when there was a unique blossoming in the employment of the garden — the *vergier*, or the *verziere* — as a means of conceptualising the process of artistic creation itself. Whilst a number of actual gardens appear throughout, the thesis is not directly concerned with what might be thought of as the medieval garden of modern popular conception; a place, that is to say, with simple beds of medicinal herbs or fruit and vegetables intended for the kitchen, though these relatively mundane places certainly proliferated during the period. The gardens that are dealt with here are of a literary, and artistic kind, frequented by the poet, the reader, and the lover, and they are places rich in symbolic associations and allegorical significance, in fantastic pieces of garden architecture that stretch or surpass the limits imposed by their own materiality, and in a peculiar and recurring preoccupation with outer perimeters, with openness and enclosure. The garden, in medieval culture, is a site of self-reflexivity and meta-poetic sophistication that in its complexity and unique melding of art and nature allows for poetry and art alike to reflect on their own genres and the creative processes that are relevant to each field, but it also allows individual art forms to explore wider relationships with other art forms, becoming, at the same time, a site of interaction and exchange between them. We find, continually, that these interactions are of a very playful nature, repeatedly teasing at the boundaries that seem to separate them, reshaping them, refashioning them, and pushing them to their limits.

The real gardens that feature here do so because they represent attempts to transpose, translate, and transplant the gardens of literary and manuscript culture

more broadly into a real life setting, but this always occurs in conjunction with the illusory and artificial, the open air greenery breaking into painted interiors and continuing the pushing around of boundaries, and indeed, the inversion of them, that we find constantly on smaller scale objects forming part of the expanded culture of romance literature, and in those romances themselves, where the garden presents such a complex, variegated *topos*. The thesis argues that many of the gardens we see emerging in different media during the period as apparently disparate and disconnected phenomena actually form part of a much more unified and interconnected growth, as though branching out from a single stem and substructure. These gardens are varied, as already noted, and as we shall see, but the purpose of the pages that follow is to re-establish some of the many interconnections that in reality bind these ostensibly discrete places together in dialogue with each other and with that larger current of fascination with artful management of nature and the place of the natural in art and literature. We may imagine these places as individual leaves or blossoms dancing in the wind on the surface of a great tree that stands like a monument, but they are leaves of shapes and colours of all different kinds. As Sarah Kay has shown admirably, this would not be an anachronistic construction to place on medieval thought, where the image of the tree is ‘ubiquitous’; Kay notes that ‘[t]he various structures that it offers – the vertical axis of summit and base, the network of roots and branches, the progression from flower through fruit and seed – seemed to medieval writers the ideal of systematizing and unifying thought’ (Kay 2007: 19). Alternatively, or perhaps at the same time, the interconnections can be thought of as a web or textile of allusions (more netlike than a branching structure) where the threads do not only spread out and divide in clear, easily traceable lines of descent, but cross each other’s paths, dipping in and out of view, and creating,

together, a wider picture of the culture's preoccupations both within and beyond the garden. Again, this is a metaphor that was employed during the medieval period itself.

Throughout the thesis, there are a number of threads that we shall find running right through that woven but sometimes maze-like cloth. One of the most important of these threads — a golden thread — comes in the form of Guillaume de Lorris' hugely influential and widely disseminated *Roman de la Rose*, which did so much to shape fashions, tastes, and, culture of the fourteenth century as well as the thirteenth. Recent scholarship on the *Rose* and its reception has focused almost exclusively on Jean de Meun's continuation of the poem, and on the *querelle* that it provoked in the early years of the fifteenth century, more recently turning to the intellectual and institutional context in which the second poet was writing. The field has expanded rapidly in these areas, with leading contributions from Pierre-Yves Badel (1980), Sylvia Huot (especially 1992, edited with Kevin Brownlee, 1993, and 2010), Jonathan Morton (2018), as well as Eric Hicks (1996), and Christine McWebb (2007).<sup>1</sup> Jean de Meun is the sole focus of the 2017 volume on the *Rose* edited by Jean-Patrice Boudet, Philippe Haugeard, Silvère Menegaldo, and François Ploton-Nicollet,<sup>2</sup> and also of the 2020 volume edited by Morton, Marco Nievergelt, and John Marenbon, *The 'Roman de la Rose' and Thirteenth-Century Thought*, which builds on Morton's earlier work (2018) looking in detail at the clerical and academic debates of the 1260s and 70s, the period in which Jean de Meun was

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<sup>1</sup> Badel, proceeding with an exclusively textual focus, showed that the *Rose* had an extremely diverse readership, touching all members of society. Hicks and McWebb especially have contributed to the ongoing conversation about the *querelle*, which centres around Christine de Pisan's allegation that Jean de Meun's poem presented women in an unfavourable and unfair light. Guides to the immense body of scholarly literature on the *Rose* have been published by Heather M. Arden (1993), Herman Braet (2006), and Fabienne Pomel (2012), but the field continues to grow.

<sup>2</sup> The approach of the 2017 collection is as much biographical as literary: by contrast the most recent attempt to recover a historical Guillaume de Lorris was Lejeune 1976: 5-17. That nothing is known of him is frequently repeated as a kind of truism.

working on his continuation. Morton in particular has given a privileged place to Jean de Meun at the expense of the earlier poet. Whilst acknowledging that ‘Guillaume de Lorris has emerged as a much more complex and ambiguous author than previously thought’, he has lamented that ‘[d]espite the considerable disparity in the length, complexity, and influence of the two sections, Guillaume’s part is often given almost as much consideration as Jean’s’ (Morton 2015: 81-2). It is no longer the case, however, that equal consideration is given to the first poet. Scholarly attention has taken a decisive turn towards Jean de Meun’s response to the *Rose*. Recent scholarship has sometimes even taken to questioning whether Guillaume existed, attributing his poem, on occasion, to Jean.<sup>3</sup> Morton’s idea that the continuation was actually ‘far more influential’ than the original poem is, moreover, founded on unstable assumptions. As Sylvia Huot has argued, the *Rose* was ‘no sooner written than it was rewritten’ and Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun are ‘by no means the only writers who worked on the poem’ (Huot 1992: 203). Responses came early, even before Jean’s intervention, and continued long after, picking up especially on the structure and imagery of the original work.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This has recently been argued by Christopher Lucken (2017). Pierre-Yves Badel has quite rightly observed that ‘cette opinion ne mérita d’être discutée que le jour où elle sera soutenue par des arguments plus que solides’: Badel 2017: 285. Lucken’s argument is not new; the idea that Guillaume was a mere persona of Jean’s was first set forth by Roger Dragonetti (1987), and has been supported by Luciano Rossi (2003 445; 2008: 363), but has otherwise failed to gain wide acceptance. Christine McWebb (2020: 3 n. 2), apparently on the fence, comments that ‘[t]he date of composition and indeed the existence of Guillaume de Lorris have never been conclusively proven’, but neither has the implausible and entirely modern notion of his non-existence. The question is a red herring. The fact that there are, as Lucken emphasises, themes that are shared between the two parts of the *Rose* should not surprise us, since Jean necessarily must have read and attempted to integrate his work with that of his predecessor. Older scholarship in French, including works by Paul Zumthor and Daniel Poirion (both 1975), as well as the criticism of such figures as C. S. Lewis (1936), presented the two poems as essentially different rather than a single indivisible entity, whilst Alan M. F. Gunn sought in 1951 to argue the opposite, that the works form a coherent whole. The distinction between the parts is immediately apparent to the reader, however, and modern attempts to demonstrate the unity of the *Rose* as a whole tend to be convoluted.

<sup>4</sup> There is, in fact, considerable evidence that Guillaume de Lorris’ poem originally circulated independently. Only one extant manuscript (Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 12786) now contains Guillaume’s work on its own; another manuscript (Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1573) contains both, but Jean’s continuation has been added at a later stage: see Hult 1986: 21-4, 89-92;

Older scholarship was quite right to observe that ‘[t]he love vision, as Guillaume used it, became the dominant genre of courtly verse narrative. The dream, the idealized spring landscape, and the allegorical personages became the stock devices of love poetry until at least the sixteenth century, and for countless readers Guillaume defined the elegant craft of aristocratic love’ (Benson 1988: 685). These devices are present in Dante,<sup>5</sup> in Boccaccio, in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, and many other well known poetic monuments besides. Jean, by contrast, was not so interested in these central aspects of the poem he appropriated, and the garden and much of the coherent structure of the initial dream narrative disappear from view amid his encyclopaedic philosophising and retellings of classical myths. C. S. Lewis concluded that Jean ‘utterly lacks, perhaps despises, Guillaume’s architectonics and sense of proportion’ (1936: 137). A more recent scholar, Alice Lamy, has characterised Jean’s poem as a ‘Romance of the Non-Rose’ (2020). What Lewis aptly termed the ‘architectonics’ of Guillaume’s garden is precisely what concerns us here.

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Huot 1992: 233 n. 27; Strubel 1992: 38. Strubel’s edition of the *Roman de la Rose* takes fr. 12786 as the basis for its text of the first poem. Gui de Mori, who wrote an influential reworking of the *Rose* in 1290, claims that he first read the *Rose* without Jean’s continuation, and only discovered it at a later stage, subsequently incorporating it into his own adaptation. At that point another poet had already composed a new ending to Guillaume’s work, which Gui de Mori took to be the original conclusion. Another thirteenth-century rewriting of Guillaume’s text, *Le Roman de la Poire*, by a poet who calls himself Tibault, was composed around 1250, again predating Jean’s continuation: on the *Roman de la Poire*, see Huot 1987: 174-208. This text, Huot has shown, relies on *compilatio* as a poetic principle, and it is worth noting that it is bound together with Guillaume’s *Rose*, Richard de Fournival’s *Bestiaire d’amour*, and other texts in the aforementioned fr. 12786 (without Jean’s poem). The other complete surviving texts of the *Poire* survive both alone (fr. 2186), and bound with a range of other works (fr. 24431).

<sup>5</sup> It remains uncertain whether the ‘Durante’ named as the author of *Il Fiore* (a sonnet-based Tuscan paraphrase of the *Roman de la Rose*, seemingly composed c. 1281-93) can be associated with Dante, and the body of literature on the subject is large. For *Il Fiore*, see the edition of Gianfranco Contini (1984): the question of attribution is discussed at xxvii-xxxix. An English translation has been published, along with notes, by John Took (2004). There have also been numerous studies on Dante and the *Rose* in general, including Richards 1981, where the circulation of texts in Old French within Italy is explored in some detail; on this factor and ‘the widespread Francophilia of Florentine culture’ in the late thirteenth century, see also the more recent article by Antonio Montefusco (2020), who dates *Il Fiore* to the later 1290s (154-5). Montefusco observes (149) that, regardless of the authorship of the sonnets, ‘[t]he appearance of the French poem, [...] must have been a substantial event in Florentine cultural and intellectual life for it to have warranted any sort of interest, let alone a translation/adaptation.’

There is no reason, besides, why there should be any correlation between, on the one hand, length and complexity, and on the other, influence.<sup>6</sup> In any case, I contend that the influence of the *Rose* was not confined solely to the sphere of literary production, and that this cannot be made the only measure of its importance. This thesis picks up an older conversation about the first part of the poem that was led by John Fleming (1969), David Hult (1986), and the 1984 collection of essays edited by Jean Dufournet. This conversation has fallen comparatively silent in recent years, but needs to be brought into contact with more recent scholarship on ekphrasis, in particular, and also with visual and material culture produced in the centuries that followed the original composition of Guillaume's *Rose*.

Any study of representations of the garden in the medieval period will naturally have to dedicate a large amount of space to the monument that was the *Rose*. Although this is not a straightforward study of the reception of the *Rose* – the focus is on the garden – it is also necessary to discuss both the literary background to the poem and its relationship with some of the works produced in response to it over the course of the following centuries. The project here spans the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, taking in some of Guillaume's direct or indirect sources in French verse and one in particular of his literary successors in Guillaume de Machaut. Richard de Fournival, one of Guillaume de Lorris' contemporaries, makes an important appearance because of his theoretical (but concrete) conceptualisation of the relationship between author and reader, as well as his association of the library with the garden.

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<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, qualities of brevity and simplicity can evidently exert a powerful effect. The thesis does not argue, however, for the simplicity of Guillaume's poem, which should not be taken for granted.

Machaut's was one of the most significant poetic voices of the fourteenth century, but he returned again and again to the *topos* of the garden, reshaping its architectonic and symbolic form whilst relying always on the foundational 'building blocks' – as Kevin Brownlee has put it – of the *Rose* (1984: 197). Little may be known of Guillaume de Lorris, but rather more is known of Guillaume de Machaut, and discoveries are still being made. Machaut studies have expanded rapidly in recent years, especially with the publication in 2021 of *Poetry, Art, and Music in Guillaume de Machaut's Earliest Manuscript (BnF fr. 1586)*, edited by Lawrence Earp and Jared C. Hartt, together with Domenic Leo. Much of the recent scholarly attention has been devoted to Machaut's innovations as a composer, but this groundbreaking study dedicated to one extraordinary manuscript – Machaut's first single-author compilation – has balanced its tight focus with a genuinely interdisciplinary breadth of approaches and opened up new avenues for research. Machaut provides a key link between the text and the world of visual and material culture, partly because his own manuscripts, which were sumptuously illuminated affairs, were in certain cases overseen by the poet himself, and yet by no means strictly tied to the idea of accurate illustration of the accompanying verses.

This transformation of the codex, in Machaut's case, into a 'solo exhibition' as opposed to more of a 'variety show' compilation, such as had predominated in the previous century, represents an enormous milestone in the history of the book. It is one respect in which the culture of the mid-fourteenth century departs from the way in which many twelfth-century literary productions like the *Rose* were originally disseminated. Anne Stone deals in the aforementioned volume with the 'geography' of the manuscript page in relation to the text of the *Remede de la Fortune*, one of Machaut's best known *dits*. In fr. 1586 this text is bound together with the *Dit dou*

*lyon*, which opens – uniquely in this manuscript – with a miniature depicting a garden that has been connected with the famous garden park at Hesdin in Artois, which Machaut is known to have visited. Absent from existing studies, however, are his connections, through his patrons, to the papal court. There, too, he will have encountered some memorable gardens, both inside and out. Because of what we know about the courtly circles in which Machaut moved, he also provides an unparalleled insight into the culture of elite patronage (of art and literature) that provided an immediate context for his own refashioning of the *Rose*.

The force of the *Rose*'s influence reached a climactic intensity in the unique cultural melting pot that was created with the move to Avignon by the papacy in 1309. It is there, in the very home of the pope, that we can see the fullest expression of what we might term the culture of the *Rose*. Paul Binski has already noticed in passing that one of the rooms in the papal palace at Avignon alludes to 'the seigneurial culture of the *Roman de la Rose*' (Binski 2000: 223). This is an observation that has gone undeveloped, and the thesis builds significantly on it by demonstrating the connections between secular literary culture and the poeticised (painted and planted) gardens at Avignon. Erwin Panofsky famously argued that the move to Avignon had minimal effect on the history of fourteenth-century painting (Panofsky 1971: 24), but this has rightly been challenged and conclusively shown to be a false assumption by a range of scholars including Enrico Castelnuovo, Michel Laclotte, Dominique Thiébaud, and more recently Étienne Anheim and Dominique Vingtain. Laclotte and Thiébaud especially have been instrumental in presenting a view of the papal court at Avignon as the actual centre of European art for most of

the fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The Avignonnais shaping of the art of painting is now clearer than it was, but there is still a tendency to undervalue the extant fresco cycles at Avignon. One, in particular, of the famous painted rooms in the papal palace at Avignon – the *Chambre du Cerf* of Clement VI (the same room cited by Binski) – has recently been characterised as a ‘harbinger’ of a *late* medieval trend for ‘green chambers’. These, we are told, ‘first appear in European art and architecture in the second half of the 14th century (especially at its end)’, only achieving genuine popularity at a still later stage in the succeeding fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Adamska, Nocuń, Ratajczak, and Záruba 2022: unpag.). This view reflects the continued currency of what should be an outdated scholarly attitude, already present in earlier writing on representations of gardens: Jack Goody, for instance, claimed that ‘visual forms’ of the enclosed garden ‘did not appear [in Europe] until the later fourteenth century’ (1993: 116).<sup>8</sup> The painted gardens at Avignon, which actually appeared in the *early* fourteenth century, were more than anticipatory forerunners for a later flowering, though they certainly did exert an extraordinary and direct influence on similar fashions well beyond Provence. I expand the focus here to include the bower-like bedchamber of Benedict XII, which was also used by his

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<sup>7</sup> Much of the scholarship on the painted rooms at Avignon has focused on evaluating the presence of Italian artists in the city and the court, and on assessing the dominance of one or the other party during the recognised periods of especially vibrant artistic activity. It is clear that French and Italian painters worked alongside each other, but the view that is now traditional is that Italian and especially Sieneese painters had the upper hand during the mid-1330s to early 1340s (see esp. Castelnuovo 1991: *passim*). Michel Laclotte and Dominique Thiébaud have presented a view of a gradually waning presence for these Italian painters in the following century (1983: 63-115), and Guido Castelnuovo has recently reinforced this idea in an article dealing with the difficult period after the return of the papacy to Rome in 1377 (2024: 38-43). He accounts for a more assertive French (and northern) influence on art in Avignon during the Schism (1378-1417) and afterwards by arguing that Italian families still living in the city were anxious to integrate with local elites, and therefore favoured French artists in diverse fields with their patronage.

<sup>8</sup> Goody’s account of the development of the garden in western art is largely shaped by those of John Harvey (1976, cited in Goody 1993: 116; also Harvey 1978; idem 1981), but these accounts must now be modified in certain particulars. Goody mentions the pavilion, for instance, as one feature of medieval European gardens transmitted directly from Sicily, North Africa, and Muslim Spain; Harvey identified the pavilion with the *gloriette* structures that appear in several places, but Jeremy Ashbee (2004) has demonstrated that the derivation is not so simple as formerly assumed.

successor Clement VI, and the actual gardens that formed part of the ensemble. I argue that these places, real and fictive, also reflect a tradition of older and deeper growth, with roots in the literary culture of romance.<sup>9</sup>

This culture is characterised as a literary culture here, but this should not be taken to mean that the written word has a primacy over the painted one, because if the painted, woven, or carved surface is explicitly concerned with its literary inheritance, we find that that same literature is itself concerned with images above all else, treating them in extraordinary ekphraseis and toying with them as artefacts of superior but sometimes fickle beauty.<sup>10</sup> ‘Codex culture’ may in fact be a more incisive term. Much of this thesis deals with the connection between text and image which come together in the playful expression of the layout of the garden space on the manuscript page, and indeed on the interior walls of real surviving monuments of the age. In the thesis, the manuscript, the text, and the painted and draped interior are put into close contact with each other, and I contend that these thoroughly interdependent fields should not be segregated into separate boxes. Without denying that different media have their respective places within histories of their own particular category, I argue that in bringing together these fundamentally connected

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<sup>9</sup> The term ‘green chamber’ is a recent coinage translating a term used in Czech scholarship since the 1960s (see Krása 1964: 289), itself related to but rather different from the German formulations *Rankenmalerei* or *grünmonochrome Wandmalerei* (see Adamska, Nocuń, Ratajczak, and Záruba 2022: unpag.), which have been used, respectively, for the twining foliate forms sometimes seen in these settings, or the overall green effect in certain painted interiors. Neither term is widely used in English, French, or Italian scholarship, and neither characterises the painted gardens explored in the thesis well enough to warrant employment here. These painted rooms are in fact too varied to be identified with such a narrow term, indeed sometimes making relatively little use of green, and sometimes no twining forms, though we certainly do encounter both. Gardens have a tendency to break out of the boxes we might put them in.

<sup>10</sup> Ekphrasis is an ancient concept that normally designates a lengthy descriptive passage devoted to an object, which may be real or imaginary, but it is especially associated with works of art. The term was used in antiquity both in a poetic and rhetorical context: Callistratus was responsible for a work entitled *Ekphraseis* and numerous other authors, including Philostratus and Lucian, produced collections of ekphrastic essays entitled *Eikones*. One important characteristic of the ekphrasis is that it tends to push the boundaries of what is really possible, giving animation to the inanimate: an example might be found in the attribution of speech or some other action to a static visual representation of a given personage, or indeed object. In medieval literature, ekphrastic objects are often given precisely this kind of agency, as we shall see.

aspects of a united culture we see the real flower and fruit of the garden as a means of exploring the place of nature in art and art in nature. In this approach I am influenced by Anne Dunlop, who ‘occasionally blur[s] categories usually kept separate’ (2009: 10) by, for instance, juxtaposing poetry and painting as a means of shedding light on both. I expand this aspect further to cover a wide range of artefacts large and small, but also narrow the focus to a single domain: that of the garden.

The thesis focuses especially on liminal zones, showing that, whether we are sitting in the (actually adjoining) fields of art or literature, these are always the sites where the greatest playfulness is possible, one medium shedding light on the construction of another or butting up against its neighbours with a sense of playful transgression. While the objective is to explore connections, we will find that these open up many areas of complexity. Speaking of the world of the codex, Martha Dana Rust has observed that manuscript illuminators ‘exploited the tension between word and image to brilliant effect, conveying meanings that do not properly reside in either text or image alone’ (Rust 2017: 17). Amanda Luyster has a similar idea: ‘the text [...] explains the image, and the image makes the text concrete, but the overlap between the two is not exact. Therefore the relation is not one-to-one, whereby the text and image move in lockstep, but the mismatch generates a creative dissonance, a generative difference. Text and image rub against each other, they open up spaces in between, and another dimension is born [...] This spatial image is richer and more compelling, less rigid, than either text or picture alone, and it quivers with the movement of life’ (Luyster 2012: 156). Rust approaches the manuscript thinking of what the illuminator brings to the text, and Luyster is thinking, from another angle, about how inscriptions included within a fresco alter the meaning of the images, which have a sort of primacy in that context. The involvement of the reader, whether

of text or image – or both in edgy combination – in studying and interpreting a given surface or series of surfaces adds another dimension that cannot be ignored.

Paul Zumthor famously argued for what he called the ‘*mobilité essentielle du texte médiévale*’ (1987: 71), referring to the processes of transformation and renewal that are enshrined in the transmission of the medieval text, especially where variable elements (text, image, and so on) coalesce in different combinations along the way, with the text necessarily undergoing a metamorphosis at each step. This idea of *mobilité*, or *mouvance*, has become a keystone of medieval studies. More recently, however, Stephen Nichols has sought to complicate this model of transmission by arguing for an alternative process that he has (employing a tidily oxymoronic metaphor) termed ‘mutable stability’. This he defines as ‘*the ability of an object to adjust to load changes without any reduction in performance*’ (2016: 71 – emphasis Nichols’). Nichols seeks to reconcile the dynamic changeability of the medieval text (which is not to be denied), with a recognisable and essential or innate quality in that text itself, which renders it capable of resisting the stress of the more radical readerly response and reinterpretation, and thus able to retain its unique identity and ‘performance dynamic’. How that ‘performance’ is to be measured is difficult to say. The risk here is that we end up prioritising the written word again, reviving the author but doing injury to the reader in the process. In some specific cases, namely with Machaut, we know that certain manuscripts were produced with some involvement on the part of the author, meaning that interpretative choices will inevitably be attributed to the poet himself, and performative success taken for granted. The situation is, in a way, more complex with the *Rose*, with its longer, less well documented, and altogether knottier transmission history. As chapter one argues, there are signs that suggest that Guillaume de Lorris anticipated aspects of

the future transmission and reception of his work within the illuminated codex, but we must be willing to afford greater credit to the reinterpreters of the *Rose*, and to acknowledge that its themes and structures could take on a new life both in and beyond the codex.<sup>11</sup> The poem was not only rewritten from the point of its initial appearance, after all, but also translated into different media throughout the following centuries. It was refashioned, reworked, and reclothed to suit a plethora of different materials and contexts, but within these expanded fields of creative endeavour there is less of a need to insist on the innate ‘stability’ of the textual production. A more pertinent question might involve the extent to which a given response, regardless of the medium, bears or is conscious of the weight of the ‘original’ text. It is necessary for us to navigate a path through such apparent contradictions, but the idea of movement remains central to our understanding both of the *Rose* and its reception. The contradictions or oppositions between progress and inertia, pliancy and firm-rootedness, are embodied in the garden-based dream narrative. The garden itself is a treasury of such apparent contradictions, ripe for the picking by poet, artist, or artisan.

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<sup>11</sup> Badel presented a view of the *Rose* (both Guillaume and Jean’s work) as unusually stable, undergoing little in the way of major transformation due to the immense esteem in which the work was held (see esp. Badel 1980: 144). Fleming had likewise seen the poem’s original reception as a fairly monolithic entity, attempting to reconstruct a representative “‘medieval reading’” (1969: 3) (as opposed to its ‘modern reputation’) rather than a range of diverse views on the text. The distinction between ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’ here flattens slightly the variable nature both of the text and its interpretation. Other recent scholarship on the *Rose*, as noted above, has focused on the text as an impetus for debate more than as a work presenting one clear doctrine to all its readers, but Sylvia Huot has been most decisive in complicating the notion of a single reading, demonstrating that the poem was indeed ‘subject to *mouvance* [and] remaniement’ (Huot 1993: 11): see also Huot 1987; idem 1992. Huot, crucially, has adopted a less exclusively text-focused approach than Badel, continuing Langlois’ work of examining individual and unique manuscripts in detail and exploring the relationship between text and image on the page. As far as the *Rose* is concerned, I build on Huot’s recognition that each manuscript offers a unique reinterpretation of the poem, but I take this beyond the codex itself, linking text and manuscript with wider expressions of literary culture during the fourteenth century especially. If it is possible to recover anything like Fleming’s ‘medieval reading’ or ‘reputation’, the text has to be brought into contact with expressions of visual and material culture that formed part of the experience of reading the *Rose*.

The thesis examines the spaces between text, image, author and reader, and the attempted bridging or crossing of them closely. Major monuments within the field of allegorical landscape — at least within a literary context — have been left by C. S. Lewis, Ernst Robert Curtius, and A. Bartlett Giamatti, and their work has been augmented by Paul Watson, Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, Lucia Battaglia Ricci, and many others. Charles Segal's short but seminal 1969 study on landscape as a framing device for human and divine action in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which demonstrated how that poet turned the *locus amoenus* forever into an ambiguous site where conventional pleasantness could signal danger, added significantly to our understanding of the complexity of the natural backdrop in medieval as well as ancient literature.

This thesis draws upon these works, but also on a range of scholarly contributions of a more art historical nature, generally dealing with the visual and material sources examined in the thesis that have, in accordance with their various respective categories, tended to be treated separately, in the more or less discrete bodies of literature devoted to the range of implicated fields. Even between the study of the painted wall and the painted page there has often existed a barrier that is in many respects arbitrary, since, as the thesis demonstrates, the two actually reflect each other closely. The thesis is looking to bring these disparate fields together, and in this respect it builds upon some important earlier work within medieval studies that has sought to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the arts and 'multimedia' qualities aspired to during the period, especially when text maintains a place actually alongside or more loosely in the cultural background of the image. Influential work has been done here by Amanda Luyster (2011), Michael Camille (1985), Meyer Schapiro (1996), and others. Particularly important also to the thesis are works by

Enrico Castelnuovo, Paul Williamson, William Randall, Alison Stones, and Lori Walters. On manuscripts, Machaut, and the *Rose*, Elisabeth Eva Leach, Domenic Leo, Sarah Kay, Sylvia Huot, and Bob Mills. On the ekphrasis in medieval literature more generally, during the twentieth century a long and unjustly maligned poetic device, a particularly astute contribution has been made by Linda M. Clemente, whose observation that ‘the natural contiguity which results between the ekphrasis as a representation of an artwork within the poem as artwork makes the reader more aware of the poem itself as a product of artistic creation’ has been key to the conceptual framework of the project and its understanding of the included texts and their respective gardens (Clemente 1992: 10). The garden is itself, after all, a kind of innately ekphrastic construction in its literary manifestations, albeit one that is typically pieced together through a number of smaller ekphrasis. These always draw attention to the construction of the containing text. Other important contributions on the ekphrasis within medieval studies have been made by Murray Krieger (1992), Douglas Kelly (1992), Mary Carruthers (1998), Claire Barbetti (2011), and Valerie Allen (2015).

Paul Watson, whom we have already mentioned, has been particularly influential on the shaping of the project because of the breadth of his scope and the depth of his engagement with the Tuscan garden as it appears in a wide range of texts, images, and artefacts. His thematic and almost topographical approach, with chapters devoted, for example, to ‘Poets by a Fountain’ or ‘The Garden of Love in Florence’, has set an important example that has influenced the organisation of the thesis. Seminal works by Andrew Martindale and Anne Dunlop on secular painted interiors have been essential for the third chapter especially. Both Watson and Dunlop are explicitly concerned with an Italian Renaissance context, although both

do reach beyond the range of their narrower focus, seeing fourteenth-century secular artistic and literary production in France and Italy as having sown the seeds for later developments.

The thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining close textual and visual analysis with a sustained focus on materiality and artefactuality to suit the wide range of different types of materials that are implicated within the scope of the project as a whole. Where the gardens of fourteenth-century interior decoration come to the fore, especially in later chapters, the analysis takes the spatial arrangement and phenomenological experience of the inhabitant or visitor to the relevant sites into account, combining this with documentary evidence to fill the gaps in the (visual) evidential record that remain, but stressing the fact that these rooms are given animation by the progression of the viewer through the spaces, just as texts are given new lives by their readers, especially within the complicated transmission context of the medieval illuminated manuscript where scribes and artists re-interpret and transform texts as they pass them on. The reading of text and image, whether separately or conjointly, is always an interactive process requiring active participation of the reader. This builds upon earlier chapters which focus on the progression of the narrator through a series of spaces within a garden, crossing boundaries and encountering obstacles, seeing and failing to see various aspects of those interpretative surfaces encountered along the way. All of the materials discussed in the thesis have been studied first hand with manuscripts consulted in multiple libraries and research institutions, including the British Library, the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, the collection of the Assemblée Nationale, the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Richelieu site), and others. Relevant sites with painted interiors preserved in France and Italy

have been visited multiple times: these include the Château de Saint-Floret, the Papal Palace at Avignon, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Villa Tornabuoni-Lemmi, Palazzo Datini, the Castello Castelbarco at Sabbionara d'Avio, the Castello della Manta, and Castel Roncolo (Schloss Runkelstein). As a general rule, when it comes to these painted interiors, photography gives a tremendously unsatisfactory (sometimes next to useless) idea of the experience on-site, but illustrations have been included here to assist the reader as much as possible. This project builds on the author's earlier Masters by Research thesis, which examined Robert d'Orbigny's *Li Conte de Floire et Blancheflor* (c. 1170) and the reception of this romance in France and Italy over the following centuries. The focus there was primarily textual, but the themes of literary artefactuality – or 'literary factitiousness', to employ a term coined by Norris Lacy (1992: 24) – and intertextual exchange that were at the forefront of that project have provided part of the intellectual foundation for this new research.

Guillaume de Lorris' portion of the *Rose* was composed around the same time as some masterpieces of gothic sculpture where naturalism is taken to an extreme point of delicacy, representation, and refinement, as in the extraordinary foliate capitals carved for the *jubé* (rood screen) of Chartres cathedral about 1230 (of which two examples can be found in the Musée du Louvre). Most of the expressions of visual and material culture discussed in the following pages come, however, from the century and a half that followed Guillaume's *Rose*, and like the poem itself and the codices in which it multiplied, the thesis is concerned in general with flat or almost flat surfaces – sometimes an arrangement of several flat planes even – where the illusory image becomes a site of interpretation. Small-scale relief carvings in the form of handheld ivories, which actually functioned very like the codex, and other comparable artefacts are included alongside the manuscript and the painted interior,

but to address gardens in architecture and the complicated subject of gothic naturalism more broadly – a vast field of study in itself – would require a much larger remit than is possible within the bounds of the thesis. The question, for instance, of whether the medieval period as a whole tended towards naturalism derived from close observation or abstraction (or ‘schematism’) is not directly relevant to the project,<sup>12</sup> which deals with a range of different examples that exhibit varying degrees of stylisation and mimetic completeness.

The thesis argues that playfulness is one of the key characteristics of representations of gardens in the period, and a particularly large place is afforded throughout to Guillaume de Lorris’ original *Roman de la Rose*, the text that, more than any other, set off the garden-mania, and indeed the fascination with roses that infused just about every aspect of the courtly culture of the fourteenth century, by which point Guillaume’s poem was thoroughly embedded in the imagination of artists, poets, patrons, princes, and even popes.

Playfulness is a key characteristic of Guillaume de Lorris’ *Roman de la Rose*. Paul Watson, in his excellent and important 1979 monograph entitled *The Garden of Love in Tuscan Art of the Early Renaissance* (28), described the first part of the *Roman de la Rose*, which was still widely read in Italy as well as France throughout the period with which he was concerned, as ‘less dryly humorous’ than other twelfth and thirteenth-century explorations of the garden theme from France, such as Andreas Capellanus’ (twelfth-century) *De arte honesta amandi*, but playfulness and humour and indeed characteristics of the poem, as all scholars of the *Rose* know well. Had Watson read the text in the original language, he would surely have

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of this question that takes both sculpture and manuscript images, especially those in medieval botanicals, into account, see the first chapter of Givens 2005: 5-36.

modified his view here. Guillaume de Lorris' original *Rose* features a serious exploration of poetry and visual representation, both of which are shown, separately and simultaneously, to be misleading and trustworthy. This exploration is relentlessly juxtaposed, however, with a consistent and apparently inconsequential taste for wordplay that bubbles along on the surface of the text, enlivening it and drawing attention to the poet's keen sense of irony. His dazzlingly intense imagery and overt emphasis on structure, which is vividly rendered throughout, is nevertheless kept slippery, as though slicked with water from the Fountain of Narcissus, at the same time exceptionally clear and spread with strange reflections that divert and mislead. The strange power and appeal of the *Rose* is partly a product of its deliberate contradictions — the constant shifting of its real dream landscape and impossible ekphrastic imagery, and its ambiguous marriage of true and false appearances — which give the poem so much of its resemblance to real dreams. It presents the reader with a sequence of artefacts, vividly realised but unstable, fleeting, and fugitive, with its plot and allegory little more than a progression through and between them. That instability opens up possibilities for re-interpretation and for other poets and artists to draw freely on the poem's example while also bringing in new dimensions to it. The constant concern with the materiality of these artefacts, which always present a puzzle of sorts to the narrator and reader alike, gave them a natural appeal beyond the sphere of literature alone and we can see its influence spreading widely into the visual arts.

The structure of the thesis as a whole follows the concentric organisational principle that is ever-present in the *Rose*, with an inward trajectory from the exterior to the interior, examining the liminal spaces along the way. The thesis moves, like that poem's narrator, from the outer garden wall to the fountain, and finally to the

foliate and floral interior, with a special focus on the bower formed from vegetal materials. These garden substructures also correspond roughly with what John Harvey called ‘the rudiments of the walled garden, pool and pavilion’, that together made up the medieval *hortus conclusus* (1976: 21, quoted in Goody 1993: 116). Already there is an irony here that is implicit in the progression: we begin with the external face of the garden wall, a monumental and highly ornamented structure, and we finish at the end with interiors, which are also painted, but an inversion has taken place in between, with the inner walls of these spaces, which are set within a *real* monumental context, opening up on their very limits with varying degrees of illusory expansiveness to create gardens that enclose but do not entrap the inhabitant. Readers approaching the material from a background in the study of texts will be used to themes of self-reflexivity and self-awareness within a literary context, and in medieval texts such as the *Rose* these preoccupations are explored chiefly through the ekphrastic construction of literary artefacts and the relationship established between poetic fiction and the dream vision. The garden is essential to the genre of the dream vision and represents itself a kind of topographical ekphrasis or *topothesia*,<sup>13</sup> which, however, tends to contain smaller ekphrastically developed divisions within its encompassing boundaries. Linda M. Clemente sees the ekphrasis as key to the self-reflexivity of many medieval romances, suggesting that ‘ekphrasis are [...] statements of the author’s own ingenuity or *engin*, [and] the hyperconscious creation of art within art’ (1992: 5). Claire Barbetti has described the text that is

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<sup>13</sup> The *topothesia* is another ancient concept that relates closely to the idea of the ekphrasis, of which it is really a subcategory. The *topothesia* is specifically, as the word suggests, a description of a *topos*, or ‘place’. It is sometimes considered a more precise term than *topographia*, which can describe real sites, since its use is limited rather to the description of imaginary places. Servius’s commentary on Virgil’s *Aeneid* (1. 159.1) is generally credited with having introduced the term into textual criticism. The conventions relating to the use of the *topothesia* are different in French literature to those in ancient verse, but the concept remains important for our understanding of the dream gardens of medieval poetry.

framed as a dream vision, meanwhile, as innately ‘a text that contemplates composition, both the process of composing and that of apprehending a composition’ (Barbetti 2011: 17). These are two interrelated aspects of the object-focused literary tradition on which Guillaume de Lorris, most of all, was drawing in the *Rose*, and that he left to later generations via that literary monument.

The objective here, however, is partly to demonstrate that these same qualities of self-reflexivity and self-awareness are present in other art forms during the period: the garden is always implicated in the exploration of artistic as well as poetic composition, and offers a wealth of metaphors for the many processes involved in the act of creation that unite the text with visual and material culture. Of fourteenth and fifteenth-century painted rooms specifically, Anne Dunlop has observed that ‘[t]here is almost no surviving cycle of secular decoration that does not suggest a self-consciousness about its own mimetic qualities’ (Dunlop 2009: 53). This is largely a result of the literary culture that shaped these sites, but the gardens of painting and sculpture also have a playful self-reflexivity of their own, which exploits the unique possibilities afforded by the specific processes, constraints, and qualities of the medium itself. The argument within individual chapters of the thesis moves between artefacts of different kinds, with the focus sometimes more textual, and sometimes more visual, spatial, or material, and this is an indispensable and unavoidable result both of the interconnectedness of the arts during the medieval period, where the garden is the site *par excellence* for such meetings to occur, and of the ‘multimedia’ juxtapositions out of which the thesis’ readings and conclusions are drawn.

Chapter one deals with the structure and artefactuality of the *Rose* and its constant play with themes of opening and enclosure, with interpretative boundaries

that teasingly conceal and reveal. The garden wall is both the starting point and the centre-piece of this chapter. The chapter shows not only how the garden is shaped through these themes, but also the manuscript folio, with its extraordinary combination of and interaction between text and image; this includes a particular focus on a group of fourteenth-century manuscripts illuminated by one individual, the so-called Fauvel master, who engaged with these themes in a particularly perceptive and insightful way. The second chapter leads the reader deeper into the garden to the second prominent, but no less important, piece of garden architecture, which is as the chapter shows a site of reflection as well as self-reflexivity, of intense intertextual activity, and a point of contact between different arts. The chapter shows how poets, ivory carvers, and painters played with the idea of a fountain set within a garden, also using it to enlarge upon the opposition of clear insight and the deceptive appearance in a sophisticated exploration of the image. In demonstrating the intertextuality that centres on the *Rose*, this chapter looks beyond that text to the work of Guillaume de Machaut in particular, before proceeding to another garden fountain that was just as attractive to artists and patrons as a place to reimagine and reshape — always in a spirit of humour and with a desire to surprise. The fountain emerges as a site that plays with scale and the subjective response, but also establishes itself repeatedly as monument to the process of creation itself, whether as a literary or artistic construction. My reading of the fountain is less concerned with its place in the medieval love allegory, and more concerned with it as a confection of layered artistic and literary connotations that produces an intense self-consciousness as well as a window that opens onto other works. The final chapter brings us to the centre of the garden and to a centre of influence in another sense, arriving at Avignon during the period of the Avignon papacy, and focusing particularly on the

secular representations of gardens that were painted in the interior of the palace that was the centre of the Christian world. This chapter shows the immense influence and prestige of the *Rose* and the literary and wider manuscript culture that, more than other text, this poem embodies.

## Chapter One

### 'Toute enclose': The Painted Wall and the Threshold of the Garden in

### Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose* and its Fourteenth-Century

### Manuscripts

#### 1.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the hugely influential first part of the *Roman de la Rose*, composed by Guillaume de Lorris around 1230, and its extraordinary concern with themes of enclosure and opening, liminality, structure and framing. These themes appear right from the outset: 'Ce est li romanz de la rose, / Ou l'art d'amours est toute enclose' (ll. 38-9). The rhyming of the eponymous 'rose' with 'enclose', programmatically stresses the thematic importance of enclosure in the poem as a whole. Boundaries and the spaces that lie on either side are of paramount importance in the *Rose*, which is constructed through encounters with a succession of vividly but ambiguously realised concentric layers; these layers, frames, or thresholds either grant access to Guillaume's narrator or forbid him from entering deeper into the garden. The first and most important of these boundaries is the high, fortified wall which encloses Deduit's (or Diversion's) garden, whose surface, adorned like the manuscript page with text and image, is the subject of an extended ekphrasis designed, like the allegorical poem itself, both to conceal and to reveal meaning.

This, the first highly fortified and ornamented structure that we meet, not only establishes the edges of the garden which will be the arena of all the allegorical action to come, but also stands at once as an illuminated frontispiece and a forbidding façade at the threshold of the poem, a representation of the illustrated text itself. The narrator must study the surfaces of this wall carefully, before he is finally

granted access into the garden by the figure of Oiseuse ('Idleness'). This chapter looks not only at the wall, but especially at the comparatively neglected figure of Deduit, because he is, according to Guillaume, the one responsible for having demarcated the outer limits of the *hortus conclusus* and having set its contents apart from the encircling meadow by ordering the construction of this curious boundary. The paired but oppositional ideas explored in the first section of this chapter – those of enclosure, framing, openness, liminality, and locking – will provide many of the methodological and interpretative keys that will be employed in the rest of the thesis, where I will examine the playful ways in which extant visual and material culture of the fourteenth century in particular refashioned the site of the garden in the wake of the *Rose*.

I argue that these themes, embodied in the built and woven fabric of the *Roman de la Rose*'s dream landscape, would go on to influence later imaginary gardens of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but would be reconfigured according to the receiving and transmitting medium. These same themes remain ever present in representations, literary and otherwise, of the garden, which is always set up through layers that interlace the natural and artificial. The poem's fascination with literary artefacts, and with itself as a kind of poetic construction, will later in the thesis be put in touch with a wider range of actual artefacts that in varying ways exploit and reimagine the garden theme, but the focus in this chapter is first on the text and then on the codex, with particular attention given to a range of especially innovative frontispiece miniatures associated with a single illuminator, the Fauvel master. These respond to the paired themes of the poem in an unusually perceptive manner.

A significant section of the chapter addresses the traditional connection between text and textile, an analogy that recurs as a self-reflexive leitmotif throughout Guillaume's poem, and here I argue, drawing on some of the twelfth-century literature that influenced the *Rose*, for the importance of the conceit within a specifically poetic framework. The key texts here are Marie de France's *Guigemar* and Robert d'Orbigny's *Floire et Blancheflor*, both of which associate the precious woven and embroidered cloth with the progress of the poem, a theme that Guillaume would develop significantly in relation to the garden, his central fabrication. Here, too, text and textile are drawn together into a symbiotic metaphorical relationship with each other. The second of these source texts (*Floire et Blancheflor*) will also be relevant to the next two chapters, since its especially heightened sense of literary artefactuality and fascination with flowers anticipated and helped to shape many of the literary and artistic developments associated with the site of the garden that were to come.

The textual analysis of the first part of the chapter leads naturally into a consideration of responses to the *Rose*, which are enshrined and embodied within the very manuscripts that contained and transmitted the text to its courtly readers. The study of the illuminated codex that takes up the final section of this chapter sets down important groundwork for chapter two, where I connect manuscripts with the wider field of creative production inspired by romances like the *Rose*, extending from small-scale ivories to monumental frescoes.

## 1.2. *In primo limine*: Defining the Outer Limits of the Garden

Early on in the *Rose*, the gatekeeper, Oiseuse, tells the dreamer (while he is still hovering on the threshold of the garden) that Deduit – the proprietor of the poem’s *hortus conclusus* – collected the exotic specimens with which it is filled and oversaw the arrangement, planting and growth of the garden:

[...] deduit le mignot, le cointe.  
C’est cil a cui est cil jardins,  
qui de la terre alixandrins  
fist ça ces arbres apporter,  
qu’il fist par le vergier planter.  
Quant li arbre furent creü,  
Le mur que vos avez veü  
fist deduiz lors tot entor faire  
et si fist au dehors portraire  
les ymages qui i sont pointes,  
qui ne sont ne mignotes ne cointes,  
ainz sont dolereuses et tristes  
si com vos orendroit veïstes (*Roman de la Rose* ll. 590-602).

Oiseuse recounts that Deduit, having prepared and superintended the development of the garden’s chief ornaments – the trees – next set about arranging for the outer limits of this space to be clearly delineated and, more importantly, for the interior and exterior to be separated from one another by a protective frame or box. From the perspective of an outsider, the garden and this wall which surrounds it appear perfectly square and regular in form (l.467; l.515), and it is later made clear that this

squareness is equally apparent once one has entered (ll.1320-2), regardless of how ambiguous and changeable the interior topography may seem to be in other respects.

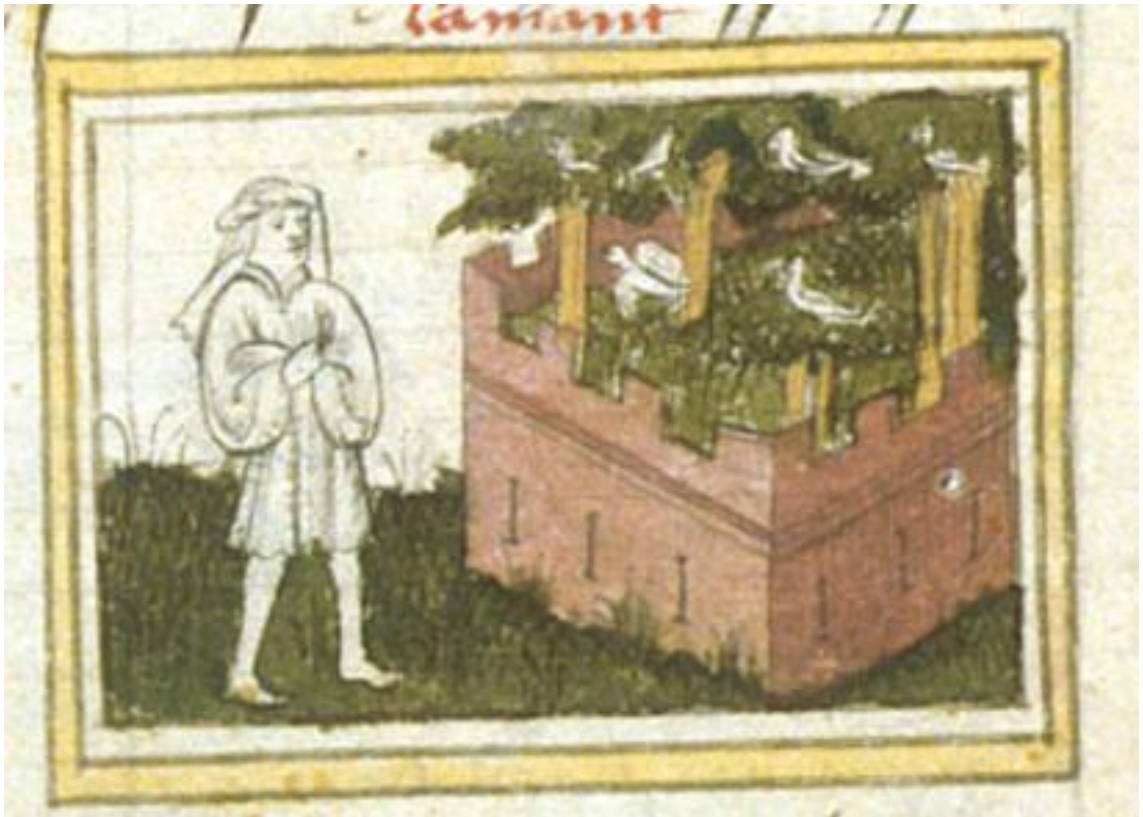


Fig.1.1. The dreamer outside the garden assessing its form, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1400, London, British Library, Egerton 1069, f.5.

Illuminators of the text seem often to have responded to this idea by depicting the garden as a square, box-like structure, even in cases where it is represented elsewhere within the same manuscript with another shape or form entirely. Here, in British Library MS Egerton 1069, the artist has rendered the ‘box-like’ garden in miniature form, out of scale with the dreamer on the left, and completely incongruous within the surrounding landscape. This heightens the artefactuality of the garden as a whole, since we are invited to examine its closed

(and comparatively bare) outer surfaces and interior almost as if it were a casket of more portable dimensions. It becomes like a ‘miniature’ in another sense too, framing the garden like the rectangular border that sets the image as a whole apart from the surrounding text within the codex.

The garden wall is unique not only in its form, but also in its fixedness within the poem, whose outer limits it defines with a firmness more difficult to find elsewhere in the dream landscape. The wall is highly unusual, moreover, in its decorative scheme, or perhaps rather its descriptive scheme, because this marginal marker, which is at the same time elaborate and (by the poet) elaborated, blurs the boundaries between art and literature as much as it serves to separate the exterior and interior spaces from each other.

Si vi un vergier grant et lé,  
Tout clos de haut mur bataillié,  
Portrait et dehors entaillié  
A maintes riches escritures.  
Les ymages et les pointures  
Du mur volentiers remiré,  
Si com c'iere, et vous dire  
De ces ymages la semblance,  
Si com moi vient a remembrance (*Roman de la Rose* ll. 130-8).

The wall is ornamented with effigies or images of Haine (‘Hatred’), Félonie (‘Felony’), Vilenie (‘Villainy’), Convoitise (‘Covetousness’), Avarice (‘Avarice’), Envie (‘Envy’), Tristesse (‘Sorrow’), Vieillesse (‘Old Age’), Papelardie (‘Pope-

Holiness’),<sup>14</sup> and Pauvreté (‘Poverty’). Even before the appearance of Oiseuse, who ultimately grants access to the dreamer, Guillaume’s extensive ekphrasis has rendered this boundary, as well as the text and images which appear on its sumptuously decorated surface, with a kind of clarity unparalleled by any descriptive passages that appear elsewhere in the poem, and yet, for all the specificity with which the wall’s appearance is set before the dreamer and reader alike, the poet is nevertheless careful, as always, to leave something of his polished construction rough or even open. In the above passage, for instance, which constitutes only a small portion of the 339-line ekphrasis, the poet begins by making several claims about the things he has seen.

The wall is, much like the manuscript page, adorned with ‘escritures’, ‘ymages’, and ‘pointures’ and characterised as ‘haut’ and ‘bataillié’— but the poet also mentions that he is relying on his memory, and in this way rather unsettles the foundations of the construct. This is characteristic of Guillaume’s rhetorical style. David Hult sees Guillaume’s *Rose* as a whole as ‘an elaborate *trompe l’oeil* situation, a layering of subjectivities that we would like to touch in order to verify, but that we unfortunately cannot, due to the nature of the object’ (1986: 8). In this, he is undoubtedly moved by Guillaume’s own imagery. On this point nothing could be more telling than the enormous diversity of treatment given to the garden wall by illuminators, for all the apparently clear details of its description: something in the style of the poem itself consciously seems to deflect or divert attempts to seize its meaning with precision. I argue that this initial boundary encountered by the narrator is more important for the shape of the poem as a whole than has previously been

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<sup>14</sup> Papelardie usually understood as a representation of pious hypocrisy, or ‘*Tartufferie*’ as Lejeune says (1973: 325). C. S. Lewis (1936: 127) suggested, however, that it denotes ‘that quality which parents call Chastity, and courtly lovers Prudery’, with the qualification that ‘moral or religious pretensions’ must be present in the justification for rejection.

recognized: it marks out the limits of the poet's subject matter as well as those of the garden itself, and it immediately suggests an architectural conceptualisation of the work as a literary monument whose construction has required ingenuity and artistry. The ekphrasis through which *we* experience the structure is encompassed, in a fitting case of ring composition, by a series of words and phrases that mimic the structure, linguistically enclosing the enclosure (ll. 131-42; 463-8). The wall protects the interior but is itself curiously guarded. None of the extant manuscripts of the *Rose* that feature illustrations follows Guillaume's description of the wall to the letter, but many stray far from it.<sup>15</sup> Illuminators often opt, for instance, to emphasise its artificiality not through the extensive use of colour, as in the poem, but by rendering its surface in grisaille, while the figures on its surface vary dramatically in scale, illumination, and degree of relief. Hult's notion that the 'unfinished ending [of the *Rose*], the jagged edge, can be seen as part of a sophisticated rhetorical strategy calculated to oblige a continuation' (Hult 1986: 8-9) will be helpful in looking also as the beginning of the poem and at other responses to Guillaume's work, since it identifies the poet as already aware of the refashioning that will come with the transmission and dissemination of the text; a consciousness, even, that the *enclosure* so stressed in the poem's opening is not innately a matter of closure as such, so much as an interpretative framework that requires a reception and response for its completion.

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<sup>15</sup> This was noticed by Fleming (1969: 32).





Fig.1.2. (A-C) Sculpted garden walls in *grisaille*: A. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1400, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 24392, f.2r; B. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1400, London, British Library, Egerton 1069, f.1; C. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, 1325-50, London, British Library, Add MS 31840, f.3r.

It is only towards the end of the ekphrasis that the dreamer begins to wonder about the origin of the wall. Several scholars, including Terry Comito (1978) and Paul Watson (1979), have identified a possible source for Guillaume de Lorris' *vergier* in Claudian's *Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti*, where the memorable description of the palace and garden of Venus in Cyprus possesses several features that make the site comparable with the garden of Deduit. Significant in Claudian's work is the fact that Venus' delightful garden is not only enclosed, but also defended by an artificial hedge made of gold: 'pars acrior anni/ exulat; aeterni patet indulgentia veris. / in campum se fundit apex; hunc aurea saepes/ circuit et

fulvo defendit prata metallo' (ll. 54-7). In the *Rose*, Guillaume brings his ekphrasis of the wall to a close by emphasising once more that this garden is securely fortified:

Ces ymages bien avisé

que si com je l'ai devisé

furent a or et a azur

de toutes parz pointes ou mur.

Hauz fu li murs et toz quarrez,

Si en estoit clos et barrez

en lieu de haies uns vergier

Qui n'iere pas fais par bergiers (*Roman de la Rose* ll. 463-70).

As at the beginning of the ekphrasis, which has already been quoted above, Guillaume once again stresses in lines 466-7 both the wall's impenetrability and its role in enclosing the garden. Like the hedge around Claudian's earlier garden of love, the handiwork of Vulcan himself, Guillaume's wall is covered in gold, and the poet even outdoes his predecessor in stressing that Dedit's wall takes the place of the more customary hedge. Reminiscent of another possible ancient prototype, the garden of Pomona, which is fenced to fend off unwanted amatory advances from uncultivated country bumpkins – 'vim...agrestum metuens' (Ovid *Met.* 14. ll. 635-6) – Guillaume emphasises that the wall, whilst displaying on its surface ugly and undesirable 'ymages' of personified abstractions that seemingly preclude entrance into the garden, is nonetheless itself, like the space which it encloses, a refined and attractive construction that displays much the same characteristics as those which are commonly associated with courtly literature. The tone of the genre as a whole, as

Sarah Kay has observed, is generally ‘decorous, restrained, even reticent’, as opposed to ‘one of brash arrogance or insolent appropriation’. This is designed, as she puts it, to keep ‘the refined (*courtois*) from their antithesis (the *vilain*)’ (2001: 1). The garden wall in the *Roman de la Rose* may be contrasted with the grotesque border that surrounds the garden in Chrétien de Troyes’ late twelfth-century *Erec et Enide*, which consists of the still-helmeted heads of those who have stayed too long within and serves as a warning to potential visitors. In both cases, the margin of the garden is a disturbing site that must be read or misread at one’s peril, but in Chrétien this liminal space is rather less refined than Guillaume’s expertly painted and sculptured construction. The final line quoted above – which is also the final line of Guillaume’s ekphrasis of the wall – has been taken in several different ways by editors of the *Rose*: either shepherds (i.e., boorish *vilains*) have never been admitted to the garden (as in Langlois and Lecoy’s interpretation), or the garden was certainly not made by shepherds (as Strubel). The former is more Ovidian, but the latter, an amusing understatement, may be more characteristic of Guillaume’s lightness of touch and more suitable in the context. The answer of who *did* make the garden comes belatedly, in Oiseuse’s little lesson in architectural history, which we have already encountered. Before Oiseuse’s intervention, we are, like the narrator, left in some doubt, wondering who has made the wall and what it might mean.

### 1.3. Self-Aware Literarity and the Role of Ekphrasis in the *Rose*

Oiseuse’s comments concerning Deduit’s involvement in both the composition and construction of the garden and its component parts draw attention to his role as a creator even as they place him at a slight distance from the actual transportation,

planting, and nurturing of the plants, and also from the physical labour and technical skill implied by the description of wall and its decoration: Dedit, whom we have at this point not yet met, has all the characteristics of a nobleman in a position to command, to commission, and to give his patronage to inferiors.

Even if Dedit is not himself a poet or an artist in the allegory, he is at least closely connected with and involved in the process of creation as it pertains not only to gardeners and construction workers, but also to poets and artists. As the only named author or mastermind of the garden, that is, the allegorical construct which forms the setting and the substance of Guillaume's poem, Dedit must necessarily be a partial reflection of the poet and the dreamer, whose inventive imaginative constructions inevitably overlap with his.<sup>16</sup> It is noteworthy that Oiseuse introduces herself early on as the intimate companion of Dedit; later on, the dreamer mentions that Oiseuse has stayed close to him throughout the *carole* ('bele oiseuse vint apres / qui se tint de lui asez pres', ll. 1248-50), suggesting at the same time that his own leisure has persisted up to this point, and also a parallel between the narrator and the garden's owner. Before this, Guillaume has included an even more striking suggestion that the dreamer has entered a state as well as a space, and perhaps even merged with the allegorical author of the garden: 'qu'oiseuse m'avoit bien servi, / qu'el m'avoit a ce dedit mis' (ll. 6867). Here the dreamer has been allowed not simply in the garden of Diversion, but has been given passage directly into diversion itself, the poet undercutting the poem's personifications in favour of an ostensibly more straightforward formulation. At the same time, the verb *mis* overlays another shade of meaning, marking out the dreamer's entrance as a passive act of being

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<sup>16</sup> Dedit plays an important role in the text's vision of its own authorship and artistry, as we shall see. These themes of art and artifice, which have been seen as central to Jean de Meun's continuation of the poem also (see Morton 2015: *passim*), are already deeply rooted within Guillaume de Lorris' first part of the *Rose*.

placed inside the containing state of mind rather than one merely of being granted access via the unlocking or opening of the enclosure.

In giving his audience another view of the process by which the dreamer comes to be associated with Deduit, ostensibly contrary to or inconsistent with the alternative conceptualisation already described, Guillaume can be understood as engaging in an ironic deconstruction of a significant part of his allegory, drawing attention to the artificiality of the construct through which he has chosen to explore his topic. The passage with which we have opened here, in which Oiseuse tells the dreamer in brief how the garden and its wall came about, functions somewhat similarly within the poem, giving some intimations of the creative processes which have produced the construct as it is actually encountered within the text. An emphasis on the process by which an artwork or object is constructed is a key feature of the ekphrasis as it is understood within modern scholarship (Clemente 1992; Bruckner 2004: esp. 20; Barbetti 2011), though the description of the wall itself has been relatively free of such details and even here the poet is somewhat reticent. Guillaume often avoids giving details too soon and in many places appears quite deliberately to opt for ambiguity over specificity. There are certainly lines in the ekphrasis proper that imply the hand and guiding intelligence of an unnamed artist: ‘mout l’avoit bien pointe et portraite/ cil qui sot tel ymage faire, / qui sembloit bien chose vileine’ (ll. 163-5). We are told that this unnamed artist had known well how to deal with his subject. On the whole, however, the poet and the narrator alike feign ignorance or simply avoid the question of authorship until later. Guillaume can, and later does, place great emphasis on the actual *process* of constructing of a fortified wall (that surrounding the castle of Jealousy), but does not do so here. Although Guillaume does not dwell on the building of the wall – the dreamer/ Amant does not,

after all, see its making but meets it as a made thing – he does nevertheless include shortly afterwards Oiseuse’s indication of its origin, and thereby explains something of its meaning and purpose in a retrospective, belated fashion. This is broadly similar to one of the recurring claims – or rather promises – made by the poet about the poem: throughout, Guillaume tells the reader that the significance of the various sights and structures encountered by the Amant will, just a little later on, be explained in full – yet, apart from passages such as the above, in which he unravels and exposes something of the artificiality of the construct rather more delicately than might be expected, they never are. This open-ended quality is a key aspect of the poem’s appeal, and part of the reason why responses from other poets and artists were so numerous.

Throughout, Guillaume opts to frame his allegory through playful ekphrasis that emphasise the constructedness or factitiousness of the work as a whole. The *Rose* is designed less as a narrative than as a series of encounters with constructions, elaborately and vividly realised, by actors who are themselves highly artificial constructs: Guillaume repeats on numerous occasions that the people, plants, and objects the dreamer sees surpass in beauty any that he and his audience may ever encounter. Frequently these relationships are, with a characteristic lightness of touch, inverted, both revealing and making more complex the workings of the allegory. On the one hand, Guillaume’s highly self-aware interest in elaborate material constructions is key to his poetic vision. Secondly, the most important of these objects within his poem are in some sense liminal spaces that close off or grant access to other interior spaces.

Many readers of the *Rose* have been struck by this characteristic, and a number of scholars have in recent decades sought to re-evaluate the role of the object or artefact within medieval literary culture, and also to reach a more complete understanding of the ekphrastic tendencies expressed during the period in question, tendencies for too long subject, like the taste for allegory, to unsympathetic critical disfavour. While few have sought to place these literary artefacts side by side with the actual material productions of this culture, there is certainly an increased awareness now of the importance of objects in certain romances. Influential studies by Paul Zumthor (1972) and Michel Zink (1979), which approached medieval literature with a more sensitive ear for authorial artistry and self-reflexivity, can be seen retrospectively to have opened a new and important interpretative door for later scholars. Building on their efforts in a 1992 article on *Floire et Blancheflor* (c. 1170), Norris Lacy remarked on what he termed the ‘overt artifice and unabashed literarity’ of this earlier Old French text. By this, he meant that the author, who is now believed to have been Robert d’Orbigny, ‘privileges the status of a literary text as an artifact, a created object that does not masquerade as life’ (Lacy 1992: 24). The poet of *Floire et Blancheflor* conveys a great part of this pervasive sense of self-aware ‘literarity’ through vivid ekphrastic description of the many artefacts that appear throughout the text, among which there is, for instance, a highly decorated garden wall that shares a number of characteristics with the wall that surrounds Guillaume’s garden. Crucially, Lacy suggested that such ‘factitiousness’ might constitute a defining characteristic of some of the less well understood romances sometimes categorised as *romans idylliques* or, as Michel Zink opted to call them, the *romans roses*, naming in particular Jean de Renart’s *Guillaume de Dole* and *Joufroi de Poitiers* alongside *Floire et Blancheflor* (1992: 24). This characteristic –

namely the text's preoccupation with itself as a literary object – is manifestly one which is shared by Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, but it is also present to a degree in other twelfth and thirteenth-century texts; in the fourteenth century, too, poets like Guillaume de Machaut would continue the trend, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

#### 1.4. The Garden Personified: Dedit's Dress, *Desguisee* and *Decopee*

Guillaume de Lorris' interest in objects, however, carries even more significance than might first appear to be the case. The description of Dedit will provide a helpful and novel means of approaching this aspect of the poem's artistry, because this figure's quasi-authorial role in the allegory and narrative has so often been overlooked. Dedit himself is described as having a face like an apple – recalling all the fruit trees of which he is the lord and master – as having a nose 'feit par grant entente', and as resembling a painting: '[i]l resembloit une peinture / tant iere biaux et acemez / et de touz membres bien manbez' (ll. 803-13). However much Dedit is made out to be the mastermind behind the garden's construction, he is treated as something of a construct himself, in many respects cut from the same cloth as all his allegorical companions and, in spite of the great gulf that separates them in quality and kind – he is described by Oiseuse as 'le mignot, le cointe' (l. 590) while the 'ymages' are in her judgement 'ne mignotes ne cointes' (l. 602) – he still remains analogous in some sense to those ten wretched and excluded figures on the exterior surface of the garden wall, whose production, we have been told, was his enterprise.

The *carole* scene constitutes in many respects another ekphrasis, of which Dedit's description forms only a small, albeit significant part, which is explicitly

designed within Guillaume's poetic scheme to provide a pleasant contrast to the unpleasant *ymages* encountered outside the garden. Although most have companions, the principal abstractions encountered inside are more or less equivalent in number to those outside.<sup>17</sup> In some manuscript illuminations, the two contrasting groups are treated in a surprisingly similar fashion, and the Louvre holds part of an early fourteenth-century ivory mirror case which depicts, in the lower register of an architectural frame reminiscent of manuscript depictions of the wall in Guillaume's poem, a *carole* which Raymond Koechlin believed to be 'sans doute' an illustration of the scene from the *Roman de la Rose* (1921: 403). The relationship between the two may not be as direct as that, especially since the art of ivory carving tended to involve a significant degree of creative reimagining, but the scenes are certainly treated in a similar spirit, as can be seen when they are placed side by side.

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<sup>17</sup> The symbolic correspondences, or rather contrasts, between the figures inside and outside are not exact: on this point, see Douglas Kelly 1978: 80-82. Kelly there sets the positive and negative personifications beside each other, measuring the number of lines given to each and searching for indications of direct antithesis or contradiction between the allegorical qualities represented and described. His conclusion (82) is that the opposition is not perfectly balanced in all instances and that '[t]he reader is not expected to analyze' it too closely. This has, of course, not discouraged later scholars. Sarah Kay has argued more recently (2001) that contradiction was key to the literary culture that developed during the twelfth century, which established, in her view, a rhetoric of paradox and opposition that does not necessarily always require a simple resolution. This dialectical way of structuring argument and works intended for entertainment forms a major part of the cultural background of the *Rose*, and there should be no surprise that Guillaume de Lorris likewise exploits the possibilities of the stark contrast. Jean's continuation has sometimes been presented as the antithesis of Guillaume's but Michel Zink especially saw Guillaume's own poetic identity as one already founded on inner conflict, enshrined – or rather dramatised – in the 'clash and the blend, [...] of recollection and the present' (1986: 100). The oppositional juxtaposition of ekphraseis, where something ugly is contrasted with something less so – as developed in the description of the garden wall and the accompanying passages on the personages inside the garden – is repeated in the poem as a sort of *mise en abyme* within the *carole* itself, when Guillaume comes to the description of the god of love's two bows. One is made from a gnarled and knotted piece of wood from a tree with a poisonous fruit, and the other, made from a young shrub, is beautiful, smoothly polished, and decorated with 'Dames i ot de tuz sanz peintes / Et vallez envoissiez et *cointes*' (ll. 904-19; quotation 916-17 – emphasis mine). The courtly personages taking part in the *carole* are explicitly rendered in miniature here on the very instrument used to bring them under the spell of love. The description here recalls both the ekphrasis of the wall, and the ekphrastic treatment given to the abstract personages of the encompassing *carole* episode, making doubly clear that these personifications are likewise part of the developing literary artefact. At the same time, there are classical precedents here in Ovid, where Cupid carries two arrows – a sharp one of gold and a blunt one of lead (*Met.* 1. 468-71) – and where Jupiter is able to choose the less destructive and lighter of his thunderbolts when he does not really wish to hurt his victim (*Met.* 3. 302-7). In Claudian also (*Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti*, ll. 69-71) the theme is elaborated: Cupid dips his arrows in two fountains, one sweet and one poisonous. Guillaume's god of love also has a choice of weapons.



Fig.1.3. *Carole* in ivory. MRR 195, Musée du Louvre, Paris. One half of a mirror case, Ivory, 138 x 141 x 13 mm (Paris, c.1300-1350).



Fig. 1.4. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Tournai, c. 1330, Tournai, Bibliothèque de la ville, ms 101, f. 6r.

In identifying the above mirror case as an illustration, Koechlin will have had in mind some specific examples of manuscript illumination treating the *Rose's* *carole* episode. In the above miniature, a synthetic summary of part of the almost ekphrastic narrative of Guillaume's *Rose*, the dreamer is shown being led into the garden by Oiseuse and subsequently joining the *carole*. The sinuous, elegant abstractions closely resemble ivory carvings, while the rough circularity of Deduit's

garden, along with the arrangement of figures in prominent registers, brings it close to rhyming in form with the designs seen on such mirror cases. This sinuosity is also visible in a separate miniature in the manuscript that shows the sculptural adornment of the exterior wall.

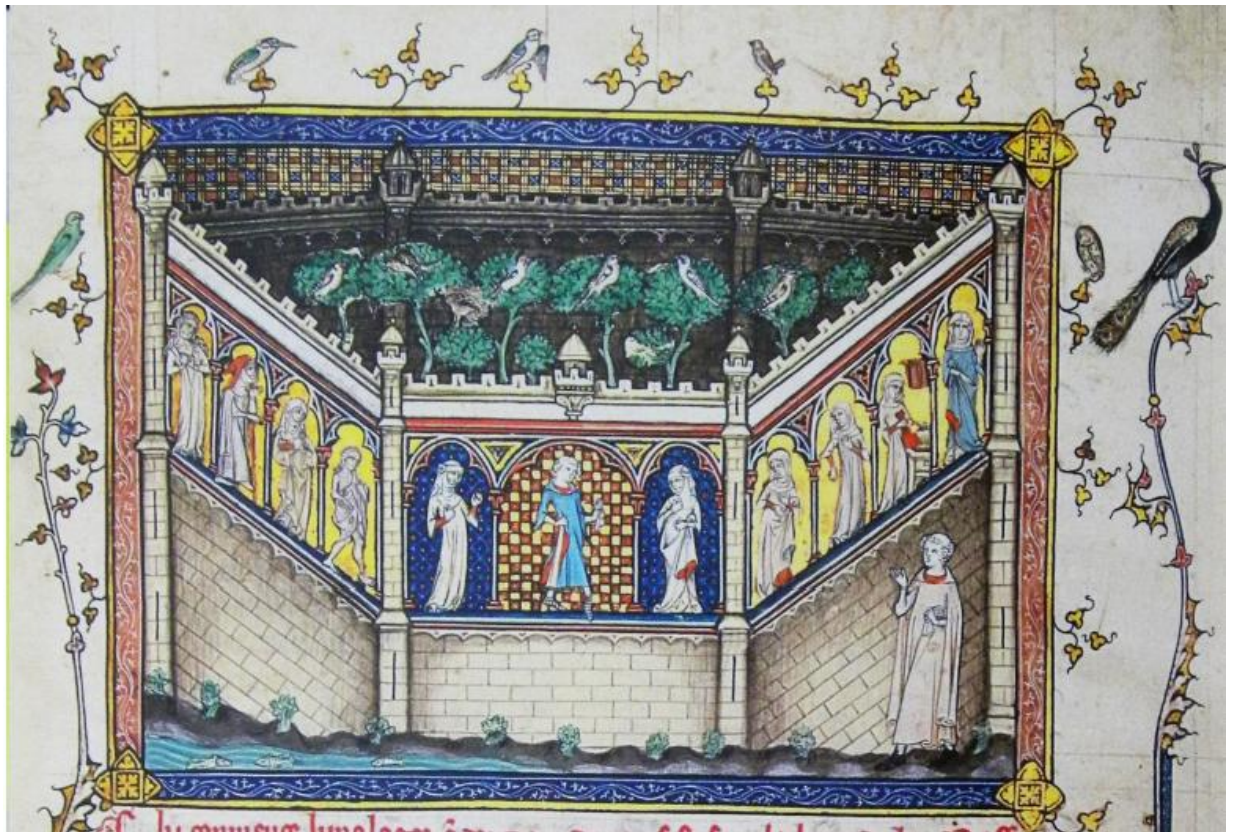


Fig. 1.5. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Tournai, c. 1330, Tournai, Bibliothèque de la ville, ms 101, f.5.

This exceptional manuscript (produced c. 1330), now in Tournai, which contains Gui de Mori's response to the *Rose* – his remaniement – provides a striking example of illumination influenced by ivory carving, since the sinuosity and flexibility of pose seen in the figures on the garden wall mimics a mid-thirteenth-century innovation in

Gothic art associated in particular with ivories.<sup>18</sup> This innovation resulted, at least in part, because of the curved shape of the elephant's tusk – an example of 'material exercis[ing] control over style and composition in the finished works of art'. Subsequent imitation in other media affected the figural ornamentation of architectural sculptures (Williamson 1982: 18-19) as well as manuscripts such as this, where the new style is well suited to its subject: Guillaume describes Dedit, after all, as unusually supple: 'plus legier home ne veïstes' (l. 815). These examples fit within a range of material and visual responses to the *Rose* which influence one another, responding also to the poem's own evocations of materiality. Some of the most noticeable evocations of this sort, as I will argue below, come in the form of clothing.

To suggest that Dedit and the other figures are closely related is of course not to suggest, as Douglas Kelly has, relying on a rather selective quotation of the text, that Guillaume's verbal pictures are so bound by conventionality that Dedit 'has no distinguishing characteristics in his description' (Kelly 1978: 65). The portrait is indeed distinctive enough, and the poet's vivid flourishes are, as we shall see, carefully chosen to imply connections between the structure of the garden and the poem as a whole, rather than merely repetitive. The passage dealing with Dedit's apparel is revealing. Guillaume emphasises that Dedit's lavish attire is

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<sup>18</sup> Both Gui de Mori and this specific manuscript have been extensively discussed. Passages were published at an early stage in Langlois 1907: 249-71 and in Jung 1968: 106-37. The whole text is reproduced with annotations in Langlois 1914-24 II. On Gui de Mori's rewriting of the *Rose*, see Hult 1981: 53-70; idem 1986; Huot 1992: 203-33; idem 1993: 85-129. The miniature above shows eleven rather than ten personages on the garden wall, as in Guillaume's poem; the interpolated centrepiece in Gui de Mori's text and in the associated illumination, above, is the figure of Orgueil ('Pride'). The wall remains extremely important in the remaniement, and Gui even associates himself with the moment of entrance into the garden by drawing attention to the fact that his own name, Gui, is woven into the 'guichet' through which the narrator gains access (Langlois 1914-24: II 256; see also Hult 1986: 48-9). Gui de Mori's many interventions are clearly marked in the extraordinary Tournai manuscript by a series of marginal symbols that allows the reader, as Huot puts it, to 'construct a personalized version of the *Rose*' by choosing to keep or ignore the added, subtracted, and 'mutated' passages (Huot 1992: 205). Particular attention has been dedicated to the Tournai manuscript by Lori Walters (1992a: 167-200; 1992b: 359-73; idem 1996: 261-76).

composed of more than one layer, and more importantly, that these layers serve both to enclose and to reveal the body of the wearer. The fabric itself, a luxurious samite, is at once almost hidden by the representations of birds and beaten gold that adorn its surface, and fashionably slashed and incised to flaunt the dandyish figure beneath. Here, Guillaume presents an ironic contrast: '[m]out fu la robe desguisee / se ere en maint leu encisee' (ll. 822-3). Guillaume's pairing of 'desguisee' and 'encisee', that is, *covered* and *cut*, again brings the themes of enclosure and openness, protection and permeability, to the foreground of the poem, which likewise simultaneously hides and reveals its meaning in a web of finely spun imagery. At the same time, Guillaume stresses the artificiality and constructedness of Deduit's apparel by dwelling on the materials from which it is wrought and by attributing the fashionable slashes in the fabric – it is not merely 'encisee', we are told, but also 'decopee' – to a point of 'cointisse'. I would argue that this phrasing serves to make clear that the peculiarities of the garment's design are the result of deliberate contrivance. Deduit, who has himself been described as 'cointe' (l. 590), is, like his garden, both walled off and accessible. In both cases the surfaces, whether of stone or of silk, present a barrier that is also richly worked with images.

Deduit's clothing inevitably recalls, however, Guillaume's choice of words in the opening of the *Roman de la Rose*, where a strikingly similar contrast is exploited to justify the poem's status as an imaginative fabrication or construction – a dream or *somnium* in the expanded sense of the term. The first two lines of the work – 'maintes genz cuident qu'en songe / n'ait se fable non et mençonge' – (ll. 1-2) provide, first of all, another opposition through which the reader must pierce, without assuming an equivalence between the two rhyming words, on which the poet expresses his own opinion. Having appealed to the authority of Macrobius, who, we

are told, did not, like ‘maintes genz’, take dreams as illusions, Guillaume states ‘que li plusor songent de nuiz / maintes choses covertement / que l’en voit puis apertement’ (ll. 18-20). The rhyming of ‘covertement’ and ‘apertement’ – that is, ‘in a hidden way’ or ‘covertly’, and ‘openly’ – neatly encapsulates a contradiction that lies at the heart of Guillaume’s poetic scheme and establishes for the first time his conceptualisation of both the dream and the work of imagination as containers of hidden meaning, containers that come with a promise to reveal secret knowledge.

Guillaume’s formulation may be compared with Macrobius’ notion that the dream ‘tegit figuris et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significationem rei quae demonstratur’ (‘covers with shapes and veils with ambiguities the meaning of the thing being demonstrated, which can only be understood through interpretation’: Macrobius, *In Somn.* 1.3. 10). The contrast between openness and closure foreshadows the verbal contrast used in the description of Dedit, but also elsewhere in the poem, since reflections or ripples from this opposition recur throughout at key moments, both minutely, as rhyming words, for instance, and on a larger scale, shaping the narrative and the allegory. One of the minutest of all is, perhaps fittingly, the pair of crystals at the bottom of the Fountain of Narcissus, which together form not only the structural centrepiece of the poem, but also an extraordinary *mise en abyme* that microcosmically replicates the garden of Dedit in its entirety: the crystals, Guillaume tells us, show ‘les choses qui sont a l’ancontre / et i veoit on sanz *coverture* / et la color et la figure’ (ll. 1553-5). We shall return to this structure, and these stones, in the following chapter. Later still, introducing another passage that has also been characterised as a *mise en abyme* representing the motive of the work as a whole (Hult 1986: 177) – the poet includes, as though transcribed verbatim, a speech delivered by the god of love himself, which

can be seen as corresponding with the *art d'amours* famously promised at the outset of the work – Guillaume repeats the claims made in the prologue of the poem even more plainly, utilising yet again the same oppositional concepts with which he had begun: ‘La verité qui est *coverte* / vos en sera lors toute *aperte*, / quant espondre m’orroiz le *songe*, / car il n’i a mot de *mensonge*’ (ll. 2071-4). It would seem that, for readers in the Middle Ages, the poem as a whole was associated more distinctly with the notion of enclosure and the subsequent revelation of meaning through an act of opening or entrance, than with any claim about the veracity of dreams, if we are to judge by the fact that an adapted version of lines 3-38 – ‘Ci commence li romanz de la rose / ou l’art d’amours est toute enclose’ – appears as the *incipit* and *explicit* in so many of the surviving manuscripts, enclosing the whole text as the wall encloses the garden.<sup>19</sup> Like Guillaume, scribes played with the multiple meanings of the final word: Hult (1986: 134) suggests at once ‘contained’, ‘hidden’, and ‘imprisoned’ as possible readings of ‘enclose’. Many modern readers have likewise been struck forcibly by Guillaume’s pervasive and enveloping imagery of exclusivity and revelation: as one scholar has put it, the ‘pattern of what is closed becoming open is repeated over and over in the poem as the narrator crosses boundaries into a variety of enclosed spaces’ (Conklin Akbari 2004: 48). Guillaume’s poem as a whole is structured as a series of ekphrastically treated surfaces and set pieces which are carefully laced together and defined as both covering and revealing, opening and enclosing truth.

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<sup>19</sup> The importance of the open/closed theme in the *Rose* has long been recognised. Badel has noted that Guillaume relies extensively on a contrast between ‘verté coverte et verté aperte’, which is changed in Jean’s continuation for a play with ‘respondre/espondre’ (Badel 1980: 18). A 1990 article by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski entitled ‘*Overt and Covert: Amorous and Interpretive Strategies in the Roman de la Rose*’, is, however, concerned primarily with Jean’s poem. Blumenfeld-Kosinski argues that ‘the second scheme [that is, Jean’s] represents an expansion of and a play on the first. Both schemes use the language of allegorical interpretation without ever using the word allegory itself’ (1990: 432-3).

That lacing together of set pieces, or even lacing together of the poem as a whole, is another metaphor that is present in the opening of the *Rose*, where text and textile are drawn together into a symbiotic metaphorical relationship with each other. We have seen that Deduit is dressed in figured silk whose bird imagery and richness of surface both reflect and give lustre to the wider poem, and also that it is itself ‘decopee par cointisse’ (l. 824), so as to play, like the work as a whole, with openings and enclosure. That glossy samite, slashed and slit and pinned and perhaps buttoned into shapely silhouette, is anticipated by – and tied to – an earlier passage in the poem that is both introductory, forming part of the prologue, and transitional, covering the narrator’s initial journey through a meadow to the garden of Deduit.

#### 1.5. Text and Textile: The Sewing Poet’s Progress and the Fabric of Nature

It is important to remember that the whole poem is organised as a journey, albeit one where the moments of pause seem to be the moments of real importance and, in a way, action. This initial meandering stroll presents the reader with three simultaneous processes that are closely related to each other, not only setting off the itinerary, as it were, of the poem, which is entirely conceived as a progression between points set ambiguously within a shapeshifting dream topography, but also linking that journey with the dressing, at the same time, of Nature and the narrator. The three processes are woven together into one tidy strand here, almost like a plait, which represents an implicit analogy between craft and poetic composition, text and textile, and art and nature more broadly. As the narrator walks from his private bedchamber out into the open, gradually wending his way towards the garden, he

devotes a long but lively passage to the *reverdie*, or springtime setting that emerges even before he has reached his destination, rejuvenating the landscape and instilling in both the poet and his environment the urge to dress in bright and cheerful clothing. Nature dresses herself in her freshly spun spring finery, and our errant narrator concentrates at the same time on the finishing touches of his own apparel, sewing up his close-fitting sleeves to fit his arms snugly. The morning walk, the advent of spring, and the narrator's own activity are bound together in close juxtaposition with each other, hinting at a connection, or even a sort of 'pathetic fallacy' between these incidences (that is not, however, to be seen as fallacious in the sense that it is unconsciously achieved). A causal relationship between human action and natural phenomena is established and emphasised. Nature, personified along with *la terre*, puts on her new clothes in the following manner: '[I]ors devient la terre si goube / Qu'el viaut avoir novele robe / Si fet si cointe robe faire : / Que de colours i a .c. paire : / Herbes et flors blanches et perses, / Et de maintes colours dyverses, / C'est la robe que je devise, / Pour quoi la terre mieus se prise' (ll. 59 – 66).

Nature's new dress is a colourful and skilfully constructed garment, Guillaume says, decorated with grass and multi-hued flowers; the colour 'perse', in particular, gives an exotic and luxurious touch to the diction used to describe the ensemble, but also complicates the ekphrastic image created in the passage, since the word, which is certainly to be associated especially with eastern silks, does not signify a single easily identifiable shade, but one that is in its nature complex: it is generally taken as indicative of a quality of blueness, but only in association with another colour, such as green or red, and therefore means a mixed and perhaps

changeable tint.<sup>20</sup> In some variants of the text, the line (63) reads rather ‘D’herbes de flors indes et perses’ (See Ott 1899: 91; Mann 1923: 193), marking the colour as something distinctly different from blue but also heightening the exoticism of the imagery and reinforcing its connection with textiles: *inde*, an adjective corresponding with our ‘indigo’, is explicitly drawn from the world of dyed fabric, and points to India, whilst *pers* leads the reader in a similar way to Persian silks; the names of both colours are wrapped up with the wider connotations of their eastern textile origins.<sup>21</sup> The colour *pers* reappears, however, a number of lines later in relation to Oiseuse’s dress (l. 564), where its place of manufacture is specified as Ghent, a little closer to home. The dress of Nature is also described, noticeably, as ‘cointe’ (l. 61), the same word is used a little later on to characterise Deduit and *his* elaborate costume of patterned silk, which is cut up ‘par cointisse’ (l. 824). Apart from the white (or blue) and purple or lilac flowers, Guillaume stresses that Nature’s dress is decorated with more than two hundred hues: ‘colours i a .c. paire’. He repeats himself in the next line but one: there are ‘maintes colours dyverses’ on the garment (ll. 62, 64). The description is both vague and precise, playfully numbering the different colours — which come not on their own but in twos — but without specifying which ones are meant beyond the single rather intangible pair named. Having established all this, however, the narrator upends the whole conceit with the last two lines quoted above, by claiming personal authorship for the design of Nature’s costume: ‘C’est la robe que je devise, / Pour quoi la terre mieus se prise’

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<sup>20</sup> Although often glossed as a blue-green, *pers* seems to be more strongly associated with violets made by mixing red or pink and black or grey, though a bluish quality is generally still implied. In most usages, as here, it is clearly differentiated from a more straightforward blue. The ‘Persian’ aspect has been connected with eastern craft merchandise, but also (less convincingly) with the colour of peach (*prunus persica*) blossom. The colour is sometimes dark, but just often light in tone. For a detailed discussion see Mann 1923: 186-203.

<sup>21</sup> The English translation of Guillaume’s poem, traditionally attributed to Chaucer (*The Romaunt of the Rose*), is noticeably taken from a manuscript with ‘indes et perses’. The translator’s solution here was to leave these words more or less precisely as they had been in the French: ‘Of gras and flouris, ynde and pers’ (l. 67).

(ll. 65-6). The key word here is ‘devisse’, which is often glossed in modern editions as equivalent to *décri*s, thus neutralising its disruptive quality. In fact it means no such thing: Guillaume is not merely describing, but actively devising, designing, and conjuring up the elaborate dream vision of Nature in her spring finery. R. Howard Bloch has commented that ‘the [poem’s] repeated play upon the verb “deviser” meaning both “to describe” and “to divide” emphasises that ‘the allegorist is, at bottom, a cutter of cloth’ (Bloch 1986: 33). This is a tidy observation, but the weight of meaning is much more firmly on the latter sense, with both aspects of the *double entendre* actually signifying a more active creative agency. Godefroy gives a range of meanings for the verb *deviser*, all of which imply some directorial, organisational, or constructive capability on the part of the subject. In rhetorical terms, the verb *deviser* corresponds more closely with the ancient concepts of *inventio* or *dispositio* than *descriptio*. The sense offered by Godefroy that comes closest to our ‘describe’ is given as ‘régler, prescrire, exposer, raconter’, all of which are still more forceful than the English equivalents, including ‘recount’. These are in any case subsidiary definitions, and the usage in the cited examples is by no means clear cut. The play is not between description and division so much as between designing or *composing* and, as Bloch suggests, cutting.

Before the reader can be too carried away by the vibrant imagery, Guillaume reminds us that this textile — and also the entire landscape setting of the poem — is really no more than a poetic construct of his own making. The textile is quite literally spun from his text, which has momentarily become, in a descriptive passage like this, a sort of textile itself. Guillaume, by presenting himself as tailor-cum-gardener-in-chief, or at very least as the designer of the *haute-couture* get-up, strongly implies that it is a site of metatextual importance and exchange. He grants

himself, as poet, extraordinary power over nature and indeed congratulates himself — the earth itself is said to take pride in his work — on his creative ingenuity and the cheerfully overt artificiality of the whole fabric of the poem. As the narrator experiences the springtime garbing of Nature, his own role as artificer and fabricator is made clear by his active engagement with the process of sewing up the sleeves of his own costume. The whole cloth of nature is laced together in the poet's description just as our narrator actively attends to the fastenings and fit of his own apparel.

The narrator passes, in his dream, from his room and the town and out into the morning light and the countryside in its May finery, telling us that it is of his own devising, but he swiftly loops back to the opening of the dream after line 85, moving his focus largely, but not wholly, from his surroundings and the season more broadly to his own activity, which we must understand as progressing in motion simultaneously with what we have already been told. The account of the dream narrative actually begins three times over, with the justification for the poem's composition, scene setting, and subsequent exposition broken tidily at lines 25, 45, and 85, but the aspects of the dream recounted in these partitioned sequences overlap to create an impression of simultaneous action. From line 85 onwards, the narrator's movement becomes the real vehicle through which the poem progresses, but this movement is, as stressed above, associated with the work of his hands. He takes up a silver needle and works on his sleeves:

Sonjai une nuit que j'estoie.

Lors m'iere avis en mon dormant

Que matins estoit duremant.

De mon lit tantost me levai,  
Chauçai moi et mes mains lavai ;  
Lors trais une aiguille d'argent  
D'un aguiller mingnot et gent,  
Et pris l'aiguille a anfiler.  
Hors de vile oi talent d'aller  
Pour oir des oisiaus les sons,  
Qui chantoient par ces boissons  
En icele saison novele.  
Cousant mes manches a videle,  
Lors m'en vins touz seus esbatant  
Et les oisselez escoutant  
Qui de chanter mout s'esjoissoient  
Et nule foiz ne reposoient (*Le Roman de la Rose*, ll. 86-102).

The silver needle is extracted from a case that the poet describes as 'mingnot et gent', linking it with the figure of Deduit, whom we are yet to meet, but whom Oiseuse will soon characterise as 'mignot' as well as 'cointe' (l. 590). With the needle he begins sewing up his sleeves. The French is slightly ambiguous here ; either he sews his sleeves which are already 'a videle', that is to say, pleated or gathered, or he stitches them into gathers. The first interpretation would suggest a kind of smocking, which might be ornamental in character; the second would imply

that he is constructing and shaping the silhouette of the garment with each stitch. Either way, this is a fiddly operation to perform, especially whilst taking a morning stroll, and the intended effect must be richly textural as well as close-fitting.

#### 1.6. Nature's Hand-me-Downs: Text and Textile Prior to the *Rose*

It has often been imputed (see, for instance, Bloch 1986: 32) that Guillaume's primary source for the conceit of Nature's dress must have been Alain de Lille's prosimetric *De planctu naturae* (composed before 1171), approximately a quarter of which is dedicated to an extended ekphrasis of personified Nature and the entire cloth of creation that covers her. Having dealt first with the maiden herself and her starry crown, representing the firmament, Alain had progressed from a catalogue of the birds shown on her colourful woollen robe, to her linen mantle, where the sea and its marine life are represented, and then to her embroidered damask tunic, representing the earth and its fauna. At length he had come to her undergarments (the subject of guesswork), and her shoes, decorated with vegetation and flowers, including the rose. The portion of the tunic representing man is torn or slashed, a little like Dedit's costume, but the moralising implication here – quite absent in Guillaume's poem – is that mankind has itself done violence to Nature, the openings bearing witness to sinful human behaviour. The textile metaphor had been spun out over many lines, and applied not just to Nature's dress, which constantly changes colour, but also to other aspects of the work's imagery, especially as the lady approaches the narrator in full pomp. For a moment this narrator is so dazzled by the sight of her that he finds he must close his eyes, and he employs a military but also textilic metaphor to convey the self-imposed and almost cowardly withdrawal of his

vision: the ‘manipulos’ (soldiers) of his sight flee ‘ad palpebrarum contubernia’, that is, ‘to the shared war-tents of the eyelids’.<sup>22</sup> This might be compared to a similar military analogy that appears in Fournival’s *Bestaire d’amour*, where, however, it is the author’s rhetorical *exempla* that are likened to soldiers, and it is made clear that the troops are being rallied rather than routed.<sup>23</sup> Again, a few lines later, Alain duplicates and develops the conceit of Nature’s costume by stressing that the whole setting of the allegory – as well as its allegorical personages or actors – is likewise engaged in the act of dressing up:

Terra, jampridem hiemis latrocinio suis ornamentis denudate, a veris prodigalitate, spirantem florum tunicam usurpavit, ne vestibus pannosis ingloria, adolescentulae aspectui indecenter compareret. Ver etiam quasi artifex peritus in arte textoria, ut virginis applauderet incessibus, vestimenta texebat arboribus, quae demissione comarum, sub quadam adorationis specie, quasi flectendo genua, virgunculae supplicabant.

(‘Earth, long stripped of her trappings by winter’s robbery, assumed thanks to the prodigality of spring a tunic breathing with flowers, so that she might not, undignified in her tattered clothes, appear in the presence of the young girl in a less seemly form. Spring herself, like an artisan skilled in the art of weaving, was weaving garments for the trees so that she might applaud the maiden’s approaches, and these, in the fashion of worshipping her, as if bending their knees, were supplicating the little maiden.’)

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<sup>22</sup> The *contubernium* is, properly, the group of soldiers who share the tent (when on campaign) or pair of rooms (when in barracks), but by extension the term refers to the tent or *taberna* itself.

<sup>23</sup> See chapter three for more on Fournival’s use of the military metaphor and a particular manuscript miniature that illustrates it. The protective ‘tent’ or ‘veil’ reappears as a device capable of amplifying a moment of revelation. Fournival’s famous ‘doors of memory’ will be discussed below in the present chapter.

This – as opposed to the longer ekphrasis of Nature’s clothing – is the passage from the *De planctu naturae* that really comes closest to the dressing of Nature in the *Rose*, though it must be stressed that even here Guillaume’s focus is rather different from Alain’s: the poet-dreamer-narrator of the *Rose* is himself the *artifex peritus in arte textoria*. The cloth is made, moreover, more emphatically a poetic construction than it had been in Alain’s hands. Bloch, who, as noted above, saw a direct connection between the *De planctu naturae* and the first part of the *Rose*, suggested quite astutely that for Guillaume the conceit of ‘Nature’s garment becomes the equivalent of an entire literary mode’ (Bloch 1986: 33). The ekphrasis of the garden wall that follows a little while later continues the emphasis on textiles. As Bloch put it (ibid.), ‘[e]ach allegorical image is constructed around the principle of dress: Avarice wears “an old coat”; Sadness, “a torn coat”; and Poverty, no coat at all.’ The analogy of the textile is tied up with the creation of the poem, and the sustained focus on clothing throughout, and on the points where fabric is joined or parted, as well as on the act of lacing together, continually draws attention to the *context* of the imagery, or rather the creative processes involved in the composition of the *text* itself. At the same time, the motif of the textile implies a construction made up of coats or layers, closely mirroring the concentric design of the poem’s dream landscape as a whole. This landscape teases the narrator and the reader with a series of figured surfaces, none of which turns out to be as revealing, in a way, as first appearances have suggested.

### 1.7. Poetic Composition as Running Stitch

The present chapter has demonstrated that Deduit’s peculiar costume is the most important of these cloth-based constructions within Guillaume’s poetic scheme, but

also that it is by no means entirely independent of the elaborate dress given to Nature herself or to the poet. Both Deduit and nature are dressed in clothes that are *cointe*. The poem as a whole is, by extension, to be seen as *cointe*. The lacing or sewing action initiated by the narrator re-emerges at intervals, too, and is still very much present as a motif in the description of Deduit, as well as Oiseuse. Like a single thread it is carried from the narrator's sleeves, through to those of Oiseuse – 'Bien et bel et estroitement / Ot andeus cosues ses manches' (ll. 560-61) – and on into the costume of the esteemed owner of the garden. Even Deduit's partner in the *carole* (and romantic partner), Liesse, who links a single delicate finger with her lover in the dance, has a fine golden thread laced through her hair: 'Ele fu bele et bien atornee, / D'un fil d'or ert galone' (ll. 854-5). Deduit's own slit and slashed costume is emphatically laced, too. The passage dealing with his dress descends as usual from the upper part of the body (he is crowned with a chaplet of roses) down to the ground, and his sandal-like shoes there continue the play with openings and closure, since the poet makes clear that these feature cut-out sections and knotted cords that fasten around his feet: 'Chauciez refu par grant metrisse / D'un solers decopez a laz' (ll. 825-6). The shoelace, and the practice of threading it in a sort of running stitch in and out of the stencilled and cut material – a sort of latticework sleeve in itself – is now associated explicitly with the metrical form of the work: the foot. The measured step of the dance and of the poem are laced together in the clothing of its characters. The 'grant metrisse', or *maitrise*, is again the poet's, or rather that of the *metrifier*, since Guillaume is again indulging in self-reflexive wordplay.

The measured step of the poem is, as has been argued here, closely intertwined with the textile metaphor that accompanies the narrator's progression and shapes the sights he sees and passes on to the reader. If the allegorical cloth of

the *Rose* was influenced by Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae*, with its mixture of often disordered prose and verse, the constant concern with dressing up, weaving, lacing, sewing, and pulling open takes on a new and rather different importance in Guillaume's text. In this respect there are many precedents for the association that the poet establishes between text with textile, and these stretch back into antiquity where the analogy is especially apparent in lyric verse. As Gianpiero Rosati has pointed out in relation to some of the many stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where textiles are given prominence, 'the semantic field of spinning and weaving provides a large reservoir of metaphors for concepts associated with poetic writing and composition', and these metaphors are 'ancient and widespread in literary contexts'. That semantic field, says Rosati, 'is constructed around the idea of the text (written or verbal) as an interlacement, as *textus*' (Rosati 2006: 334, 343).<sup>24</sup>

This ancient metaphor persists in medieval literature, appearing just as widely in twelfth-century garb, and often tightly bound to the site of the garden, where nature and artistry themselves are always and necessarily intertwined. The best known examples come in the *chansons de toile*, and it also appears in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* or *Chevalier au Lion*. E. Jane Burns, whose work on textiles in medieval literature has in many respects dominated the field, sees the analogous relationship expressed between sewing, especially, and singing as a uniquely feminine form of composition, complicating the masculine 'equation between the acts of loving and singing' that was recognised long ago by Paul Zumthor (1972: 212-17). As she puts it, 'the acts of loving and singing are equally imbricated with sewing' within the female-led *chansons de toile* (Burns 2002: 91). This gendered quality is not always apparent, however, and is certainly no longer the case in the

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<sup>24</sup> The idea of the poet's 'progress' is also derived from antiquity; ancient poets frequently use the image of the ship, the cart, or horse, to signify the momentum of the text, as well as the humbler foot: see Kenney 1958: 205-6, where such metaphors are associated especially with didactic poetry.

*Rose*, where sewing, devising, and composing – all at once – are presented as the related activities of the textile-focused male narrator.

1.8. Transportative Textiles in Twelfth-Century Verse: Dream Vision and Garden Cloth in *Guigemar* and *Floire et Blancheflor*

Available to Guillaume, also, was an extensive range of alternative twelfth-century sources where textiles play an equally or even more metatextually significant role than in the *De planctu naturae*, and in order to understand more fully the function of the textile element in the *Rose*, where, as Bloch suggested, dress can be seen as approaching an ‘entire literary mode’, it will be worth looking back at one or two examples with which he will have been familiar. There appear in a number of other twelfth-century texts – especially those in verse – woven and embroidered cloths that play a similarly significant role in giving structure and shape to a narrative, whilst accompanying or even transporting the journeying protagonist from one place (or state) to another. Guillaume’s nimble activity as seamster on the go, along with Deduit’s showily metrical step, reflect a living poetic tradition where the textile actually serves as a transportative device, mirroring and actually becoming in a sense the boundary that takes the narrator into the narrative proper.

One such transportative textile occurs in *Guigemar*, one of Marie de France’s well known *Lais*, composed sometime after 1170. The eponymous hero, gravely wounded by a deflected arrow that he has himself fired at a white hind, happens upon a mysterious – and marvellous – boat. Like a careful poetic construction it is fashioned of expensive materials and appears seamless: for the protagonist, ‘n’i pout trover jointure’ (l. 155). It has a silken sail, and, stepping aboard, he finds on the deck a canopied bed in which he cannot help but seek rest: ‘En mi la nef trova un lit,

/ dunt li pecol e li limun / furent a l'uevre Salemun / taillié a or, tut a trifoire, / de ciprés e de blanc ivoire' (ll. 170-74). The bed is an exotic and elaborately worked structure comparable to many other artefacts in twelfth-century romance literature, and particularly within the *romans antiques*, whose authors were largely contemporaries of Marie de France. The segment of the ekphrasis that has attracted the most scholarly attention is that concerning the ornamentation of the bed 'a l'uevre Salemun': this elusive phrase has been the topic of some debate. Some (especially Lawton 1955: 50-52) have thought this formulation a general and imprecise expression of praise for the quality of the object, and others (especially West 1954: 176-82) have argued that it pertains to a distinctive and recognisable decorative technique involving intaglio and intarsia. Nigel Abercrombie suggested in 1935 (353) a textual connection with the description of Solomon's litter in the Song of Solomon (3: 7-10), an elaborate construction of cedar, silver, gold, and purple cloth. His reading of the description as drawing on a purely literary precedent would make the term a coinage on Marie de France's part, but ultimately the similarities between the biblical passage and the bed in *Guigemar* are not close enough to be conclusive. Twelfth-century (and later) literary references to *opus Salomonis* especially involve ivory and gold – a combination best known to us through the Greek term 'chryselephantine', employed for some very prestigious works of antiquity – but the phrase used by Marie de France also appears to have been extended to similar workmanship in other hard, precious materials like ebony.<sup>25</sup> Similar uses of the term *oeuvre Salomon* or related formulations appear in many texts of the period, including the *Enéas* (ll. 4075-78; on this see Hoepffner 1932: 272-308) the *Roman de Troie* (ll. 1817-18), and *Floire et Blancheflor* (ll. 561-2), a

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<sup>25</sup> For more on the symbolic associations of ivory in particular, see chapters two and three of the present thesis.

poem that we shall discuss in more detail below. An excellent recent summary of occurrences and discussion of interpretations may be found in Allegra Iafate's *The Wandering Throne of Solomon*, a monograph that focuses specifically on objects associated with the semi-legendary king (Iafate 2015: 47-53). Iafate, following West, has argued that 'it seems beyond doubt that in most medieval poems "oeuvre Salemon" indicated an actual technique or a decorative effect, probably with reference to something that had an effective counterpart outside literature, something known to the cultivated and rich audience of these romances. [...] we should then imagine to be confronted with the evocation of real objects.' The literary objects, says Iafate, 'seem utterly realistic and evoke precise examples' (Iafate 2015: 50-51). There is, of course, a certain amount of artistic licence to be taken into account. Apart from the magical function of many of these literary artefacts, there is also a difference in scale that is noticeable, where authentic techniques that were usually employed only on small objects may be found instead on larger structures within the context of romance literature. As indicated above, the mention of Solomonic work gives an exotic flavour to the structure described by Marie, and an impression of antiquity as well as fine and expensive craftsmanship, but there is another aspect to consider in relation to the idea of the *oeuvre Salomon*. Iafate cites as a potential 'real life' example of what might have been considered *opus Salomonis* the elaborately inlaid *minbar* or mobile pulpit of the mosque of Kutubiyya in Marrakesh, which was produced in Córdoba from 1137, not so very long before the *lai* of *Guigemar* and other texts referring to such work were composed. Iafate does not comment further on this example but the surfaces of the *minbar* – shown below – are ornamented in a manner characteristic of Islamic art of the period, with geometrical

interlocking strands that lace together to form a complex and unending web or lattice of illusionistic knots that evoke an elaborately woven textile.

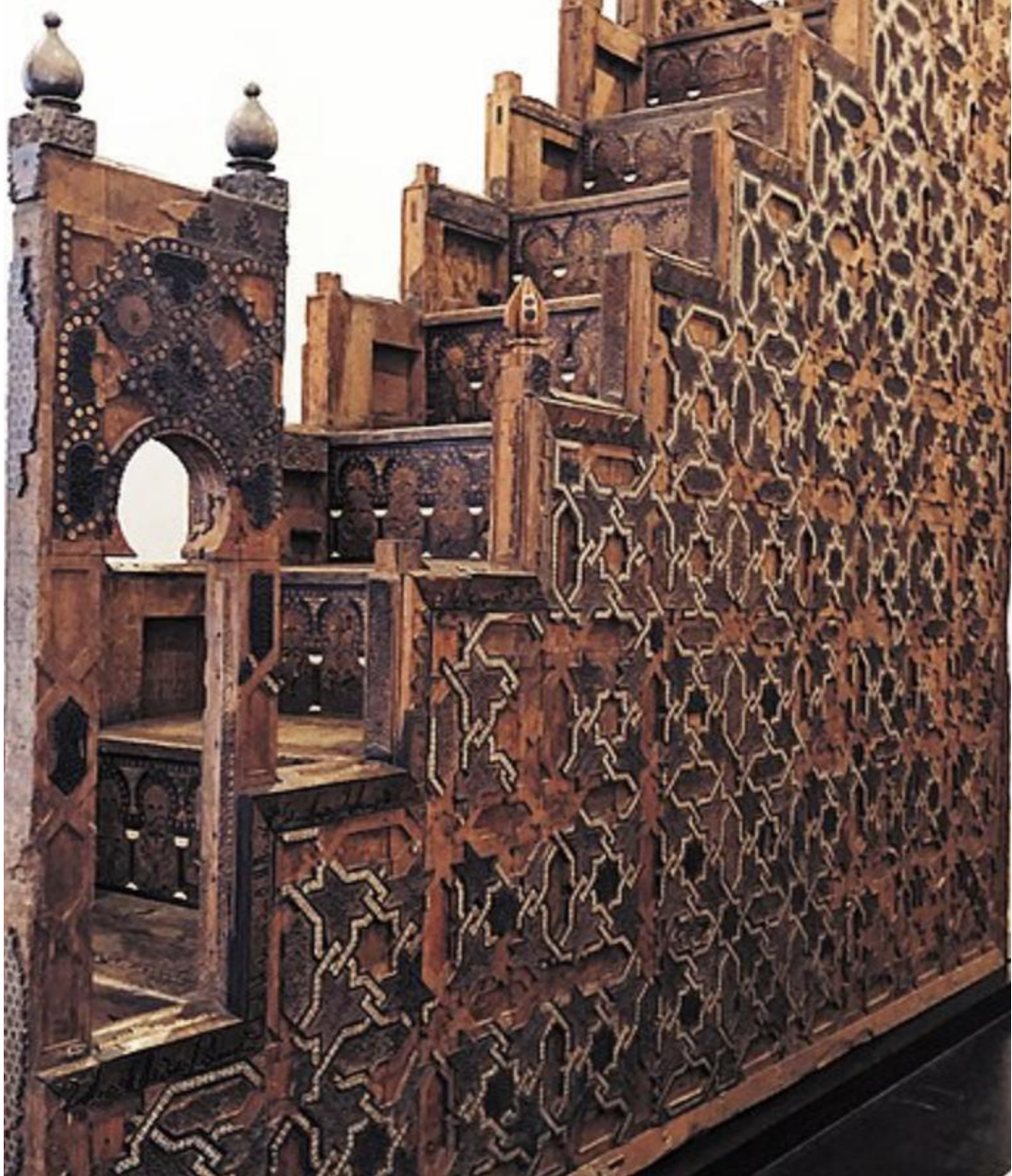


Fig. 1.6. Kutubiyya Mosque, Marrakesh, *minbar*, wood and bone inlay decoration, (Córdoba, 1137 – c.1145).

Here we have a plausible solution to what has sometimes seemed an insoluble problem for scholarship. The technique loosely associated with Solomon during the

twelfth century must have involved an interlacing of flat threads or ribbons treated in inlay, and it should surely be connected with the ornamental motif known as the ‘knot of Solomon’, which is only a compact and self-contained unit of the more extended interlacing or *entrelacs* decoration applied to larger surfaces. Iafrate has since written more extensively about the ‘knot of Solomon’ in her 2019 monograph on the Solomonic tradition, where, as she indicates, the earliest appearance for the term (as *nodo Salamone*) is traced to Dante’s *Rime* (LXXV; Iafrate 2019: 87). She does not explicitly link it with the earlier idea of the *oeuvre Salomon*, and it must be acknowledged that the *Rime* are rather late, but in all probability the two ideas are connected. If this interpretation is right, the surfaces of the bed as a whole in *Guigemar* are cut and ornamented into the semblance of a woven textile, meaning that the solid enclosing structure of the whole relates directly to the soft textiles contained inside. These textiles, as we shall see, are the items of real importance, and their significance is echoed and enlarged – and not to be obscured – by the interlaced ornament on the surfaces that surround them.

The key part of the descriptive passage as a whole comes in the bed linen itself: ‘D’un drap de seie a or teissu / ert la coilte ki desus fu. / Les alters dras ne sai preisier; / mes tant vos di de l’oreillier: / ki sus eüst sun chief tenu, / ja mais le peil n’avreit chanu. / Li coverturs de sabelin / volz fu de purpre Alexandrin’ (ll. 175-82). Again, the textiles are exotic and luxurious, the bedcover of zibeline (sable skin or fur) with a lining of ‘purpre Alexandrin’ not so far off from the *pers* textiles of the *Rose*, though Marie must mean here the prestigious Tyrian purple of antiquity. There is, in addition, a quilt of silk embroidered (‘teissu’) with gold thread, and Marie places particular emphasis on the pillow, which forms the centrepiece of the whole ekphrasis: ‘Les alters dras ne sai preisier; mes tant vos di de l’oreillier: / ki sus eüst

sun chief tenu, / ja mais le peil n'avrait chanu (ll. 177-80). 'The other sheets I can hardly evaluate, / but so much I say of the pillow: / whoever had held his head on it / would never have white hair.' Marie thus signals that the textile element in the ensemble is unusual and imbued with strange capabilities. If not entirely restorative, like the many fountains of youth that appear elsewhere in romance literature and medieval art – and we must remember that Guigemar is wounded – it still has the power to pause or halt deterioration. The pillow especially, along with the associated bedclothes and containing structure, is presented as a magical artefact, but the most important function of the ensemble is not to just to provide rest for the hero and a suspension of the narrative, but the opposite. As Guigemar falls asleep, the bed and the ship set sail into what may or may not be the territory of a dream. Monica L. Wright, who has paid special attention to cloth in twelfth-century romances, notes the importance of the pillow in this *lai*: '[t]his cloth,' she says, 'along with the magic ship itself, performs the function of physically transporting Guigemar to where he needs to be. Here, the cloth's function is entirely extraordinary while nonetheless seeming ordinary, for nothing is more normal than sheets on a bed. Marie has found a device for transporting her knight to where he must go that in no way shocks the reader but extends and deepens her use of clothing, gradually sustaining the clothing metaphor that she established at the very beginning of the *lai*' (Wright 2010: 150).<sup>26</sup>

Marie de France does not make clear whether the ship, bed, and sheets are part of a delusion, or labour the point that the hero has been lulled to sleep, but there is unavoidably an implication that this moment of magical transportation is also a moment in which Guigemar undergoes a transformation himself. He does not clearly

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<sup>26</sup> Wright has already cited Guigemar's *clothing* with armour at lines 47-8 and the bandaging of his wound (with cloth) at lines 139-40. The 'clothing metaphor' to which she alludes is implied by Marie's association at the outset of social status and identity with garments; Wright sees clothing in the text as having 'various performative functions' from that point onwards (Wright 2010: 148).

awaken from a dream at any point within the *lai*, although he rises from the bed when he reaches his mysterious destination and meets the other characters. The dream becomes, in a sense, the new reality, but the reality of the poem is itself already fantastic even before he encounters the ship: the white hind, for instance, has addressed the hero in human speech as no real animal can. Guigemar travels and crosses boundaries only as a dreamer, and only after having made physical contact with the enchanted pillow and other luxurious bedclothes. This physical nature of this contact is thoroughly inscribed in the very word that is used for the pillow: as in modern French, this pillow is an ‘oreillier’ – literally an ‘earer’ – since it is pressed against the side of the sleeper’s head. Marie makes no mention of any sound or speech in this moment of being lulled to sleep, but it is significant that the ear is the conduit or point of contact with the woven textile here, as indeed it is for the audience of a *lai*, which would have been read aloud, and perhaps accompanied by deictic gestures that would have dramatised this moment further. As we shall see later in this chapter, the ear is a site of especial significance for the medieval author, and more than anyone else it would be Richard de Fournival who would, in the following century, seek to emphasise its role as an point of access into the mind and memory of the reader or listener. By resting his head on the pillow, then, Guigemar becomes a sort of recipient of its enchanting, fabulous, poetic, and transportative power.

A more developed version of this kind of textile-led transportation occurs in the opening of Robert d’Orbigny’s *Floire et Blancheflor* (c. 1170), where an expensive imported cloth – again associated with a bed – becomes once again a point of access to a foreign land, and in this case into the narrative proper. In the frame narrative of the poem the visual and aural stimuli that introduce – and *induce* – the

richly imaginative story to come are combined in a single sequence involving physical contact with a highly worked and patterned textile and an orally delivered narrative accompaniment. The poem, it is implied, is the product of both the bedtime story and the luxurious textile, which looks, according to the description, like a garden. The bedspread itself evokes the settings and subjects of a romance: the narrator listens to an old story told to him by the elder of two high-born ‘damoiseles’ who are conversing, as he enters, on the subject of love. These sisters are both ‘bele et sage’ (l. 48), and the story is set, vaguely, more than two hundred years ago (‘bien avoit deus cens ans’: l. 52), repeated, apparently, from ‘uns boins clers’ who had conveyed it to the elder lady orally after having encountered it himself in a written form. Immediately apparent is the playful duplication and reduplication of frame narratives here that concocts an entirely false provenance and transmission history for the story, stamping it with great antiquity and an unverifiable distance from the present: the story is embedded deep within a concentric layering of spurious written and oral exchanges that imply several transformations – and perhaps translations – along the way. Robert pointedly rhymes the words ‘dit’ and ‘escrit’, just before the story itself begins, to draw attention to the reworking that necessarily comes with each retelling and to establish a sort of shifting and intangible authorial distance from the poem itself (l. 53-4). In the last two lines of the frame (l. 55-6), the poet dramatically condenses the long and complicated provenance of the tale into a single couplet, which places him almost in the role of the storytelling lady: ‘Elle commence avenant. / Or oiiés son commencement.’ There is a sudden shift here from the third person to an imperative apostrophe that implicates the reader, or more particularly the listener, since the text demands to be read aloud, again with a few performative gestures. The verb ‘commence’ is forcefully repeated as a noun,

‘commencement’, making an artefact of the tale just as it really comes alive, and the following lines, we must assume, are told from the perspective not of our narrator, but of another, anonymous, character who is addressing her sister. Our narrator has not been explicitly addressed, but listens in, and instructs us to do the same. ‘Now hear’, we are told, ‘her beginning.’ The juxtaposition of ‘or’ and ‘oiiés’ in line 56 actually pun on the word *oreille* or ‘ear’, which, as we have seen, is also closely related to the word for ‘pillow’. At the same moment that this is going on, the gardenlike bedspread on which our narrator sits asserts a distinctly magical presence in the frame narrative, involving itself in this new step within the story’s complex transmission history. In short, *it too* tells a tale. It is described as follows:

En cele camber un lit avoit

qui de paile aornés estoit.

Molt par ert boins et ciers li pailles,

ainc ne vint miudres de Tessaile.

Li pailles ert ovrés a flors,

d’indes tires bendes et ours (*Floire et Blancheflor*: ll. 37-42).

It is only once the narrator has reclined upon this richly ornamented textile that the text’s frame narrative gives way to the ‘contained’ story of Floire and Blancheflor, apparently overheard from the unnamed noble ladies who are discoursing on love nearby. As in *Guigemar*, the bedclothes suggest sleep, but there is in this case a suggestion that the bedspread and supporting structure of the bed itself actually provide the imaginative setting of the story that is subsequently going to be experienced. The story is not merely heard, but, it is implied, also reinvented and reshaped by the receiving narrator, who is at once the ear and mouthpiece for readers

of the tale; he is an intermediary audience as well as the author of the text as *we* may receive it; a conduit both *aural* and *oral*. In the telling, the story again becomes mixed with an implicit dream vision, inscribed in the presence of the woven and exotic bedspread. As in *Guigemar* it is through physical contact with this sumptuously worked fabric that the magical moment of transportation occurs, now taking our *narrator* out of the frame and depositing him in the story proper, set more than two hundred years before his time and, presumably, far away: ‘Illoec m’assis por escouter / deus dames que j’oï parler’ (ll. 43-44).

This passage has been discussed briefly by E. Jane Burns, in her important 2002 book on clothes in courtly literature of the medieval period. As she has noticed, ‘the very telling of the courtly love story [of *Floire et Blancheflor*] emanates from a richly hybrid silk coverlet dyed with color from India and containing Arabic banding, an eastern luxury item that surpasses in quality the best silks coming to France from the Greek city of Thessaly’ (Burns 2002: 192). For her, the implications of the description are mainly for historical study of medieval trade relations between east and west: she comments that the ‘*tire [sic] bendes* mentioned [by Robert] suggest the adoption in the west of Levantine traditions of decorative cloth’ and stresses that ‘[i]f repeated allusions in courtly narratives to the foreign sites of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Thessaly, among others, have often passed unnoticed before the eyes of sensitive readers, it is largely because courtly love stories have so thoroughly defined themselves in terms of the east’ (Burns 2002: 193). It is certainly true that genuine, recognisable artefacts may underpin descriptions of this type, as indeed we have argued above in relation to the bed in Marie de France’s *Guigemar*, but this particular passage is no straightforward record of a real-life prototypical bedspread. There are in fact variant texts here to take into

account, too, which alter the reading of the relevant lines. The text quoted here, above, comes from Jean-Luc Leclanche's edition of 2003, which is based largely on a single manuscript (A – BNF, fr. 375), with insertions from two other extant versions (B, from BNF, fr. 1447; and V, Vatican, palat. Lat. 1971).<sup>27</sup> A third manuscript, C (BNF, fr. 12562) is regarded as a later copy of manuscript A. An alternative text is printed in Édélestand du Méril's edition of 1856, where the relevant lines run as follows:

En cele chambre un lit avoit

Qui d'un paile couvert estoit,

Indes et rouz, broudés par tors;

Onques plus riches n'ot estors.

Moult par-ert boins et chiers li pailles:

Ains ne vint miudres de Tessaile. (ll. 37-42)

As du Méril noted, lines 39-40 are taken in his edition from manuscript B, and in the other extant manuscripts come only *after* the following couplet referring to Thessaly (here, ll. 41-2; Leclanche: ll. 39-40). The order is inverted and the sense quite changed. Du Méril, however, considered the alternative texts offered by the other available manuscripts to be inferior, and the second line of the couplet so corrupt as to be unintelligible (du Méril 1856: 2-3 n. 7). This judgement applied both to manuscript A and manuscript C. The first (followed by Leclanche 2003) reads: 'Li pailles ert ovres a flors / Dindes tires bendes et ours'. The latter reads, for the second line: 'Deux des tires bendes a our.'

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<sup>27</sup> See the introduction in Leclanche 2003: vii-xxviii.

Respectively, each variant couplet might be translated in the following way. A: ‘The coverlet was worked with flowers / Bands of Tyre-blue silk and gold’; B: ‘Blue and red, embroidered with [twisted] cord / Never richer had a store’;<sup>28</sup> C: ‘The coverlet was worked with flowers / Two of Tyrian silk bands in gold.’ The best reading here is evidently A, as adopted by Leclanche. The ‘tors’ of manuscript C may perhaps seem plausible as a technical term to characterise the type of embroidery employed on the cloth, but the ‘estors’ of line 40 is likely a misreading for ‘et ours’, whilst ‘rouz’ is evidently a corruption of ‘tires’ or, again, ‘ours’. Bearing in mind these errors, the jumbled order of the lines and words, and the wider importance of flowers within *Floire et Blancheflor*, it must be concluded that ‘flors’ is a likelier reading than ‘tors’. The ‘deux’ of manuscript B is, meanwhile, presumably a misreading for ‘dindes’.

Burns’ discussion of the passage draws attention to the word *tires*, which is noticeably absent in manuscript B, and which she interprets as referring to Islamic *tiraz* borders, produced in specialist workshops in Moorish Spain and across the Arab world: the word would denote embroidered golden bands exhibiting geometrical patterns, perhaps involving interlaced motifs or medallions, or calligraphic inscriptions featuring Quranic text or the names of prominent individuals. The inclusion of such inscriptions within the patterning of the figured silk would be suitable, in a way, given the connection between text and textile that is made explicit in the passage via other means, and the sense of exoticism bound up with this material would be entirely appropriate given the specific settings of the

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<sup>28</sup> In Merton Jerome Hubert’s loose verse translation, which relied on Margaret Pelan’s 1956 edition, based more exclusively on manuscript B, this couplet is rendered, with the surrounding lines, as: ‘And in this room there was a bed / On which a rich silk cloth was spread / With a gay hem of red and azure / And exquisite beyond all measure, / The silk of wondrous quality; / No finer silk from Thessaly’ (Hubert 1966: 24, ll. 39-44).

story to follow, which takes Floire and Blancheflor from Al-Andalus to Babylon and off to other pastures new.<sup>29</sup> Such fabrics were certainly known in twelfth-century France, and the suggestion that *tires* is a French form of *tiraz* is not a new one.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the word *tires* is usually taken as pointing to the city of Tyre, traditionally (and indelibly) associated with *Tyrian purple*, which would still highlight the wide reach of ‘Levantine traditions of decorative cloth’. Burns’ translation, however, of the key couplet – ‘It was embroidered with flowers and decorated with bands of indigo and gold *tiraz* fabric’ (Burns 2002: 193) – does not accurately represent the Old French of any of the extant manuscripts, though she quotes from the text as given in A. Either way, the bedspread is clearly an exotic, imported cloth, evoking and prefiguring the distant settings that frame the human action of the narrative, and especially the enclosed gardens that appear at significant moments within the story.<sup>31</sup> Again a certain foreignness is present in the colour *indes* and in the word *tires*, which seem to be associated with each other in the line. The bands or borders and flowers represented on the cloth together anticipate the *real* gardens of the poem, where, as in the *Rose*, richly ornamented boundaries divide the field and hem in the flowers. The most important of these gardens belongs to the Emir of Babylon, who has Blancheflor shut up in a tower of green marble. The

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<sup>29</sup> The Babylon of the text has been identified with Cairo (see Hubert 1966: 19), but the geography of the poem is entirely fanciful.

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, Snyder 2001: 300, 304 n. 29. For an early identification of the word *tires* as meaning *tiraz*, see Brossard 1880-1: 525 n. 1.

<sup>31</sup> If a reading of the bedspread as a representation of a garden seems far-fetched, it should be remembered that ‘garden carpets’ had been produced in Persia since the sixth century, with a particularly large and celebrated example belonging to the Sasanian king Khosrau II, and that the same theme become common in humbler dwellings too. Jack Goody notes that although ‘[a] specialised variety called ‘garden carpets’ belongs typically to the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries [...] most Persian carpets of all periods are garden carpets in a wider sense, using floral patterns and often the formal framework of a garden design. These in their turn were copied in actual gardens’ (1993: 112). The Persian knot and so-called Spanish knot, as opposed to the Turkish or Ghiordes knot – all of which were used in pile-woven textiles – lend themselves particularly well to the representation of curved, organic, and vegetal forms, including flowers, though even the widespread and more geometrical *gul* motif represents a stylised rosette. The bedspread in *Floire et Blancheflor* features a combination of floral elements and a formal framework made up of bands: it is that combination, more than anything else, that makes the cloth gardenlike.

garden, when we come to it, will be hemmed in itself by a wall decorated in gold and blue: ‘De l’une part est clos de mur / tot paint a or et a asur’ (ll. 1963-4). This garden, and these colours, inevitably recall the bedspread of the poem’s frame, and the site comes remarkably close in its description to the similarly ornamented outer wall of Deduit’s garden in the *Rose*, which is also adorned with images in ‘or et [...] azur’ (*Rose*, l. 465).<sup>32</sup>

The description of the gardenlike bedspread also marks the first appearance of the all-important flower motif that is threaded throughout *Floire et Blancheflor*, and even through the names of its two protagonists and the title of the poem. This flower motif is key to the organisation and atmospheric tone of the poem as a whole, as William Calin recognised as long ago as 1964. In a particularly perceptive article published that year, Calin drew attention to what he called the ‘pervasive, significant, willed pattern of flower imagery which sets the tone of the work as a whole and gives it its unique literary quality’ (Calin 1964: 103). Calin also attempted in that article, for the first time, a catalogue of instances where this patterning comes to the fore within the text, but he managed to miss the first appearance of the floral, worked into the bedspread of the frame narrative. There are two reasons for the oversight: the first is that Calin was focusing on the ‘contained’ narrative rather than the ‘containing’ frame; the second – more important – reason is that he was relying on Margaret Pelan’s 1956 edition of the poem, which preferred the variant text of manuscript B, where, as shown above, the ‘flos’ are replaced by comparatively indistinct and amorphous ‘tors’.

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<sup>32</sup> The line in each poem is almost identical, with the verb ‘furent’ simply substituted in the *Rose* for the ‘tot paint’ of *Floire et Blancheflor*. The preceding line is also similar: ‘De l’une part est clos le mur’ changes to ‘De toutes parz pointes ou mur’ (emphasis mine).

This debut manifestation of the flower motif is only brief, but it serves, because of its emphatic position in the frame, a programmatic purpose within the poem as a whole, transporting the narrator to the far off (and temporally distant) garden settings of the poem's interior. The Emir's garden has already been mentioned above, but the two protagonists also fall in love within a garden, and Blancheflor's false tomb, a monument to which we shall return in chapter two, is also placed within an enclosed garden. Other textiles in the poem are similarly adorned with floral motifs, linking the garden bedspread of the frame with the gardenlike textilic artefacts handled and traded within the story, as well as the obvious garden sites where various interactions take place along the way. Bedspread to one side, the most important of these floral textiles occur as part of the elaborate trappings of Floire's horse. Particular attention is given, within a substantial ekphrastic passage, to the saddlecloth and cover that accompany Floire when he sets out to recover Blancheflor, disguised as a merchant. The saddle cover, which is again associated in the relevant passage with a journey, is decorated with flowers in orphrey: 'La covreture de la sele / ert d'un brun paile de Castele, / tote floree a flors d'orfrois; / tel le voloit avoir li rois' (ll. 1181-4). The flowers are given a kind of agency within the passage, enshrined in the verbal force of the word 'floree', which lends the apparently inanimate object an animation that stretches the bounds of possibility. As Floire proceeds on his way, it is implied, the flowers on the saddle cover likewise progress from bud to bloom. Later in the poem, Floire and Blancheflor will finally be reunited in the green tower on another silken bedspread: 'En un arvol d'une cortine / de soie u gisoit la mescine / se sont assis priveement' (ll. 2465-7). As in *Guigemar*, the containing structure of the bed itself is specifically mentioned in this case, since the word 'arvol' indicates a roofed or even vaulted

arbour-like frame above the sleep-inducing coverlet. The reader must instantly be reminded of the floral bedspread and love dialogue of the frame narrative, and the implicit connection between both sites is underscored by the fact that the cloth again becomes – straightaway – the setting for some storytelling, as the lovers fill each other in on the events that have taken place during their separation: ‘Après dist cascuns son talent. / Flores a premiers commencié’ (l. 2468-9).

As stressed above, it is by establishing physical contact with the richly worked silk that an entrance is made possible into the narrative proper, or in this case, into the story within the story, since the reduplication of frames continues deep within the tale, making artefact of agent and agent of object. We do not hear that there are flowers embroidered on this cloth, or even wove into it, but that is because they are now *sitting* on it, and addressing each other and the reader in direct speech. The bedspread of the frame narrative serves an anticipatory function, then, that relates both to the other *textilic* objects that appear at key moments within the story, and to the *sites* where some of the most important action of the poem occurs. Looking back at the frame from the context of the story, the bedspread becomes retrospectively invested with a kind of glamour that results from its implied (but never explicit) identification with artefacts like the saddle cover and the coverlet on Blancheflor’s Babylonian bed. This floral bedspread, encountered by our narrator at the very threshold of the narrative, might be one of the very cloths that is implicated in the story, retaining in its silken fibres an ostensibly mute but living memory of the distant lands, characters, and exchanges that are conveyed verbally to the reader. The text is transmitted, like the provenance of the artefact itself, within the warp and weft of the textile, echoes of which have been threaded throughout the whole work. The textiles relate closely to the enclosed gardens that are encountered throughout the

poem, both in Al-Andalus and in Babylon, at once replicating and prefiguring these settings, but the cloths themselves are all associated with transportation and the crossing of boundaries in a more literal sense too. As in *Guigemar*, the textile has a magical agency that actually carries the protagonist (in this case the narrator) away and into the story, and this is all the more suggestive because explicitly associated with the bed, where one might enter into a dream that draws – and extrapolates – on threads of reality observed during waking hours. In this sense, the bedspread functions like a real magic carpet, taking the willing participant into the text and to places that reflect the gardenlike patterning of the cloth’s evocative surface.<sup>33</sup>

This magical quality is hinted to the reader through the mention of ‘Tessaile’ (l. 40), which Burns sees as a straightforwardly exotic element in the description devoted to the bedspread, and a record of the esteem in which Thessalian textiles were held during the twelfth century. More than this, medieval readers familiar with ancient poetry would have recognised that Thessaly had a long-standing and

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<sup>33</sup> There can be no doubt that the magic carpet is most strongly associated now with the *One Thousand and One Nights*, where it appears in the story of Prince Ahmed and the fairy Pari-Banou, but this tale is a very late (eighteenth-century) inclusion within the compilation, having come to Antoine Galland (compiler and translator of the first French edition, between 1704 and 1717) from the Syrian storyteller Hanna Dyâb. This particular story appeared only in the last volume of the *Mille et une nuits*, published in 1717. The oldest stories featuring a flying carpet come rather from Hebraic sources dating to as early as the eleventh century (see Warner 2011: 59-83; Iafrate 2015: 205-12; idem 2019: 134-48; Bottigheimer 2018: 30, 34 n. 52), where the owner-operator is King Solomon. The immense flying carpet said to have been owned by Solomon is suggestively garden-like in most accounts, described as a woven cloth of green silk embroidered or interwoven with gold and silver and set with precious stones and figured ornament. The king’s throne (of ivory) travels on the carpet too, and there is space for his entire courtly retinue to ride along. In other respects the stories of Solomon’s carpet and associated flying expeditions are similar to the popular romance tradition concerning Alexander’s flight. Both Warner (2011) and Bottigheimer (2018) have argued that Dyâb’s tale, which includes the prototype for the magic carpet of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, is actually an adaptation of a modern French story, with no firm roots in Islamic literary tradition and doubtful connections to stories about Solomon, but it would appear that stories about the king circulated more widely in the middle ages. Richard Burton had already noticed in the 1880s that the motif appeared in the fourteenth-century *Grande Chronique de Normandie*, in which the tenth-century knight Richard I of Normandy (or Sans-Peur) is transported with a group of dead soldiers from the banks of the Seine to Mount Sinai on a flying cloth (Burton 1887: 425 n. 1).

traditional literary association with magic, witchcraft, and plants with strange properties.<sup>34</sup>

### 1.9. Love's cloak and the Landscape of the *Rose*: A Floral Facsimile of the Garden

That Guillaume de Lorris was familiar with *Floire et Blancheflor* is apparent from a range of textual as well as thematic clues that sometimes involve direct quotation of his predecessor. The blue and gold of the garden wall presents one such instance of direct citation. Another comes, just after the description of Deduit's clothing, in the extended ekphrasis that the poet devotes to the garments of the god of love. The sustained analogy between text and textile that runs through the *Rose*, and more particularly between the running stitch and poetic composition, bears the impress more generally of the transportative textiles and concentric framing structures that appear in that poem and to an extent in *Guigemar* too. A number of previous scholars have already noted a connection between *Floire et Blancheflor* and the *Rose*, though without discussing the nature of the link in much detail, meaning that the idea of direct influence has been somewhat taken for granted. Among the number of these scholars are Erich Köhler (1963), Elizabeth Pearsall and Derek Salter (1973), Armand Strubel (1992), and Jacek Kowalski (2006). Pearsall and Salter in particular found a place for *Floire et Blancheflor* as 'part of the complex derivation of the developed landscape of the *Roman de la Rose*' (Pearsall and Salter 1973:

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<sup>34</sup> References to this in Greek and Latin literature are exceedingly widespread, but see, for example, Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 2. 97-102; *Remedia amoris* 249-51. These texts were still widely read during the period, and the *Remedia amoris* is specifically cited in Marie de France's *Guigemar*, where a painted mural shows Venus throwing the book on a fire and excommunicating anyone who has dared to follow the poet's advice (ll. 239-44). This association with magic applies equally to Thessalian fabrics that appear in other contemporary works of literature, such as *Erec et Enide*, which is also cited by Burns in relation to the coverlet in *Floire et Blancheflor*.

51).<sup>35</sup> That ‘developed landscape’, even before we come, as an outsider, to the garden walls, is presented as a textilic construction of the poet’s. Once we have, with the narrator, passed through the wicket into the garden proper, the textile element keeps cropping up to draw attention to and to represent the creative processes involved in the poem’s composition and the artistry that these processes have involved.

The anticipatory bedspread in the opening of *Floire et Blancheflor* might also be seen as prefiguring the poetic textiles of the *Rose*, and this is especially the case because the ‘willed pattern of flower imagery’ that Calin detected in the former poem is also thoroughly laced through the subject, settings, imagery, and title of the latter work. So far, this chapter has already argued that Nature’s flowery dress, the narrator’s pleated sleeves, and Dedit’s elaborate costume of figured samite all represent the poem as a whole and the garden setting that forms the arena of nearly all its allegorical action. Each one of these textile creations is fundamentally implicated in the narrator’s journey through the dream narrative. A fourth costume, briefly mentioned above, further emphasises the concentricity and self-reflexivity of the poem – and the garden’s – arrangement by asserting the unity of the *floral* and the *fabric* deep within its interior. Immediately following on the heels (quite literally) of Dedit’s description, Guillaume introduces the god of love himself, who is, if not the noble patron of or possessor of the garden – this role is taken by Dedit – then certainly the presiding monarch in the place. As with the other figures we have met, an extended ekphrasis is dedicated to his dress, which microcosmically

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<sup>35</sup> In his monumental 1891 *Sources et Origines du Roman de la Rose*, Ernest Langlois cites *Florence et Blancheflor* as a source for Guillaume de Lorris, but this is not to be confused with *Floire et Blancheflor*, which is a different work.

replicates the whole garden not only on its colourful, organic, and assertively floral surfaces, but also materially within its weave and actual substance.

It has already been recognized by Sylvia Huot that this garment is meant to be interpreted as a representation of Dedit's garden itself, and a facsimile, by extension, of the poem as a whole (Huot 2010: 11-17). Huot notes that, once the narrator has become the focus of the god of love's dangerous attentions, 'it is as though the garden itself, embodied in the force of desire, is watching him'. The god of love is, himself, 'a walking mass of flowers and songbirds'. His costume, the poet tells us, is not made of silk, but of real living summer flowers of all 'guises', all of which are 'par grant sen assises' (ll. 884-5). Interspersed among these personified, 'seated' blossoms are large rose leaves – 'Fueilles de rosiers granz et lees' (l. 891), more geometrical or even heraldic 'losenges et [...] escuciaus' evoking garden architecture, and numerous animals, including 'oissiaus', 'lionciaus', 'bestes' and 'lieparz' (ll. 880-1). As with Nature's dress and the bedspread in *Floire et Blancheflor*, the flowers come in 'inde', but also in 'jaune', 'blanche' and other colours besides; the poet names the violet, periwinkle, and broom specifically as having a place within the living fabric (ll. 887-9). Although Guillaume claims at the start of the ekphrasis that the gown is difficult to describe (l. 875), he proceeds with aplomb and stresses above all else the fact that it is 'ovree de flors' (l. 883). This is a direct quotation from the description of the bedspread in the opening of *Floire et Blancheflor* (l. 41), and the phrase appears, furthermore, in the same emphatic position within the line. The verb 'ovree' is invested with slightly greater significance here than in the earlier poem, because it has appeared some lines beforehand in the first person at exactly the crucial moment when the narrator is gaining access to the garden; addressing the reader there with one of the poem's rare

apostrophes, the narrator says: ‘Vos conterai comment j’ovré’ (l. 692). The ‘work’ of entering the garden – because this is how the poet puts it – contains a pun on the verb *ouvrir* (‘to open’), which Guillaume playfully avoids when referring to the actual unlocking of the wicket that allows access into the interior: Oiseuse does not open, but rather *uncloses* the gate, whose own woven structure is emphasized in the rhyming word ‘ramé’ (‘branched’ or ‘branchy’): ‘Quant el m’avoit desfermé / Le guichet dou vergier ramé’ (ll. 689-90). The act of entrance is linked textually with the embellishment of the god of love’s garment, and a connection is once again established between the artistry with which the described artefact has been created, and the activity of the poet-narrator at the very moment when he crosses the threshold of ‘frame’ narrative into the enclosed or contained story within.

Unsurprisingly the verb ‘deviser’, which as we have seen above has already been used in the *Rose* with a double sense, appears again – twice – in the passage that introduces the god of love to the reader and narrator. In the first instance it is actually used as a noun, and the deviser, designer, or divider is the god of love himself (l. 866); in the second case, the poet is again doing the devising, and the object of the verb is the ‘robe de floretes’ of the god of love (l. 874). Guillaume is again presenting himself as a ‘cutter of cloth’, to use Bloch’s expression. The same slippery, but emphatically authorial verb also appears, significantly, at the end of the ekphrasis of the garden wall, which is also revealed (by the employment of that word) as a poetic construct of Guillaume’s conception: ‘Ces ymages bien avisé / Que si com je l’ai devisé’ (l. 464).

The god of love is also presented through wordplay as a sort of tailor, presiding not so much over his own costume, as over the dispensation of ‘amoretes’ (l. 866). Literally these are ‘little loves’, handed out as gifts by the deity according to

his 'devise', but as a noun the word 'amore' can also refer to a narrow blade; in the diminutive form used here, the god appears to be administering little pricks to suitable candidates, as he sees fit. His own garment, though a poetic construct that falls under the poet's jurisdiction, is said to be made 'de fines amoretes' (l. 877). The sense is double: on the one hand, the craftsmanship has been, in essence, a labour of (little) loves(s); on the other hand, the artistic process of placing those varied images of animals, lozenges, and shields upon the surface of the flowering cloth has called for the pricking of needles. Quite simply, the process of constructing this embroidered cloth has involved the making of holes as well as the addition of fresh material. In this respect the god of love's robe is linked with Deduit's complicated costume and the poet's own gathered sleeves, which have also been the site of some careful needlework during the morning walk. This floral garment, too, is a complex, layered construction, both worked and pierced through by the flowers from which it has been woven, and artfully closed and 'opened'. Like the garden as a whole, and the theme of the poem advertised at the outset – the 'art d'amours' itself (l. 38) – the god of love is 'toute enclose' – bound like a precious artefact within a richly worked container that is itself an artwork designed to tease the onlooker.

#### 1.10. Concentric Enclosures: The Locked-Out Lover and the Open Wicket

It is not possible to list all of the different (and different kinds of) opening and closing frames which Guillaume employs in the *Rose*, since what has been called the 'multiplication des cadres' (Verhuyck 1974: 283 - 93) is central to his poetic vision, and some are a great deal more tangible than others. As indicated above, however, there are three principal constructions that give concrete shape to the otherwise

protean scenery from which the poem is composed. The first, with which we are chiefly concerned here, is the wall which surrounds the garden; the second is the Fountain of Narcissus, which will occupy us in the next chapter; the last, which cements the arrangement as concentric rather than more straightforwardly symmetrical, is Jealousy's castle, a final, impenetrable obstacle through which the Amant cannot pass, but one through which passage would undeniably be an act once again of entering as opposed to exiting. The extraordinary synthetic miniature, above, from Gui de Mori's remaniement (Fig. 1.4), condenses a large part of the narrative of Guillaume's concentrically arranged poem into a single image in which the viewer can trace the dreamer's journey in a snaking line from his admittance in the top left, right through the *carole*, back to the poem's centrepiece – the Fountain of Narcissus – and down to the lower right-hand side of the miniature, where he again confronts the outer wall. In Guillaume's text, the Amant and the reader together progress to – but are impeded from continuing through – not the original garden wall, but another structure deep within the dream, a little like reaching the innermost part of the Inferno, in Dante's well known and similarly concentric scheme. It is in this sense that the poem becomes 'une oeuvre sans dénouement' (Verhuyck 1974: 288). Indeed, as a result of the Amant's inability to escape from the composition (and condition) in which he is ensnared, it is possible for the close of Guillaume's poem to mirror its opening all the more closely, with a return to the classical motif of the *exclusus amator*, and a brilliantly cohesive but deliberately frustrating example of ring composition.<sup>36</sup>

When he first encounters the wall surrounding Dedit's garden and considers entering, the dreamer finds the interior space difficult to access, and ultimately he

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<sup>36</sup> The most influential study on the *exclusus amator* or *paraklausithyron* theme, involving a locked-out lover and a closed door, is Copley 1956: *passim*.

never manages to leave, instead finding himself confounded by numerous other barriers as the dream landscape around him rapidly changes and throws up unanticipated new hurdles. The entire poem is structured, as John Dixon Hunt has phrased it, around the ‘crossing [of] these boundaries’, with narrator and reader alike having to manoeuvre ‘past a series of obstacles, learning the next step in a navigation of its spaces’ (2013: 35). If the Amant sometimes struggles with this navigation, he is perhaps not alone: Suzanne Lewis, referring to Jean de Meun’s poem as well as Guillaume’s, feels that ‘the reader sometimes becomes lost within a thicket of contradictory meanings, exploratory ambiguities, and shifting perceptions [... and] becomes caught in a web of closures or impossibility of meaning’ (1992: 215). Perplexity on the part of modern readers, and especially those who, following the recent scholarly tradition that has privileged the second part of the *Rose*, have given greater attention to Jean’s continuation than the original work from which his poem sprang, may sometimes have been aggravated by the phenomenon that Hult has termed ‘the overgrown jungle of a long critical tradition’. In a sense, however, every reader who struggles with the *Rose* only re-enacts the readerly frustration of Guillaume’s Amant. In so far as Guillaume’s *Rose* is structured, framed, ordered, and arranged through boundaries both material and immaterial, it must be regarded as the complete antithesis of the *roman rose* as Michel Zink defined it in his pioneering work on Jean Renart’s *Guillaume de Dole*: if the protagonists in these romances achieve ‘satisfaction sans obstacle de ses désirs’, then the dreamer or Amant of Guillaume de Lorris’ poem belongs to an altogether different and less reliably fortunate class, closer in his suffering, as well as in his repeated confronting of impenetrable barriers, to the often similarly anguished paraklausithyronic lovers

of ancient elegy, a tradition that also found expression in the work of the poet's contemporary Richard de Fournival.

As we have seen, modern scholars of the *Rose* have often sought, not entirely unlike its medieval readers, to express the unique concentricity of the poem's structure, and by extension that also of Guillaume's dream narrative, through analogy. It should come as no surprise that the text's arrangement has sometimes been found to resemble not only the configuration of actual gardens which open and close to admit or exclude (and in which one can become lost or entangled), but also the composition of smaller, more intimate objects, such as boxes. Both Verhuyck and Barney have likened the boundaries or enclosures which ripple across the surface of Guillaume's poem to 'boîtes chinoises', the former suggesting at the same time an alternative, slightly more corporeal, symbol for the text in the matryoshka doll. The suggestion of these particular analogous objects, however widespread their use might be within modern literary discourse, is reasonably astute when used in relation to the *Roman de la Rose*, since Guillaume also in numerous places evokes boxes, and the poem is filled not only with imagery of opening and closing, entrance and exclusion, sewing and lacing, but also with keys, locks, and references to the giving of gifts. For instance, before the dreamer leaves the *carole*, Oiseuse's initial unlocking of the wicket is described as the giving of a great bounty: 'car ce fu cele qui bonte / me fist si grant, qu'ele m'ovri / l'uis dou guichet, soue merci' (ll. 1253 – 1255). An even more visceral image comes later in the poem, when the Amant allows the god of love to lock his heart in lieu of offering him a gift to show his subservience. Characteristically, Guillaume frames *both* locking and unlocking as acts of gift-giving. In following chapters, I will argue that these paired but oppositional processes of opening and closing, concealing and revealing, clarity and

obscurity, are ever present in representations, literary and otherwise, of the garden space, which is always constructed — as it is in the *Rose* — through concentric layers that mix or interlace the natural with the artificial or *artefactual*. It is the places where the various interfaces that make up these layers meet or leave an opening – a potential threshold – which will concern us most.

### 1.11. Forbidding Façades on the Illuminated Folio: Fournival and Framing for the Reader

We have already encountered the extraordinary ekphrasis of the fortified garden wall which Guillaume places like an illuminated frontispiece at the front of his poem and of the garden beyond, a structure decorated with ‘escritures’, ‘ymages’, and ‘pointures’ (ll. 133 – 134), one whose external façade is sumptuously adorned with precious materials and colours – ‘or et [...] azur’ (l. 465) – particularly associated with manuscript illumination, but also with protected interior spaces. Whilst alluding to an existing literary tradition – exemplified by both the bedspread and the Emir’s garden wall in *Floire et Blancheflor* – that made use of similar structures decorated with gold and blue, Guillaume seems also to anticipate the transmission and reinterpretation of his work through illuminated codices. Here, too, these colours would be employed, along with writing, to form interpretative surfaces for the reader.

Bearing in mind the overt connection in the *Rose* between the garden wall, with its text and images – symbols that must be read and interpreted before entrance is possible – and the manuscript page, adorned as it is in similar fashion, I would like to look in detail at the frontispieces of a number of manuscripts which represent this

key part of the poem not only in terms of illustration – indeed we never see representations that follow the text in a completely literal way – but also by virtue of their position within the codex: these frontispieces, I contend, serve as thresholds to the poem in more than one way. Given the prominence of the garden wall in Guillaume’s poem, I shall set some examples which share similarities in iconographical and spatial arrangement on the manuscript folio side by side, and in doing so will focus particularly on the architectural details in these frontispieces and the way in which the different parts of the manuscript page – the miniatures, marginalia, text, and so on – relate to one another. In the manuscripts discussed below, the varied and sophisticated arrangement of these constituent elements, even where one pattern is followed or where authorship is shared between different examples, provides evidence of some of the different ways in which Guillaume’s poem could be interpreted. As Martha Dana Rust has said, illuminators ‘exploited the tension between word and image to brilliant effect, conveying meanings that do not properly reside in either text or image alone’ (2007: 17) but are caught somewhere in the boundary between the two. This tension is present in other ways on the manuscript page where friction between one kind of image and another, or between one word and another also come into play; much of this occurs in the boundaries that are embodied within the images, in the overlappings that are expressed in visual terms, in the contrasts between organic and artificial forms that come about, and in the materiality of the manuscript – the dazzling effect, for instance, of the patterning and illumination itself – as well as in the spatial configuration of the folio as a whole and its relationship with the rest of the codex and the reader. The codex, as an artefact, plays with boundaries and thresholds and

reconfigures spatial relationships between them in much the same way as the text contained within it.

Recent scholarship on the illuminated codex has sometimes conceived of the book itself as a site, and one with a ‘geography’ of its own. An excellent essay by Anne Stone (2020: 93-131, esp. 117-26) has recently drawn attention to the way in which the spatial (and almost topographical) organisation of the diverse textual, musical, and illustrative elements in one particular manuscript reflects the social and emotional status of its narrator and heightens the experience of the reader, accelerating or condensing the narrative in places, and dramatising the shifts between moments of solitude and public activity.<sup>37</sup> Mary Carruthers has also conceptualised the reader’s experience with an illuminated manuscript as a kind of journey, where the ‘experience [is] more like travelling through stages along a route than like perceiving a whole object’ in a single moment (Carruthers 2010: 290). Carruthers emphasises not only the spatial aspect of the reader’s experience, but also the more assertive or directive features of the codex itself, taking into account the text and other attendant parts of the composite whole. This she refers to as the manuscript’s *ductus*, a term that implies a leading, guiding, assisting authorial presence.<sup>38</sup> As she defines it, ‘[d]uctus is the way by which a work leads someone through itself’. Identifying a single and coherent guiding presence – like Oiseuse in the *Rose* – is not always possible, though the advantages of doing so are clear and are part of the reason why I will focus as much as possible over the following pages on a single illuminator who is associated with a number of specific manuscripts. It

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<sup>37</sup> This is the famous manuscript of Guillaume de Machaut’s works, fr. 1586 (Bibliothèque nationale de France), which will be discussed briefly here in chapters two and three. Stone focuses on the section featuring Machaut’s *Remede de Fortune*.

<sup>38</sup> My use of the word ‘authorial’ here does not signify only the original composer of the text, but also includes the involvement of other parties involved in the production and arrangement of such a manuscript.

will be useful to keep the idea of *ductus* in mind as we approach the codex and think about how it directs us – its readers – to navigate its spaces, but also to remember that many hands and voices are necessarily contained within its complex ‘geographical’ constitution.

The idea that the illuminated folio can, like the text on its own, present the reader with a threshold into the inner meaning of the work is not entirely new, but I build here on previous scholarship in the field of manuscript studies which has sought to recover a medieval conception of the reader’s response to an illustrated text. Looking to medieval sources, scholars have already found that an architectural and spatial metaphor for the opening especially of a text was already in use in the thirteenth century. A text to which many medievalists have returned is the *Bestiaire d’amour* (c. 1225-50) of the bibliophile, philosopher, cleric, and *trouvère* Richard de Fournival, whose name has already been mentioned before now.<sup>39</sup> The *Bestiaire d’amour* ironically reclothes the moralising medieval bestiary in the garb of a desperate paraklausithyronic lament; our author, as locked-out-lover, pleads with his addressee for admittance, citing numerous evidences from the animal kingdom as his reasons. The text starts, however, with a prologue that exploits an architectural metaphor for the transmission of information from author to reader. Richard states that ‘[c]este memoire si a .ij. portes, veoir et oïr, et a chascune de ches .ij. portes, si a .j. chemin par ou on i peut aler: che sont peinture et parole. Peinture sert a oeil et parole a oreille’ (ll. 13-16). The balanced coordination of word and image is emphasised through the alternating alliteration that ties together the words ‘peinture’

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<sup>39</sup> Fournival was, progressively, canon (in 1240) and then chancellor (1246) of Amiens cathedral, canon of Rouen, and chaplain to Cardinal Robert de Sommercote. One of the most influential scholars to have discussed Richard’s image of the ‘house’ and ‘doors of memory’ is Mary Carruthers. See especially Carruthers 1990: 277-8. Carruthers (1990: 443 n. 8) credits Sylvia Huot (esp. 1987: 138-73) with having first drawn her attention to Richard de Fournival’s work.

and ‘parole’, ‘oeil’ and ‘oreille’. Fournival presents the reader with the idea that memory is stored like treasure in a fortified strongbox – ‘le maison Memoire’ (l. 17) – into which there are two means of access, imagined figuratively as doors, each associated with the senses of the receiver. One door provides access via the eye, and the other, through the ear.

Previous scholars of the *Rose* have already drawn attention to the relevance of this conceit to manuscripts of the *Rose*, whose similarly enclosed construction and continual casting of the narrator into the role of locked-out lover is, in a sense, reenacted in the arena of the manuscript folio, where text and image work together, in theory, to assist the reader. The wider importance of Fournival’s idea was noticed by John Fleming as long ago as 1969 (12), and Sylvia Huot has likewise connected what she calls the ‘audiovisual poetics’ (1987: 135-73, esp. 138-41) of the *Bestiaire d’amour* with the *Rose*, using Fournival’s ‘doors of memory’ as proof also that ‘the visualization of abstract concepts is fundamental to allegory itself’ according to ‘the medieval science of memory’ (1993: 285).<sup>40</sup> Fournival’s image is, however, rather different from Guillaume’s. In the first case, the reader is him or herself the strongbox, and the ‘painture’ and ‘parole’ of the manuscript are the forces seeking to cross the threshold into the treasury of the mind; in the *Rose*, on the other hand, the narrator is presented as the reader, struggling to enter into the garden, which is conceived as something akin to that treasury. In the context of the manuscript, though, Fournival’s metaphor as expressed *textually* becomes intertwined with its

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<sup>40</sup> Huot also formulates this as ‘audiovisual communication’, which is more precise in context as Richard’s text is in prose. Huot has, however, also discussed the anonymous verse rewriting of Richard’s text that has come down to us as the *Bestiaire d’amour rimé*, which contains numerous interpolations that echo the *Rose*. Huot comments that these make ‘explicit the analogous poetics of the two texts’, meaning Richard’s original *Bestiaire* and Guillaume’s initial part of the *Rose* in particular (Huot 1987: 158-64, esp. 159). As Huot notes (159 n. 15), it is possible that Fournival himself composed a lyricised version of the *Bestiaire d’amour*, if the fragmentary but faithful rhyming text in ms. BNF fr. 25545 is telling the truth about its own authorship.

pictorial expression too, and the working of the conceit is actually inverted in the process. This is an example of the kind of ‘tension’ to which Martha Dana Rust has alluded, often produced when word and image are brought together. In one well known codex in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (fr. 412), the idea is given concrete visual expression, with a depiction of the ‘maison Memoire’ and its two doors.



Fig. 1.7. *Li Bestiaire d'amour*, Metz, c 1285, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 412, f.228r.

The reader is confronted, like the narrator of the *Rose*, with a fortified façade and two closed portals, requiring some active interpretation rather than the merely passive receptivity suggested by Fournival’s text. The manuscript now becomes the

treasury of desirable information. The contents are securely locked inside the pictures and accompanying text.

This pictorial interpretation of the doors of memory is actually the opposite of the conceit as Fournival had opted to wield it, but the inversion is by no means incompatible with his thinking, since he himself does something similar as author in another of his texts. In the *Biblionomia*, a less well known and apparently less widely circulated text written in Latin rather than the vernacular, Richard imagines a sort of public library established for the benefit of the citizens of Amiens, and he likens this space, metaphorically, to an *ortulus* or little garden ‘in quo [...] civitatis alumni fructus multimodos invenirent, quibus degustatis, summo desiderio hanelarent in secretum phylosophie cubiculum introduci’ (‘in which the pupils of [...] the city would find various fruits, and after tasting them, would pant with the greatest desire to be introduced into the secret chamber of philosophy’.<sup>41</sup> A different kind of *ductus* is at play here, and the idea of being led into the literature is embedded in the word (‘introduci’) that signifies that moment of initiation. The books in this garden library are arranged, like plants, in discrete, orderly plots, and the *Biblionomia* itself is described as the ‘clavis’, or ‘key’ to the place. Mary Carruthers, just in passing, has already mooted a connection between Fournival’s idea of the *ortulus* and the garden of the ‘encyclopedic’ *Roman de la Rose*, but the nature of the link has not been the subject of serious enquiry.<sup>42</sup> For Carruthers the similarity seems to be almost fortuitous, resulting from the general organising principle that is implicated in the arrangement of a real cloister garden. The garden

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<sup>41</sup> The Latin text is published in Delisle 1874: II, 518-35. According to Charles Segal (1969: 18), the word *secretus* is in Latin literature innately sinister, indicating the ‘isolation’ of a place. This is not obviously the case in the *Biblionomia*, where secrecy is associated in a more positive way with privacy and advanced learning. In the *Rose*, too, the exclusive places explored are not necessarily unpopulated, though they are, in a sense, secret.

<sup>42</sup> In characterising the *Rose* as encyclopaedic, Carruthers appears to be alluding mainly to Jean de Meun’s poem. See Carruthers 2000: 274.

in the poem is largely synonymous with the ‘secret chamber’ of Deduit, rather than a vaguely defined ‘philosophy’, and yet Guillaume’s exclusive garden also holds in store, deep within its shifting landscape, a series of even more exclusive spaces. The *Biblionomia* actually seems to allude directly to the amorous imagery of the *Rose*, not least because Fournival is teasingly mixing his metaphors (and again genres) in it: the panting reader he imagines is looking for admittance not just into the garden but into the bedroom (*cubiculum*) of Philosophy, which is therefore personified as the courtly love interest of the student.

The act of entrance, then, moves in two directions: Text and image should travel straight into the reader’s memory, as Fournival makes clear in the *Bestiaire*, but the reader should also pass into the textual space through the figurative doorway(s), in order to understand fully and interpret it properly, as is emphasised in the *Rose* and its manuscripts. The relationship between word and image is complex here: the illuminator of Fournival’s text, in treating the doors of memory, has enclosed the structure within a historiated initial, combining the text and its illustration in a single, condensed cell-like unit. This has gone unnoticed. Older scholarship on the illuminated codex tended to see the historiated initial as indicative of the close partnership of the word and the image: Fleming, for instance, refers to an initial where the ‘artist attempts to weave the “text” and [pictorial] “gloss” into one fabric’ (1969: 12); J. J. G. Alexander observed that historiated initials link ‘text and illustration in a particularly intimate manner’ (1978: 10). More recent scholarship has sought to find evidence of disunity, rather, between text and image, of conflict, or ‘tension’, as Rust says must necessarily occur at the boundary between the two.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Carruthers, however, describes the *Bestiaire d’amour* in particular as ‘a picturebook’ where ‘the writing and seventy-plus drawings [form] a unit’. Echoing Alexander’s choice of phrase, she observes that ‘[p]icturae and litterae remain intimately linked in the later Middle Ages’: Carruthers 2008: 277.

This tension is not to be seen as a mere accident of the imperfect or unequal relationship between text and image, but as a crucial part of the creative reinterpretation of the work that occurs at the very threshold of its transmission. As I will argue over the following pages, the poetic act of crossing that initial boundary into the work through word, image, and the materiality of the codex as a whole is given new significance in the aggregate, and dramatised through the constant reconfiguration of boundaries, margins, and borders that occurs on the manuscript folio and across the book in its totality. This playfulness with boundaries might be seen as characteristic of manuscript production during the period, but it gains in potency in the context of the *Rose*: the reader is, like the narrator of the poem, confronted at the outset by a flat wall adorned with ‘maintes riches escritures / Les ymages et les pointures’ (ll. 133-4).

#### 1.12. Painted Wall and Painted Page: Marginal Monumentality at Manta and the Fauvel Master

I will focus in the rest of this chapter on a group of manuscripts that have been attributed by Richard and Mary Rouse in their excellent *Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200-1500* (1999) to a single illuminator operating in Paris on the rue Neuve Notre-Dame in the mid-fourteenth century – the so-called Fauvel master, whose actual name has not come down to us.<sup>44</sup> These codices offer particularly powerful renderings – or rather reinterpretations – of the text’s concern with themes of mirroring, weaving, perception and subjectivity. They are now

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<sup>44</sup> See also Alison Stones 1998: 529-67. Stones splits the corpus attributed to the Fauvel master into two subsections: those autograph works produced by the master himself; and those produced by an assistant. All will have issued forth from the same workshop and the distinction is not of great importance to the discussion here.

scattered across the British Library, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and the Médiathèque Luxembourg de Meaux. In the same order, these are abbreviated as follows: BL Stowe MS 947 (London); Cod. Gall. 17 (Munich); BNF fr. 24390. (Paris); and Meaux BM 52 (Meaux). Alongside these, a fifth manuscript, found in the Assemblée nationale de France, MS 1230, is of particular interest and will be brought into the discussion: this is likewise of Parisian manufacture and dates from a similar period (c. 1330), and it shares, moreover, a number of similarities with those already mentioned.

The group of *Rose* manuscripts attributed to the Fauvel master share characteristics that enable them to provide us with an unusually direct insight into some of the earliest responses to the poem. Because these responses are not confined to the textual mode of expression only, they offer a commentary that is in many respects more appropriate to the themes explored in the *Rose*, since the poem is so explicitly concerned with the power of the visual and with the construction of different kinds of artefacts. The text itself is almost wholly constructed through ekphrastic episodes that dwell on images and the materials used in their making. These manuscripts are at once part of the transmission history and the reception of the poem, but the way in which they reshape and reformulate those central images of Guillaume's text reveals an exceptionally vivid, innovative, and sensitive response to the *Rose*. The poem's fascination with painting, inscriptions, architecturally defined surfaces and enclosures, bold combinations of text and image, and with the poem itself as a textilic artefact, is transposed here into a new medium that goes further in exploiting and dramatising the text's interest in interiority, exteriority, circularity, mirrors and mirroring. The Fauvel master's varied responses to the garden of Guillaume's poem, the personages that populate it or straddle its boundaries, and the

structures that demarcate that space, involve always a profound recognition of the unique strengths of the medium and of the material context and readerly performance of the codex.

At the same time, it is necessary to bear in mind the extraordinary reach and cultural cachet that has rightly been associated with the dissemination of manuscripts of this type, and especially with those touched into more suggestive shape by the Fauvel master himself. We know that this illuminator's name manuscript – an especially innovatively rendered codex featuring the *Roman de Fauvel* – which is now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, actually inspired a major part of a monumental fresco cycle at the Castello della Manta in Piedmont. It was purchased in Paris by the French-speaking Thomas III of Saluzzo at some point between 1403 and 1405, along with three other codices, many ivories and other elaborate artefacts that shared in the wider literary culture that centred around French romances.<sup>45</sup> The fresco cycle, commissioned after 1416 by Thomas' illegitimate son Valerano, the next lord of Manta, was planned with the assistance of Thomas' widow, Marguerite de Roussy, and their legitimate (but young) son, Ludovico I. It was intended as a means of celebrating Thomas' legacy, and the iconographical scheme relates specifically to his own literary contribution, a romance entitled *Le livre du chevalier errant* (begun 1394), but it also draws on the other manuscripts he treasured, as an active participant in the culture rather than as a more passive consumer.<sup>46</sup> The Sala Baronale of the Castello della Manta features, on one wall, a fountain of youth scene

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<sup>45</sup> For more information on the context of the commission and its connection with the *Roman de Fauvel*, along with a detailed inventory of Thomas' purchases in Paris, see Silva 2011: 9-41. Credit for the discovery of Thomas' purchases and initial recognition of the importance of the *Roman de Fauvel* manuscript for the frescoes at Manta must go to Maria Luisa Meneghetti. See Meneghetti 1989: 511-35. See also the summary entry on scholarship on Manta in Allaire 2014: 218-19.

<sup>46</sup> The iconography is closely related to a contemporary manuscript of the *Livre du chevalier errant* in which the illuminations are attributed to the Master of the *Cité des dames* (BNF, ms. Fr. 12559, ff. 125r-v): see Debernardi 2019: 10.

directly inspired by the illuminated *Roman de Fauvel* produced by the Fauvel master, and on the others, a sort of extended labelled pageant of the Nine Worthies and their female counterparts, the *neuf preux* (*novi prodi*) and *neuf preuses* (*nove eroine*).<sup>47</sup> These figures, though ostensibly taken from Thomas' *Chevalier errant*, are descended in a direct line from both the ugly figures on the outside of Guillaume's garden wall (in format), and the more attractive personages encountered inside (in style), including Dedit and Oiseuse. One of the ladies even tends to her golden tresses with an ivory comb, just as Oiseuse does in numerous manuscript illuminations. Representations of allegorical personages are also key to the *Roman de Fauvel*, where the title forms an acrostic that reads: *Flaterie, Avarice, Vilenie, Varieté, Envie, Lâcheté*. The Worthies in Manta are, of course, cut from rather different cloth, like the figures who take part in the *carole* inside the garden in the *Roman de la Rose*, and as in Guillaume's poem, great care is lavished on the textiles.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> An in-depth discussion of sources relating to the iconography of the Nine Worthies in relation to the frescoes at Manta can be found in Debernardi 2019: 5-42; transcriptions of the captions or *tituli* that accompany each figure are provided in an appendix at *ibid.* 199-206; further discussion of the text may be found in Piccat 1991: 141-66.

<sup>48</sup> A study on the clothing represented at Manta has been carried out by Riccardo Passoni (1992: 37-60), who argues on the basis of costume for a date between 1415 and 1420.



Fig. 1.8. La Sala Baronale, by the Master of La Manta, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, once with metal foils, Castello della Manta, Piedmont, c. 1419.



Fig. 1.9. View of the Fountain of Youth, by the Master of La Manta, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, once with metal foils, Sala Baronale, Castello della Manta, Piedmont, c.1419.



Fig. 1.10. (A-B) View of the fireplace wall, Male and Female Worthies, and doorway by the Master of La Manta, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, once with metal foils, Sala Baronale, Castello della Manta, Piedmont, c.1419.



Fig. 1.11. Semiramis with Ivory comb (also identified as Etiopie and Menalippe), by the Master of La Manta, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, once with metal foils, Sala Baronale, Castello della Manta, Piedmont, c.1419.

Crucially, the pictorial scheme at Manta situates its characters within a continuous garden setting, each figure punctuated by a columnar tree chosen for its symbolic suggestion of the virtues of the individual concerned. These trees form an ordered but changeful framing device within the scheme that also enlarges upon the symbolic potential of the ‘contained’ human actors, and they are treated with

impressive variety and delicacy of touch throughout.<sup>49</sup> The limits of the room are represented as the *interior* of an enclosed and protected garden, unlike the painted outer wall of Dedit's garden, where the figures are excluded. The *carole*-like motif of courtly characters, male and female, set into a continuous garden planted with straight, regular trees, would, however, pass even onto the outer edges of smaller objects such as wedding chests or *cassoni* produced during the Quattrocento in Italy within the wider circle of the same literary influence. This is visible in the surviving *cassone* panels attributed to Giovanni dal Ponte (also called Giovanni di Marco), which show famous lovers conversing in gardens strikingly similar to those painted at Manta. Paul Watson argued that the similarity between these boxes, dating to the 1430s, and the decoration at Manta reflect 'a common heritage in medieval palace decoration' (Watson 1979: 80).



Fig. 1.12. Cassone with courtly figures in the Garden of Love, Giovanni di Marco di Giovanni, known as Giovanni dal Ponte, Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, Tempora and gold on wood panel (Florence, c.1430).

<sup>49</sup> For a short, recent study specifically on the trees and flowers represented at Manta, and a discussion of the intended symbolism, see Molinengo 2021. This contains many illustrations of details from the fresco cycle, and attempts to identify species wherever possible.

The ornamental vocabulary that makes up such painted gardens as are to be found at Manta passed down during the early to mid-1400s from the monumental cycle through the hierarchy of decorative arts into small-scale objects again, but it had originated on the manuscript page, in the innovative interpretative choices taken by illuminators like the Fauvel master, who reimagined the relationship between exterior and interior within the context of the codex. In some of these manuscripts, too, as the following pages show, the courtly cast of ‘Worthy’ types had already been pushed to the margins of the folio – normally associated with the *unworthy* – where they act themselves as spectators and commentators looking *into* the text and its window-like miniatures, and noting who enters or crosses boundaries in that interior space.<sup>50</sup>

We must not lose sight of the immense power of these ‘multimedia’ manuscript productions, nor of the kind of audiences for whom they were intended. We know that these noble audiences treasured such artefacts, but also extracted from them inspiration for the decoration of their homes, sometimes enlarging the miniature to the level of the palatial, extending the small-scale illumination into grander avenues and attempting at once to bring the page to life and to live in the gardens of the folio. We must not be fooled into thinking that these illuminated codices were insignificant because they were small or into mistaking them for mere vehicles for textual transmission. Within the small folded pages of this manuscript are the seeds of much of the monumental art as well as the literature of the fourteenth, and even the fifteenth centuries.

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<sup>50</sup> One of the most influential studies of the margin as such a place for the *vilains* is Michael Camille’s *Image on the Edge* (1992).

1.13. Mirrors in the Miniature: Oiseuse and the Threshold in the Fauvel Master's  
*Rose* Frontispieces



Fig. 1.13. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1340-50, London, British Library, BL Stowe 947, f. 1r.



Fig. 1.14. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1334-6, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Gall. 17, f. 1r.



Fig. 1.15. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1320-30, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 24390, f. 2r.



Fig. 1.16. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1320 – 1330, Meaux, Médiathèque Luxembourg de Meaux, Meaux BM 52, f. 1r.



Fig. 1.17. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1330, Paris, Assemblée nationale MS.

1230, f. 3r.

Excepting Meaux BM 52 for the moment, to which we shall return presently, all of these examples open with a two-column miniature that presents, on the left, a frontal view of the dreamer lying asleep in bed, and on the right, a full or partial bird's eye view of Oiseuse sitting inside Deduit's walled garden, holding her comb and mirror. This is not a typical arrangement within *Rose* manuscripts – as may be ascertained by the attribution of most to a single illuminator – but especially in the emphasis that it places on circularity, it is one that responds to and seeks in a particularly creative way to condense many of the key themes, unifying images, and concerns of Guillaume's poem – among these ideas of framing, opening, enclosing, encircling, concealment, revelation, resistance, reflection, vision, and illusion.

In all of the frontispieces discussed here, save Meaux BM 52, the two halves of the bipartite or two-column miniatures are designed to mirror each other compositionally, each also corresponding visually, if not strictly in terms of illustration, to the two columns of text that stand beneath them. An architectural metaphor is already implicit in this layout of text and image, but at the same time the horizontal symmetry of arrangement is akin to the structure of the open codex itself, and also to the twin leaves of a folding writing tablet such as were produced by neighbouring Parisian workshops in the fourteenth century. The most concise of the two-column frontispiece miniatures associated with the Fauvel master is found in Stowe MS 947, which with its more or less square frames, condensed compartments, and economical design, presents the reader with two tightly-packed images complicated only by the *bas-de-page* marginalia. The mirroring is more obvious in Cod. Gall. 17, fr. 24390., and in the other manuscript here connected with the Fauvel set, Assemblée nationale MS 1230. In all of these, the round cusped trefoil arch on the

left, seemingly indicating an interior space, rhymes visually with the wide open-topped roundness of the garden wall on the right, courtesy of the bird's eye view, as well as with the other circular elements of the design: the curling vine-like tendrils that represent the vegetation and especially the roses, and the circular mirror.

This artist is particularly interested in mirrors. In his seminal work on gothic ivories, Raymond Koechlin drew attention to the mirrors depicted by the Fauvel master in the manuscript of the *Roman de Fauvel* (the illuminator's aforementioned 'name manuscript'). This manuscript – BN fr. 146 – which, as indicated above, was owned by Thomas III of Saluzzo, was described by Koechlin as 'l'un des plus sumptueux, a-t-on pu dire, de la première moitié du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle' (1924: 368). The miniatures, as Koechlin noticed, present many ladies holding mirrors, and the master takes particular care in representing not only the surface of the mirror as a circular disc, but also the ivory rim that runs around the edge. It is in fact relatively rare within extant manuscripts of the *Rose* for Oiseuse to be represented holding both a comb and a mirror,<sup>51</sup> though the Fauvel master is consistent not only in the inclusion of both, but also in managing the mirror especially in a recognisable way. In each of the manuscripts discussed here, the mirror is executed in such a way that it is clearly differentiated from the gilding that surrounds it and unites, in each of these examples, the two halves of the two-column miniature. The Fauvel master chooses to execute the mirror's surface in silver (or possibly tin in BL Stowe MS 947, where its bright, shiny surface remains untarnished), approximating the appearance of a real mirror on the page and showing an exceptional attentiveness to the materiality of the

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<sup>51</sup> Alcuin Blamires and Gail C. Holian mark this manuscript as being one of twenty-five in which Oiseuse is shown with neither her comb nor her mirror (Blamires and Holian 2002: 12). While this is true for the miniature on folio 5v., where she is shown empty-handed, greeting the dreamer at the garden gate, it is not the case for the more important (by position and prominence) frontispiece, where attention has been lavished upon the depiction of the mirror and the comb.

object described in Guillaume's poem and depicted within the miniatures – an attentiveness that we shall also see reflected in the work of other illuminators connected with the Fauvel master, such as the Montbastons, one of whose manuscripts of the *Rose* – Arsenal 3338 – is discussed below. There is a much greater emphasis on the reflective part of the mirror here than in his manuscript of the *Roman de Fauvel*, where there is no such silvering, but in the *Rose* manuscripts too the rim is also indicated with a light, matte, circular frame that echoes other parts of the design.

We have already observed that the fascination with mirrors extends to an interest in mirroring of a compositional kind. In all three of the two-column frontispiece miniatures enclosed by arches, part of the architectural structure is picked out in red, drawing attention to the pliancy and circularity of its shape. Its upper surface is, moreover, ornamented in the *Assemblée nationale* example with angular crockets that bring the form closer still to the crenellated construction to the right. In all of these manuscripts the sleeper is seen not from above but straight on, occupying, especially in *Cod. Gall. 17*, the same space on the left as the wall on the right, and to some extent echoing its shape. Again, in all of these miniatures, the undulating horizontals of the tucked-in dreamer to the left continue, partly in the garden walls, but also in the flowing water to the lower right; in *Stowe MS 947*, where only part of the wall is presented, the hem of the bedspread is emphasised with crisp strokes of white that correspond with the curvilinear highlights of the stylised stream, suggesting an implied association between slumber and water, a traditional *topos* and one that runs through the poem itself.<sup>52</sup> The dreamer is linked visually with these encircling, enclosing elements which unite the two halves of the

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<sup>52</sup> See the following chapter.

composition, that is to say, with the setting and the boundaries that define it as much as with the figure shown inhabiting the garden on the right, though he is presented himself in a setting that is simultaneously suggestive of enclosure and exposure. The height, impenetrability, and all-encompassing circularity of the wall are emphasised in all three manuscripts, and most of all in the *Assemblée nationale* example; the unusual amount of space given within these miniatures, especially MS 1230, to more or less blank wall – we may only hope that Dedit obtained the necessary planning permission for such a construction – draws the reader's attention to the much more tightly-packed detail of the garden interior and the figure of Oiseuse, whilst also strongly accentuating the insularity of this space. The same might be said of the relatively uncluttered but not unimportant part of the design on the dreamer's side devoted to a blank pair of curtains that perhaps should, but, much like the garden wall, do not provide any cover for the figure inside. There is then, in all these frontispiece miniatures, a sophisticated interplay between motifs suggesting openness and those emphasising enclosure, and strongly connected with these two apparently opposing concepts, imagery symbolising at the same time revelation and concealment.

Scholarly engagement with Stowe MS 947 has not been plentiful, but the frontispiece is mentioned by Sylvia Huot in *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (1993: 275), where the miniature is read more or less simply as announcing the beginning of an amorous dream narrative:

The MS British Library Stowe 947 [...] opens with a two-part miniature representing the dreamer in bed, and Oiseuse seated inside the garden wall, holding her mirror and comb and surrounded by the rosebush [...] This image

tells us, first of all, that the poem will be the story of a dream. The conflation of the rose, object of desire, with the sensuality and self-absorption of Oiseuse – a feminine figuration of Narcissus, in whose mirror the rose is first glimpsed – tells us that the dream is inspired by and focused upon erotic love.

The rest of Huot’s analysis of Stowe MS 947 focuses on the animals which appear on the lower margin of the folio – a lion and a beaver.



Fig. 1.18. Lions and beavers in the margin, *Le Roman de la Rose*, c. 1340-50, London, British Library, BL Stowe 947, f. 1r detail.

Her reading presents the lion as ‘an ambivalent symbol [...] probably [representing] the nobility of heart that is often invoked in the *Rose*, and which the lover seems never to approach.’ She identifies the beaver as defensively castrating itself, an aspect of the animal’s behaviour described in the bestiary tradition, and connects this with references to castration in the poem, although it must be noted that these occur exclusively in Jean’s continuation. The animals, together, are seen as offering ‘the possibility of a corrective antidote to erotic impulses’.

There are other ways of interpreting the frontispiece, not necessarily incompatible in every respect with the above reading, though certainly complicating

matters. On the Fountain of Narcissus more will be said in the following chapter, but for now, it is worth indicating merely that the mirror has other resonances too. The dreamer, just as much as Oiseuse, is represented in an introspective state, in a sense one of similar self-absorption, and the mirror may also be seen as an object symbolic of the narrator's inward-turning dream vision. Such a reading has its literary parallels, as will be discussed below. The notion that Oiseuse, in all her 'sensuality and self-absorption' is really *conflated* – as opposed to being associated only – with the rose, as Huot suggests, is dependent upon her reading of Oiseuse's immediate surroundings in this manuscript as a rosebush.

Some difficulty enters here. In fact, Stowe MS 947 presents Oiseuse seated not among roses, but among trees and birds, and it is the dreamer, rather, who is depicted surrounded by a stylised rosebush representing at the same time his dream and his desire. Perhaps Oiseuse, then, may more justly be connected with the birds or indeed with the dreamer. It is worth turning to Guillaume's text here for a moment to shed light on the multi-layered figure of Oiseuse, who is symbolic at once of the somewhat contradictory attributes of idleness and action, freedom and enclosure, and mobility and immobility.

When she emerges at an opening in the wall, it may not be immediately clear quite how she embodies the quality of idleness, since her granting of permission for the narrator to proceed inside seems to give her more agency than she ought to have as a representative of leisure, but, she is more contemplative than lazy. The connection between leisure and love is an old one, which Guillaume reflects, but he also plays with her name in other ways. Strubel (1992: 73) argues for wordplay between the word 'Oiseuse' and the 'uis' ('external door') of the garden – in the phrase 'Par l'uis qu'oisseuse overt m'ot' (l. 632) – but he neglects to mention

Guillaume's playful paronomasia on Oiseuse and 'oissaus': like the birds, idleness can cross certain boundaries without difficulty. There is a paradox here that idleness is more mobile than other abstractions. Although in Stowe 947 neither Oiseuse nor the birds appear overly active (garden gatekeeper and fowls are all at rest), she is sometimes portrayed in manuscript miniatures alongside birds flying over the high walls to underscore the connection (for an example, see Egerton 1069). In the text, repeated assonance and sibilance in line 632 suggest birdsong onomatopoeically, and Guillaume presents an extensive catalogue of birds, that spans the moments before and after his entrance into the garden, almost giving the impression that the narrator wishes to be swept up and made one of their number. Together with the punning on Oiseuse and *oissaus*, this ornithological sequence helps to ease the passage of narrator and reader alike over the threshold and into the space beyond.

Oiseuse's role as doorwoman is not solely a contrivance of superficial wordplay, however, since she stands physically *and* symbolically at the entrance to Deduit's garden. The word *oiseuse* is directly derived from the Latin *otium*, or 'leisure', which Roman love elegists had closely associated with the pursuit of love. For instance, in his *Remedia amoris*, Ovid instructs the lovesick *amator*, wishing to escape love, to avoid *otium* at all costs, suggesting that 'otia si tollas, periere Cupidinis arcus / contemptaeque iacent et sine luce faces', whilst the goddess Venus 'otia amat' (Ov. *Rem. am.* 139-40, 143). In terms of the *Rose*'s allegory, it is apposite that the narrator is admitted into the garden of Deduit by idleness. As we know from the very opening, the narrator is asleep, and there is hardly an activity idler than that. Ovid, again, had listed sleep as one of the principal pastimes of the at-risk idler: 'languor et immodici sub nullo vindice somni' (*Rem. am.* 145). Guillaume

needs Oiseuse, as the crowning bird in his famous catalogue of *oissaus* (ll. 643-79), to assist him in crossing the initial threshold towards a state of readiness for love.

Oiseuse is herself a transitional figure within the allegory, as well as within the fictive landscape of the poem, and she stands on the threshold of the garden, capable of coming and going and indeed of providing access for the narrator. Guillaume devotes an extended ekphrasis to her physical appearance (ll. 527-65), the rhetorical style of which follows romance convention in most respects, descending in typical fashion from head to toe (Strubel 1992: 73), and this leads neatly back into the action of the narrative (at l. 575), which has been suspended for a significant span to allow for ekphrastic ornament and cataloguing of the birds on either side of the description of the garden wall; the focus on birds surrounds the wall itself in ring composition and helps carry the narrator over the threshold. As Guillaume's description of Oiseuse comes to a close, she finally allows the narrator to enter into the garden. The fact that her own rather ekphrastic depiction follows so closely upon the descriptive sequence concerning other allegorical figures, not hovering on the boundary but exiled to its outer face, links her with them, but the poet also makes clear that she is set apart. They are comparatively static — but not too static, because one of the purposes of ekphrasis is to enliven beyond the realm of probability — both in visual and narratological terms, but the treatment of Oiseuse gradually brings her out from any status as mere passive cypher and into the agency of an active character; as a result of this arrangement, the narrative progresses smoothly from ekphrasis, or *descriptio*, as Curtius defines it (1973: 181), to dialogue, action and entrance.

Returning to Stowe MS 947, then, I would argue that it is more appropriate for Oiseuse to be connected with the birds or with the dreamer than with the

rosebush, and indeed this is what we see in the frontispiece. An association of the latter kind – between dreamer and leisure – would actually be more in line with the allegorical scheme of the poem, in which Oiseuse enables the dreamer to enter the garden but does not lead him even half of the way to the rose. It must be noted, nevertheless, of the represented personages, that all *Rose* manuscripts associated with the Fauvel master, along with Assemblée nationale MS 1230, can be seen as presenting a contrast in the frontispiece miniatures as well as an implied relationship between the two compartments: the inactive dreamer is wrapped up in his bedding and his illusions, eyes closed and recumbent; he has already been connected above with the wall and the water. Oiseuse, on the other hand, for all her leisure, sits upright and is much more active, her hands busily engaged in the arrangement of her hair, and her eyes – wide open – focused on her reflection in the handheld mirror.

The situation is different in the other manuscripts associated with the Fauvel master. In Cod. Gall. 17 and BNF fr. 24390., as well as MS 1230 in the Assemblée nationale, Oiseuse is shown surrounded by stylised roses, and the dreamer by not much more than the minimalistic pair of curtains, which in a sense frame him but give no clues as to the content or direction of his dream. Here, however, there are no seemingly reproofing marginalia to alter the reading of the miniature. The text is surrounded by relatively neutral foliate borders in MS 1230 and only accompanied by cusped baguettes attached to the decorated initials in fr. 24390; Cod. Gall. 17 features a foliate border that provides a perch for, in place of the lion and beaver, two birds. These animals resist such readings as put forth by Sylvia Huot. The interpretation of the marginalia in Stowe MS 947 as a ‘corrective to erotic impulses’, reliant as it is upon her reading of the miniature above as emphasising this eroticism through a conflation of Oiseuse with the rose of the poem’s title, is, therefore, by no

means secure. What is more certain, on the other hand, is that the animals in Stowe MS 947 mark the boundary of the folio as a wild and untamed space, uncultivated and dangerous in contrast with the apparently safe interiors represented in the miniatures above and to some extent the text. The sense of danger is, however, shared even by the *bas-de-page* beasts, both of which the illuminator gives in vigilant and defensive postures: the beaver, as Huot has noticed, behaves this way when threatened by the hunter; the lion, too, with his wide eyes, curling mane and sweeping, footprint-effacing tail is distinguished as timid and fearful, since these are also behaviours associated with the timorous and endangered lion – the scaredy-cat as opposed to the ferocious beast – in the bestiary tradition. The frontispiece of Stowe MS 947, therefore, places a particularly ominous emphasis on the lower margin of the folio by its inclusion of these visual allusions to hunting where the animals do not, as might be regarded as more usual, interact with one another, but are both shown *on edge* in more than one sense. The marginal images might be interpreted, then, as serving to warn the (rather less watchful) dreamer and reader alike of possible peril to come.

In the other manuscripts attributed to the Fauvel master, this sense of peril is presented in a different and perhaps more conventional way, with the personified figure of Danger himself. Both fr. 23490 and Meaux BM 52 incorporate this personage in the frontispiece miniatures themselves, but the Fauvel master takes care in both cases to place him on the threshold of the garden, occupying an awkward and highly conspicuous liminal position even within this space.



Fig. 1.19. (A-B) Danger on the threshold, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Details, c. 1320-30, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, BNF fr. 24390., f. 2r. and Paris, c. 1320 – 1330, Meaux, Médiathèque Luxembourg de Meaux, Meaux BM 52, f. 1r.

In both manuscripts he paces energetically, obstructing the only doorway into the garden. In the context of a frontispiece miniature for the *Roman de la Rose*, Danger's presence is not unusual in the slightest. In numerous manuscripts he appears like a

burglar looming over the dreamer's bed, club in hand, and threatening from the outset to turn the dream violently into a nightmare. His own ability to cross boundaries of all sorts is generally taken for granted. The placing in these closely related manuscripts of Danger within the miniature's frame but outside the boundary of the garden is significant as it reflects the dubious status of the figure within the poem's allegorical and spatial scheme, and reveals something of early readers' attitudes towards this figure, associated in Guillaume's poem itself not with the garden wall and its illuminated images of those unworthy of love, yet still with one of the obstructive boundaries encountered deeper within the garden.

Another fourteenth-century manuscript with a two-column frontispiece – BNF fr. 23491 – evidently influenced by those associated with the Fauvel master (especially Stowe MS 947), but stylistically bearing too many dissimilarities to be considered among their number, makes for an especially illustrative comparison. This frontispiece shows Danger gauchely entering the left-hand compartment which frames the dreamer; nowhere does he interrupt the right-hand frame containing Oiseuse and the garden wall (where he is positioned in BNF fr. 24390. and Meaux BM 52), but crucially he remains engaged – in the architectural sense – with the threshold between the two parts of the miniature, blocking one pillar from view but partly concealed by the overlapping border of the other, which in this configuration becomes a kind of doorpost – two columns, as it were, marking the division between the columns of the page. The frames themselves, which take on here a very functional role within the design, are given a special prominence via gilding, which ensures a contrast with the diapered backgrounds within the miniatures. Straddling the compartments and preventing the easy flow of the miniature from left to right like true resistance, pushing abruptly and intrusively against the narrative logic of the

frontispiece, and incompletely visible in his retrogressive movement, Danger's association with the liminal zone could not be more forcefully represented and emphasised.



Fig. 1.20. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, fourteenth-century, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, BNF français 23491. f. 1.

Reference has been made above to the manuscript in Meaux (BM 52), which is also attributed to the Fauvel master. The reason for setting this exceptional example apart from the others is its different layout. Here the illuminator dispenses with the two-column arrangement in favour of a significantly larger and more complex frontispiece miniature divided not vertically but rather horizontally into two registers.



Fig. 1.21. Detail of the upper register. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1320 – 1330, Meaux, Médiathèque Luxembourg de Meaux, Meaux BM 52, f. 1r.

The upper register, representing the walled garden, brings together several motifs which can be seen as emblematic of Guillaume's poem both individually and as a complex collective group; the figures are seen synthetically here, enclosed within the same space and only divided by the flora and fauna of the garden itself, although encountered separately within the *Rose*. Read from left to right, the motifs correspond for the greater part to the order of Guillaume's narrative, standing for the various types of transformative boundaries or interactions through which the *Rose* is structured. First, Oiseuse is represented with her comb, her mirror, and also – it is extremely rare to see her with all three – her key; in the centre we find the god of love enthroned on a treetop surrounded by deer, rabbits, and birds; finally we encounter Narcissus gazing at his reflection in the spring, from which a rivulet runs

down towards a doorway guarded by Danger, not inside, but outside or even on the perimeter of the garden, barring access. Danger's placement on this side matches his first appearance in the poem, though there is perhaps a more important reason for relegating him to the right-hand side. As in the two-column miniatures we have already seen, the design emphasises a kind of mirroring. The two instances of reflection to left and right make a pair of Oiseuse and Narcissus. This manuscript, indeed, would serve as a better example of the former as a 'feminine figuration' of the latter, although, as before, the implied mirroring around the central figure of the god of love also necessitates a contrast: Oiseuse is still active, and positively loaded with the implements associated with her leisure; Narcissus is, like the dreamer in the other two-column miniatures, far less active, and bereft of such equipment. More significantly still, only one of the two mirrors is explicitly connected with Danger. To Oiseuse's true mirror are attached no terrible connotations or consequences, but Narcissus' provides only a dangerous illusion.

Just as Oiseuse and Narcissus are here engaged in visual examination of (their own) images on one kind of surface or another, both episodes in Guillaume's poem – those involving these two figures – constitute moments where the dreamer is required to look, read, and interpret a surface of some kind, taking into account both text and image before he may continue past the boundary which bears it. The first of these – the wall, with its images and inscriptions of characteristics unwelcome in the garden of Deduit – is portrayed, enlarged in the lower register, with the names clearly inscribed in rubrication above the niches in which the effigies of the excluded stand: the first three figures that Guillaume describes – incidentally the three with the least distinctive attributes (Haine, Forsenee, and Vileine) – are omitted, but the

Fauvel master includes Covoitisse, Avarice, Envie, Tristece, Vieillece, Papelardie, and Povretez.



Fig. 1.22. (A-B) Details of the lower register and of the historiated initial. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1320 – 1330, Meaux, Médiathèque Luxembourg de Meaux, Meaux BM 52, f. 1r.

As in the other manuscripts attributed to the Fauvel master, the dreamer is not shown within the limits of the garden, but in a discrete space with clearly defined borders. In Meaux BM 52 he is enclosed in a historiated initial below, at the top of the first column; the central pillar of the ‘m’ becomes the boundary between his enclosed bedchamber, with its concealing curtain, and the dream, with its open vision of roses, while the rest of the initial encircles him just as the garden wall does the principal actors in his dream above, enclosing the narrator within the text itself – but also within a form closely related to Oiseuse’s mirror.

#### 1.14 Margin and Miniature Inverted: Codex Architecture and Readerly Experience

The last feature of this exceptional frontispiece worth discussing here is the extraordinary frame (see fig. 4) that runs along the right-hand side and lower edge of the folio, interrupted by eight circular mirror-like portals. Each of these encloses a quatrefoil decorated with a figure or a scene representing motifs from the poem, episodes and characters to come in the following folios. For this frontispiece, especially with respect to this *encadrement à médaillons*, but also to its unusual two-register configuration, it is necessary to seek comparanda elsewhere, since none of the other *Rose* manuscripts attributed to the Fauvel master exhibit these characteristics.

A late fourteenth-century manuscript that shares numerous similarities can be found in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal – Arsenal 3338 – produced by Richard and Jeanne de Montbaston, whose practice as illuminators and *libraire* was not entirely independent of the Fauvel master’s work, since they too worked on the rue Neuve

Notre-Dame and collaborated on occasion with their neighbour.<sup>53</sup> More extant manuscripts of the *Rose* (nineteen) are attributed to the Montbastons than to any other illuminator.

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<sup>53</sup> For a comprehensive study entitled 'A 'Rose' by any other Name: Richard and Jeanne de Montbaston as Illuminators of Vernacular Texts', see Rouse and Rouse 1999: 235-260.



Fig. 1.23. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1325-50, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Arsenal 3338, f. 1r.

Arsenal 3338 opens, like Meaux BM 52, with a large double-register frontispiece miniature, not fully divided into quadrants but with each register topped by two pointed gables regardless of whether the scene is intended for inside or out. Bearing some similarity with the two-column miniature discussed above, the upper register shows the dreamer with a stylised rose bush on one side, with a very large crenellated garden wall and Oiseuse on the other, surrounded by trees and her attributes – as in Meaux BM 52, the mirror, comb and key are all present, the first of these apparently suspended from the arch above or the background. The lower register repeats the wall, placing Danger to the left, where he again hovers around the threshold of the garden, apparently more in league with the nine *vilains* depicted, but not named, to his right. The Fauvel master's emphasis on circularity is not shared here in this miniature, where the garden wall is viewed in both upper and lower registers straight on, and the gables are triangular, yet Arsenal 3338 also features an *encadrement à médaillons* that extends along the right-hand and lower edge of the folio. Six faces peep out from the portals towards the miniatures and the text, status indicated chiefly by headgear, but also by the order in which they appear from top to bottom: a strict hierarchy is observed, with a pope followed by a cardinal, a bishop, a king, a queen, and a courtly lady. All appear to be readers, observing the miniatures, reading, interpreting, and perhaps debating. These medallions are different from those in Meaux BM 52, in that they represent single figures which do not appear within the text itself, but stand apart from it in more than one sense, representing the readership, and the reception of the poem. The hierarchical arrangement is, however, observed in both manuscripts.

A second (mid fourteenth-century) manuscript with an elaborate and architecturally noteworthy frontispiece might be placed alongside Meaux BM 52 and Arsenal 3338. This is MS 1126, held by the Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève.

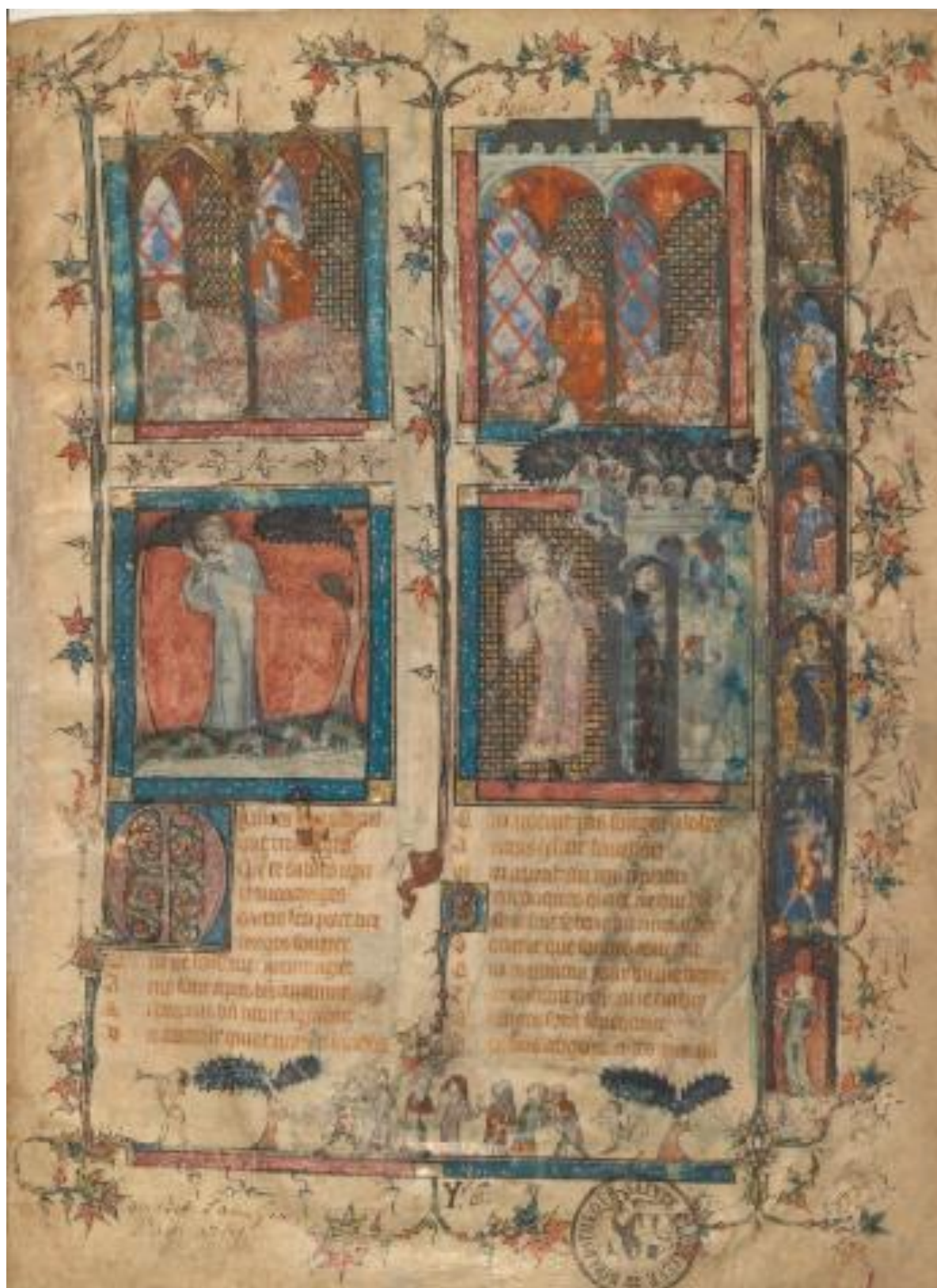


Fig. 1.24. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1350-60, Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève, Sainte-Geneviève MS. 1126, f. 1r.

The opening folio of MS 1126 shares with the Arsenal and Meaux manuscripts a similar arrangement of text, miniatures and marginalia, albeit with the principal frontispiece miniature found in these divided instead into four to form a kind of quadrant. The individual compartments are kept discrete, even their borders held apart by margins and foliate interruptions. Here, in contrast with the Montbastons' work in Arsenal 3338, the interior space is clearly indicated by the arches and columns in the upper register, and exteriority by their absence, though the architectural features are varied across the upper miniatures: although at first glance it appears that the same space is represented in the two miniatures that form the upper register of the frontispiece, the change in the architectural frames reflects the dreamer's gradual movement from the depths of the interior to the outside world – the gilded pointed arches with crockets give way to rounded stone arches topped with a row of crenels and securely roofed over. All the columns are silvered, giving some continuity despite this change, and the richly patterned background of the first miniature is repeated in the second. The change, then, is not only deliberate, but signifies the dreamer's passage from one condition to another – from sleep to deceptive wakefulness, as well as from the interior to the exterior. The illuminator of MS 1126 gives special consideration to materials, and is also particularly preoccupied with the representation of depth, but employs and varies the effects which give the design an impression of relief – an impression which is partly produced with the aid of the elaborate patterns and unusually extensive silvering – to give the images greater legibility and to represent with sensitivity the situation and state in which the dreamer finds himself. Danger appears behind the dreamer in the top left quadrant, rather than with the garden wall or the entrance into the garden beyond. This wall juts expressively out of the lower right quadrant and overlaps the

lower border of the upper register, imposing itself suddenly upon the miniature in a similar fashion to the wall in the poem, whose appearance in the dream landscape is similarly abrupt – the dreamer leans back as though startled by the scale and solidity of the structure, as well as in surprise to be greeted by Oiseuse, who is here shown with just her mirror. The mirror and the doorposts are silvered.

A second imposing and perhaps even more dazzling construction stands in the margin, corresponding with the *encadrement à médaillons* in Meaux BM 52 and Arsenal 3338: this is a tower of six pointed trefoil arches framing niches, stacked one upon the other, which, like the medallions, enclose six figures representing characters from inside the garden. Again, there is a hierarchy: the god of love stands at the top of the tower, followed by Oiseuse, Deduit, a lady (perhaps Richesse), a hooded male figure (probably the *amis veriteus* of Richesse), and a lady with a chaplet (probably Liesse). Alongside the tower grows a creeper from which spring a number of pliant and foliate shoots that pass under the feet of each of these personages, connecting them with the garden in which the dreamer and reader alike will encounter them over the following pages. As in Arsenal 3338, these figures look inwards on the page towards the text and the miniatures.

In a sense, this manuscript, with its courtly figures pushed to the outskirts of the folio, comes closer to Meaux BM 52, in that the encased figures in the margin represent the characters which animate the poem and populate the interior of the garden beyond, although the decorative scheme appears to draw on Guillaume's ekphrasis of the effigies on the exterior surface of the garden wall in the *Rose*. We have seen above that Meaux BM 52 includes not only individual figures enclosed in its medallions, but also complete scenes treated with unusual care and clarity. These medallions, which act like portals into the narrative and the poem's allegorical

goings on, are much more legible than usual, in part because they are in some cases very similar to the actual miniatures which represent these scenes and motifs later on in the manuscript. From top right to bottom left, the roundels depict: the god of love; a courtly couple; Narcissus at the fountain; two figures with a tower (probably the Amans and Raisons or Jalousie); Bel acueil and Vieille; Fortune with her wheel; a lady in white (Pygmalion's lady?); and finally a lady in black (Venus or Nature). In the miniature below, which comes five pages later, we can see a strikingly similar ensemble cast taking part in Deduit's *carole* – here again, the artist shows a heightened sensitivity to materials.



Fig. 1.25. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1350-60, Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève, Sainte-Geneviève MS. 1126, f.5r.

The illuminator has responded both to Guillaume's poem and to his audience's taste for fine cloth by kitting out the dancers with a range of luxurious fabrics. The extensive employment of gold leaf and patterning helps, moreover, to set the personages in motion, the contrasts in colour and forms bringing them to life by emphasising the sense of movement and animating their dance. These figures set the readerly pace and we are invited to join them in their journey around the garden and through the codex.

In all three of these frontispieces – Meaux BM 52, Arsenal 3338, and Sainte Geneviève MS 1126, the margins of the garden – that is, the enclosing garden wall, adorned with its text and image – are permitted not by leisure, but by the thought, reasoning, and diligence of the illuminators, to enter inside the frontispiece miniatures, while the courtly set are relegated to the boundaries of the folio. We are accustomed to think of the margins of the page as marginal in every sense – the proper place for whimsy and *vilains*, wild beasts and birds, but the relationship between margin and miniature is here inverted, and the different regions of the codex are approached in an altogether different manner. In these examples it is the margins of the frontispiece that signify inclusion, access, and safe passage to the rest of the manuscript, exploiting the opportunities afforded by the format of the codex itself and utilising these creatively to respond to and reformulate the *Rose*, a poem deeply interested in boundaries, liminal spaces, inclusion, exclusion, and many of the other motifs that lend themselves so well to visual reinterpretation. The reader of Meaux BM 52, Arsenal 3338, or Sainte Geneviève MS 1126 is invited either to linger outside with the miniatures until they have been, like the garden wall, successfully interpreted and the due preparation completed for admittance to the garden of the

rest of the manuscript, or to turn the page and join the ranks of the pleasant people seen on the edge for speedy access.

The group of *Rose* manuscripts believed to have been illuminated by the Fauvel master, together with the others discussed here – manuscripts which share characteristics that make for revealing points of comparison – provide an unusually rich insight into some of the earliest responses to Guillaume’s poem, and responses, moreover, that are uniquely fitted to the themes and concerns of the text precisely because they are not confined to a purely textual medium. They constitute something rather more significant than a mode of transmission for the poem, but also form a major part of its reception. More than this, however, in the way they reformulate some of the central images of Guillaume’s text – a text that is after all, in great measure constructed through ekphrastic episodes that evoke images and the materials used in their making – this group of manuscripts responds in an exceptionally vivid, innovative, and sensitive manner to his unusual concern with painting, inscription, architecturally defined surfaces and enclosures, with striking arrangements of text and image, with interiority, exteriority, circularity, mirrors and mirroring. These manuscripts respond in ways that only illumination can to these themes, representing Guillaume’s garden by exploiting the unique approaches made possible by the medium itself and the context and materiality of the codex to represent this space, the figures inhabiting it, and the borders that mark its limits.

## Chapter Two

### Fountains: Creative Compositions and Startling Sights

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter moves deeper into the garden as it appears in medieval textual, visual, and material culture, to examine the role of the fountain, which is so often the centrepiece of the *hortus conclusus*. ‘Take away the fountain, and the Garden of Love is no more’, wrote Paul Watson on the subject in 1979 (70). If the garden as a whole is a site of self-reflexive significance, then the theme of self-consciousness is at once distilled in the fountain and given a strange and even eerie intensity. The fountain encapsulates but also amplifies many of the oppositions that we have already encountered, including the unifying dichotomy between openness and enclosure, or concealment and revelation, that is so central to the poetic mission of the *Rose* and so emphasised in fourteenth-century manuscripts of the text. This opposition is reframed, in the fountain, as a contradiction between reflection and perception, which are again explored and symbolised in material terms. In this thesis, which is concerned principally with interactions between art forms – always a key aspect of self aware composition, which must necessarily involve comparisons with other modes of representation – the fountain also emerges as a particularly highly charged site of artistic exchange. As Watson observed, it is also ever-present, and might be considered the keystone of the imaginary *hortus conclusus*.

Because of its function as a meeting place for different art forms – as a composite structure even, where different materials or types of expression are often found co-existing and even replicating each other – this chapter will look at a range of examples of the fountain motif in diverse media, including manuscripts, ivories,

enamelled silverware, and mural painting, all of which reinterpret the literary site according to the possibilities afforded to each by material constraints, which are repeatedly converted into expressive virtues. All these objects, which may seem disparate to the modern scholar, and which have generally been treated separately, according to taxonomic and disciplinary boundaries, were in reality facets of a highly cohesive literary culture that produced and experienced them, not singly, but in close dialogue with each other. This is shown in the chapter through the example of Jean, Duc de Berry, who reappears throughout as an avid consumer and patron of text and artefact alike, at once receiving and propelling along the 'multimedia' culture of French romance. Extant representations of the fountain in these different media always involve a playful pushing at the boundary of the art form in question. The fountain is a place where the status of the visual and the mimetic is explored and renegotiated, where the poetic vision, the dream vision, and the artistic vision coalesce in a complex, layered microcosm of the wider garden. The fountain is often the site where poets fall asleep and cross into a dream narrative, or where other changes in state can occur. In short, it is a place for transformations of many kinds, but it is always a slippery place that encapsulates an apparent contradiction.

Charles Segal, writing in 1969 about the symbolic elements through which Ovid's landscapes were constructed, observed that '[w]ater is among the oldest of literary symbols. Its usefulness for [the poet] lies in part in its ubiquity and its suggestive ambiguities. It is both life-giving and destructive. It causes death by drowning; yet it is indispensable to life' (1969: 24). This dangerous element often seems deceptively artless in ancient literature, but in medieval works of art and literature, its ambiguities are simultaneously concentrated in the overtly constructed and even ornamented garden fountain, and extended beyond the boundaries of the

substance itself, so that it comes to encompass the containing structure, setting, and other accessories lurking in or near the water's edge. Far from being only concerned with water, I am here concerned just as much with solid materials, including stone and ivory. This chapter focuses on the fountain as a site where visual processes are at stake, rather than a place where bathing or drinking might occur, as in the *topos* of the 'fountain of youth' as represented at Manta and on numerous caskets in ivory. Touch and taste are less relevant to the argument here, since I will examine the fountain as a site where *sight* is privileged and called into question.

The fountain is a place where one may learn truths, but also one where facts might be obscured, where deceptions may occur, or misunderstandings snowball. This is as true, in a sense, for the scholar as it was for the poets and lovers of medieval literature, and indeed a long shadow has been cast by C. S. Lewis' claim, of the fountain episode in the *Rose*, that '[t]his important step in the story is allegorized in a manner which quite intelligent readers have been found capable of misunderstanding or of simply overlooking' (Lewis 1936: 128). Michael Camille declared, similarly, that the story of Narcissus, which is explicitly bound up with the fountain episode in the *Rose* and indeed implicitly with other fountains elsewhere, is 'one of the most important but also misunderstood archetypal images of medieval love and looking' (Camille 1998: 44-5). The fountain episode in the poem almost seems to have been intentionally devised to attract such boldly rhetorical stances from readers, and it has duly attracted a vast body of scholarly literature.

This chapter takes the fountain of the *Rose*, and scholarly responses to it, as a point of departure, and a means of shedding light on other fountains in text, manuscript, handheld object, and mural. The first section here addresses the function of the *Rose*'s fountain as another unstable interpretative boundary and poetic

construct, akin to the garden wall explored in the previous chapter, and I connect it, again, with one of the monumental ekphrastic structures described in *Floire et Blancheflor*, which, although not a fountain, serves a similar purpose within the relevant narrative and is situated in a similar garden setting, surrounded by exotic trees. Next, I proceed to another poetic monument, this time at the centre of Guillaume de Machaut's *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse* (c. 1360-2), which, I argue, combines Guillaume de Lorris' garden wall and fountain into a single spectacular construction that again enables the transition from lucid frame into dream narrative. Some examples of manuscript illumination are discussed here, before the chapter turns to one of the other star fountains of medieval art and literature: that associated with Tristan and Iseult. From this point on, I look beyond the text to the playful ways in which this site was reinterpreted in visual and material culture, where artists exploited the unique possibilities offered by their respective crafts to heighten and enlarge upon the themes of reflection and perception, truth and deception. These were themes that were explored on a large as well as a small scale: the familiar oppositions were, during the fourteenth century, exploited in self-conscious cycles of interior decoration where walls could be, as Anne Dunlop says, 'painted away' or even 'turned [...] inside out' to play a 'spatial joke' on the viewer (2009: 53-4). The final section of the chapter turns, then, from objects on a smaller scale to one grand decorative scheme, preserved at the Château de Saint-Floret in Auvergne, where the fountain episode of Tristan narratives is refashioned in a particularly witty and *immersive* way, forcing the viewer to participate in that game of 'love and looking'.

## 2.2. The Fountain as Garden: The *Mise en Abyme* at the Centre of the *Rose*

In Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, boundaries between different spaces are of more than merely topographical significance: they are essential to narrative structure and the shape of the allegory presented to the reader. Crucially, enclosures repeatedly function also to propel the narrative on, using their ostensibly superficial and superfluous formal characteristics to achieve this; in both cases, these characteristics are detailed through the ekphrasis, where description pushes the limits of what is possible in the object or surface thus rendered, often breaking free from the constraints of the materials from which they are made. The narratological importance of these boundaries is mirrored in the manuscript miniatures that accompany the texts in surviving codices, and these do more than illustrate the respective texts, instead establishing further visual connections between their own mode of communication and the imagery of the two poems. The outer garden wall in the *Roman de la Rose*, in many respects the archetype for this kind of boundary, set an example that would be followed by other similar boundary structures in the same work, each reflecting and commenting upon the last, and by similar constructs employed by other poets, and chiefly by Guillaume de Machaut. I will come later in the chapter to the latter's most important 'fonteinne' and its relationship with Guillaume de Lorris' earlier garden wall and Fountain of Narcissus in the *Rose*. Machaut's fountain, as we shall see, allows the poet to reflect, summarise and comment upon Guillaume de Lorris' work with some subtlety and even a competitive edge. For now, though, it will be necessary to outline the role of the fountain in the *Rose*.

In the *Rose*, when the dreamer states his belief that 'j'alai tant destre et senestre / Que j'oi tout l'afaire et tot l'estre / Dou vergier cerchié et veü' (ll. 1414-16), he discovers 'une fonteinne souz .i. pin' (l. 1424). This fountain has a significant

role in the *Rose*'s narrative, since its contents reflect parts of the garden that the narrator has not noticed, showing him places to which he, and the plot, might progress and indeed actively do progress to in the subsequent lines, that reflected image coming to *divert* him from any alternative course within the garden of Diversion itself, and absorbing the whole remaining portion of the poem. In this way, it acts as a boundary; one that, like the painted garden wall, Guillaume must approach and *study* before he can advance, and one that functions similarly through illusionistic images. For a number of scholars, led by David Hult in particular, the fountain becomes 'the image of fiction itself' (1986: 287). I would argue that the fountain has been prefigured by the garden wall, which is the facade to the poem's dream fiction, but the concentric layers of fiction grow deeper and complex at this crucial point in the *Rose*.

Both wall and water would seem to function through the mimetic images on their surfaces, and this rather anticipatory visual aspect is highly prominent in illuminations treating these moments in manuscripts containing the text – one such example is Français 12595, f. 13v (realised, significantly,<sup>54</sup> for Jean, Duc de Berry around 1400-2) – which depict only the roses on the water's surface, selectively distilling the boundary to its ostensible role within the narrative: that is, to reflect the rosebush. The rose is held at a distance from the narrator, but it will still come to enclose him in its spell of attraction, and the poem as a whole in other ways. Guillaume de Lorris' poem pointedly rhymes 'mil choses' with 'de roses' (ll. 1612-13), and thusly contrasts the diverse surroundings with the roses, one of which will

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<sup>54</sup> Jean de Berry, one of the most important patrons of artistic activity of his time, will appear again multiple times within this chapter, and chiefly in connection with Guillaume de Machaut, since he was the poet's patron and is even represented as a character in the *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse*, which is explored below. As I demonstrate, Jean de Berry's own activities as a collector are well documented, providing us with a major insight into the way in which manuscripts and ivories in particular were used.

become the object of focalisation. Guillaume makes much of the mirror-like qualities of the fountain: ‘por faire la chose entendre / Un essemble vos vueil aprendre: / *Ausis comme li mireors mostre* / Les choses qui sont a l’ancontre’ (ll. 1550-3, emphasis mine). This mirror-like quality is intensified by his novel addition of two ‘cristal merueilleus’ (l. 1546) at the bottom of the structure (Strubel 1992: 117). We may be reminded that Oiseuse, with whose assistance the narrator has entered garden, had herself carried a ‘mireor’ (l. 557); that object, we may now realise, had also served an anticipatory function, preparing the way towards the fountain at the centre of Dedit’s garden. In the *Rose* manuscripts illuminated by the Fauvel master, who, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was especially interested in mirrors and reflections more generally, the fountain is almost rendered as a handheld mirror. In the Meaux manuscript especially we see the narrator grasping its frame squarely, as though lifting it for closer inspection. The fountain is presented as a tactile artefact, a *mise en abyme* of the miniature that is nearly as portable as a codex. In both examples the reflection appears on a flat, framed surface.



Fig. 2.1. The Amant and the pictured rose, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1400-2, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr.12595, f. 13v.



Fig. 2.2. The lover and the mirrored surface, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1320-30, Meaux, Médiathèque Luxembourg de Meaux, Meaux BM 52, f.10v.

Returning to Guillaume, the fountain of the text, with its strange crystals, might in some ways present a more complex and layered reflection, then, than that which is typically present in illuminated miniatures, where the function of the structure is normally streamlined, but the poem does not do away entirely with the obstructive surface here; this fountain is one which emphasises the boundary aspect by identifying further hurdles for the narrator to overcome. In particular it focuses on the reflection of the 'rosiers chargez de roses / Qui estoient en un destor / D'une haie

clos tout entor' (ll. 1613-5) – and this represents the next hurdle for the narrator. The phrasing closely echoes the initial 'toute enclose' of the poem's opening (l. 39), signifying the importance of this moment, and also recalling the garden wall (l. 469), which had been given a remarkably similar, encompassing structure. Strubel rightly notes that this fountain scene is a 'point de fracture' in the narrative, where we leave behind the splendid garden for the *lieu d'action* – and the rose (Strubel 1992: 117), but the water does not act as a boundary in the sense we might expect. The reflections might suggest slippage between image and reality, what is seen and what is known, but the narrator is not fooled by the false images on the water's surface, as we are told Narcissus once was at *this very fountain*: he does not attempt literally to cross the watery boundary, like his ancient predecessor, but can see deep into the pool, well beyond its initial, mirrored facade. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus exclaims to his reflection that 'exigua prohibemur aqua' ('we are held back by trifling water') and comically laments the thinness of the boundary between himself – and himself: 'posse putes tangi; minimum est quod amantibus obstat' ('one would think you could be touched; it is the smallest thing that stands in the way of lovers': *Met.* 3.450; 453). Whilst the water's surface may appear the most permeable of boundaries, it is of course the most impermeable one possible – only water lies beyond. In the *Rose*, the narrator's attention is not directed towards that misleading image, as Narcissus' was, but penetrates further, and yet it is itself deflected and diverted (by the reflection in the crystals) back into the "real" world of the dream and onto the thorny boundary that separates him from the rose he now desires more than anything. Boundaries formed of different materials function in similarly anticipatory ways in the *Rose*, and are connected through their surface images, which form a sequence where the individual screens, as it were, become part of a larger

construct, but a construct of a frighteningly slippery and unstable sort, capable of expanding suddenly or of throwing up further obstructions for the narrator.

The last of those obstructions, and the one which brings Guillaume's original poem crashing to its 'jagged' ending, comes in the form of the castle of Jalousie, which therefore becomes both the *climactic* and actual centre of Deduit's garden, following a spate of exceedingly swift construction work which dramatically alters the focus and mood of the poem, and indeed with them the imaginative landscape of Guillaume's poem. On the other hand, the Fountain of Narcissus forms the symbolic centre of the poem itself — its navel, as it were — not least because the ekphrasis and associated *topothesia* that concern it come at about the midpoint of the work as it has been handed down to us (ll. 1422-1619).

Scholarship has not neglected this site, in part because the centrality of its situation within the wider poetic structure and scheme of Guillaume de Lorris' work has marked it clearly as a place of special significance; indeed, the fountain as a site of special status within the garden would be picked up by other poets and readers of the *Rose*, as becomes apparent from the *vergiers* conceptualised and laid out in verse, painting, and other media that clearly descend from Guillaume's shining example. Claire Nouvet has suggested that the *Roman de la Rose* 'performs a provocative gesture when it decides to graft the pool of Narcissus at the very center of its own oneiric space' (Nouvet 2000 b: 3). At such a pivotal moment in the poem, Guillaume's *fontaine d'amors* — meaning not just the surface of the water but also the two fabulous crystals which lurk below, seen through layers of transparent but reflective matter — offers a strange and telescopic view of the depths of the dream vision, and also of the extended dream landscape that surrounds it and forms its external context. As we have seen, the fountain provides the narrator, now the

Amant, with his first sight of the rose, which does not simply float as a reflection on the untroubled and misleading surface of the water. The container and its contents act like a portal, not just sending the narrator's own visage back at him, as had happened in the case of poor old Narcissus, but pulling his vision deeper into yet more mysterious and extraordinary layers of mimetic representation. Those crystals do not simply proffer a glimpse of what lies directly above them, but instead exhibit a startling microcosm of the garden as a whole, revealing places that the narrator has not yet seen and extending the universe of the enclosed *vergier*, which now begins to take a different shape altogether from that which he – and we as readers – have so far been led to expect. At this point we have, in a way, lost sight altogether of that original box-like enclosure containing the garden, which now, despite the clarity of the crystalline image which ought to keep those outer margins of the dream region in view, seems to have slipped or melted away as the priorities and vantage point of our narrator shift. In the crystals the image of the garden becomes, paradoxically, less firmly crystallised.

As in the case of the initial garden wall, which had first put up an imposing and obstructive facade, blocking the narrator's vision of the garden from without, the Amant is yet again obliged to look closely at the image presented before him, reading it and interpreting it and coming to some greater understanding of its meaning before he is permitted to progress within the poem's landscape, and it is the same, of course, for the reader, who must necessarily follow the Amant's fumbling lead. For Eric Köhler this fountain was a 'source de la connaissance', that is to say, a spring through which the narrator comes to know of — and about — his love for the rose (Köhler 1963: 93). It is a site of perception, but a complex one. The step from the landscape of the dream, to a *reflected* version or even representation of it,

overlays a further symbolic dimension to the exploration of illusion with which the poem had opened, and through which its meanderings have up till this point already been shaped and directed. The theme of what is true and what is false in connection with dreams — and implicitly in connection with poetic allegory — had been introduced in the very first lines of the poem. The *Rose*'s phantasmagorical structure, relying on a sequence of vignettes or tableaux rather than a straightforward narratological cause and effect, plunges into a greater depth here, greatly intensifying its microscopic focus on the illusory. The Fountain of Narcissus is, emphatically, the most inherently and openly illusionistic artefact that is encountered anywhere within the bounds of the *vergier* that takes us and the Amant to the very threshold of the rose (and no further), since it only gives to us a representation of the love-object, overtly misleading in its proximity to life and therefore a source of significant anxiety and suffering for the narrator.

The sense of peril is heightened by the fabulistic treatment given to the familiar story of Narcissus, which is reinterpreted here to present a warning that is quite at odds with that present in ancient sources. As long ago as 1959 Jean Frappier noted the etymological connection that, both in Latin and Old French, binds the words for 'shadow' and 'reflection' together, and he did so specifically with the present example in mind; that is to say, the role of the mirror and the Narcissus theme in the *Roman de la Rose* (Frappier 1959: 138); there are indeed numerous cases in twelfth and thirteenth-century literature where the word *onbre* is used for a reflection, as in the *Roman de Troie* at line 17692, or in Bérout's *Tristan et Iseult* (we shall return to this soon enough). It should also be observed that in the Narcissus myth as it is treated in Ovid — by far the best known rendition — a link is established between different types of reflection; that of sound as well as sight.

Narcissus spurns the nymph Echo, but soon stumbles upon the still water in which he will find his own image, and in due course his doom. The boy is deceived by the duplication of his own image, but also by the repetition of his voice, meaning that his death itself comes through a dual doubling of natural phenomena that he cannot understand — and we must not forget that the fountain as a whole is a site of understanding and its opposite; a monument, even, to true and false visions and a place at once of interpretation and misinterpretation. The shape of an object is preserved both by its reflection and its cast shadow, and both can be seen in some sense as representations of the original, though the actual character of that representation is unstable. The instability involves an analogy between two natural phenomena which is productive for poetic purposes, and artistic ones too, as we shall see later on. In the *Rose* the two phenomena are presented as similar to mimetic representation achieved through artistic means, like the ekphrastically treated figures that had given a (misleading or honest) nightmarish quality to the garden wall.

Claire Nouvet's impression of the fountain in the *Rose* as a site devoid 'of all negative connotations', a 'source of life', even, is puzzling, and very much at odds with the overtly threatening atmosphere that creeps into the allegory (Nouvet 2000 b: 3). Water naturally has a healthy and life-giving presence in the garden setting, but it is also ambiguous and can cause rot and disease if present in the wrong places or the wrong quantities. This dubious status is carried into the text. The fountain here contains an image of the beloved rose (and the entire rosebush) on its surface, and also beneath it, and yet what the Amant sees there is extremely misleading. He does not have the ability to cross this boundary; nor is he so foolish as to attempt to venture down into its depths. Our narrator stresses, by the troubling vision of Narcissus, whom we are told died right here on this spot, and by the constant

characterisation of the pool itself as dangerous (see especially ll. 1510-19; 1568-79 and 1604-11), that to attempt to seek the reflection itself would mean forsaking life and the possibility of a real love in favour of a mere semblance of both; to tarry by the fountain, Guillaume stresses, would surely spell death. During a lengthy ekphrasis of the pool's perimeter, water, and crystals, the narrator makes clear that the *reflective* surface of these same crystals, quietly lying at the bottom, is 'li mireors perilleus' (l. 1568). The Amant, who is, as we have noted, not so easily fooled as Narcissus, understands well that the reflection might trap him, just like others who have come before him, with the tempting promise in visual form of something utterly beyond his reach: 'cil mireors, car li plus saive, / li plus preu, li plus afaitie / i sont *tost* pris et agaitie' (ll. 1577-9, emphasis mine). Refashioning the old story of Narcissus, our poet engages in a kind of reflection or even echoing of ancient prototypes, and yet his use of the physical site of the boy's death, here given a much more elaborately constructed form than in Ovid, contains other influences from the wider landscape of twelfth-century romance literature, where similar *topoi* are often present.

### 2.3. A Misleading Monument: The Fountain of Narcissus and the Tomb of Blancheflor

The tremendous emphasis placed on this site and its artefactuality — it is no simple pond, as in the *loci amoeni* of much classical literature — comes remarkably close in several respects to some of the similarly misleading — and also richly worked — structures that appear in Robert d'Orbigny's *Floire et Blancheflor*.<sup>55</sup> Just as

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<sup>55</sup> Strubel (1992: 111 n. 1) also detects a similarity between the site of this fountain in the *Rose* and the text of *Floire et Blancheflor*, but does not specify which of the places described in the earlier

Guillaume de Lorris' Fountain of Narcissus presents a fictitious and indeed dangerous picture to the narrator, Robert d'Orbigny had presented his protagonist — Floire — with a beautiful but sad monument commemorating the death of Blancheflor. The Fountain of Narcissus in the *Rose* — which is presented, atypically, as more solid than liquid — is explicitly conceived as a tomblike monument to a failed lover, and in this sense it looks to a long and established tradition that includes such figures as Blancheflor. Mary Franklin-Brown observes that '[t]he death of the lover is a very old theme in poetry. Courtly lyric poets frequently allude to it, and its paradigmatic expression in narrative is perhaps the myth of Tristan and Iseut' (2012: 282). Those two ill-fated lovers will occupy us in the second half of this chapter, but for now, I wish to draw attention to the site's role as a misleading monument to a lost lover, where surfaces are designed to deceive: these characteristics of the structure in the *Rose* are already present in Blancheflor's tomb in *Floire et Blancheflor*, which is also set within a mysterious garden. A comparison with the earlier poem reveals a number of similarities that have not been sufficiently recognised.

In *Floire et Blancheflor* the misleading monument takes the form of a tomb richly decorated with a series of interpretative surfaces and featuring a pair of highly artificial but thoroughly lifelike (and actually animated) effigies of the two protagonists, which move, speak, and exchange flowers. Its surface is covered in mendacious inscriptions, and many different materials are included in the structure, including gold, silver, veined marble, coloured enamels, magic stones, inlaid Solomonic work, and — perhaps most significantly of all — crystal (ll. 543-660). The

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poem is nearest to it. He implies that there is a fountain associated with a pine in that text: he must be thinking of the Emir's garden, which does indeed feature a stream and a tree that are part of the literary background to this episode in the *Rose*, although the tree there is not actually explicitly characterised as a pine.

whole edifice is placed within an enchanted garden locked into an eternal *reverdie* that denies the possibility of death. In a sense the impressive — but frightening — automata reflect the two young lovers closely, since as artistic representations they are presented as convincing, seeming almost to defy the death which is otherwise the whole gist of its bizarre, composite structure. The artificiality of the automata offers, perhaps, a clue that all is not as it seems, but the real deception — and danger — actually lies in the false statement made by the monument that Blancheflor has died, when in fact, she has not. The statement, or proclamation, of her death is made through an extraordinarily outlandish show of eternal life and continuing animation that is in reality all fakery and tricks; art, in this case, tells fibs to the spectator. The danger for Floire is that he cannot help but believe the whole setup, taking what the tomb and its surroundings — where the very trees seem to lie in sympathy with the artfully crafted sarcophagus and effigies — are telling him at face value. Floire, upon seeing the misleading tomb, in which he believes Blancheflor's body is contained, immediately loses all hope and seeks solace in his own death, attempting a very poetic end indeed, with the use of his stylus. He believes he will pass over into the tomb himself, and into a life beyond the present one, where the two young lovers may be reunited and able to pick real flowers together in the *champ fleuri* of the afterlife. The tomb is, however, empty; its message is a fiction.

Something similar takes place in the fountain episode in the *Rose*. Again, the monument serves to offer up an image that can ensnare anyone foolhardy enough to gaze into its limpid waters (and even more limpid rocks). Again, there is an inscription that the narrator must read and reflect carefully about before attempting anything further. Again, danger is present, and in this case a death has actually taken place. The fountain in the *Rose* is inscribed with verses proclaiming that Narcissus

has come, here, in this place, to a sticky end: ‘si ot dedanz la pierre escrite / ou bort  
amont lettre petite / qui devoient qu’anqui desus / se mori li biaux narcissus’ (ll.  
1432-5). The fountain and its epigraphic caption have a distinctly funereal character,  
and the structure, as much as any gravestone cut with an epitaph, commemorates  
Narcissus’ death like a tourist spot, tastelessly beautified and plastered with  
warnings to the visitor not to fall for the same trick. All this is of course completely  
at odds with the the virginal *locus amoenus* and unviolated spring of Ovid’s  
treatment of the story, and indeed of classical literature more broadly, which likes its  
untouched spaces. A modern reader might well wonder what the fountain looked like  
in Narcissus’ day, if it is now almost a venerated place, set up in a tomblike manner  
with a stone basin and carved inscription. Guillaume, however, states mischievously  
that this fountain *is* untouched, telling us that Nature has fashioned it just so —  
marble basin, epitaph and all — entirely without the intervention of any skilled  
architect, designer, or artist (ll. 1429-35). This is no longer simply the place where  
the boy met his end and became a daffodil, but one where his demise is  
memorialised, the tomblike site becoming in a very real sense also the place of his  
interment. The phrasing of the inscription — ‘anqui desus’ (l. 1434) — flatly  
contradicts the poet’s claim that the structure was fabricated by Nature ‘just so’. The  
structure, which is really a *memento mori* for the narrator and reader alike, has  
obviously been erected after the fact of his untimely end. The warning is most  
pressing for the narrator, who is in immediate danger of falling in love, not with  
himself so much as with a mere insubstantial image of the rose, since Guillaume’s  
interpretation of the ancient story completely changes the emphasis of the original in  
this respect. This point was strongly emphasised by Michael Camille, when he  
characterised the story of Narcissus, as it appears in its medieval garb, as an

important but widely ‘misunderstood archetypal [image] of medieval love and looking’ (Camille 1998: 44-5). David Hult has pointed out that the poet actually changes person in this episode for the first time, shifting from the first to the third almost as though this whole portion of the text is interpolated. For Hult, the shift in perspective sets the Narcissus narrative apart ‘as an *exemplum*’.<sup>56</sup> Narcissus is kept apart from the other allegorical figures that have already been encountered, whether outside or inside the garden, or, like Oiseuse, straddling the boundary between the two (1986: 268). Within the text, the change in person makes the Narcissus episode a sort of textual ekphrasis, like a painted or carved passage set within plainer surroundings, that has a grave moral as well as an ornamental function. This is just the kind of ornamentation that the exterior of the fountain lacks. Text suffices as its only adornment, as if it were itself a poem. Indeed, as noted above, Hult has seen the fountain as ‘the image of fiction itself’ (1986: 287). The same interpretation is offered by Emmanuèle Baumgartner, who comments that ‘[a]vant d’être miroir, la fontaine de Narcisse est d’abord texte’ (1984: 50). All the colourful pictorial representation comes from *within* this comparatively spartan structure. The fountain still remains a solid and artificial structure, despite what we have been told about how natural it is.

Blancheflor’s false tomb is similarly silent about the actual cause of her death, though the monument appears to Floire as a profusion of symbolism about eternal life and renewal, simultaneously giving him the double bluff and hinting at the reality, which is indeed the girl’s uninterrupted life. The tomb also features an inscription that gives the monument as a whole a clear textual as well as a visual and material presence: the automata are even given the power of speech, further drawing

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Fleming 1969: 92-6; also Lejeune 1973: 330, where the *exemplum* is identified as serving both an ironic and a serious purpose.

attention to the monument as text, but complicating the deception that it embodies. Like Floire, the narrator of Guillaume's *Rose* must interpret the surfaces and surroundings of a monument to a dead lover, dodging the dangers it poses and carrying one with his slow and broken path towards the object of his love.

#### 2.4. The Fountain *in situ*: The Water and the Pine

Nouvet has noticed that, in the opening of the *Roman de la Rose*, the narrator comes before reaching the garden upon a clear stream that 'cites the water of Narcissus' pool'; he washes his face in it, as though waking up from his dream, but, as we know, his very awakening is really part of that dream. Nouvet takes this moment of washing — where the narrator attempts to clear his vision — as a sign that he is actually entering into, or rather already in the oneiric world of his imagination: 'at the very threshold of the garden', she comments, '[...] the Lover is looking "per", through the deceptively clear allegorical mirror of the pool' (Nouvet 2000 a: 368 n. 21). Indeed, images can have an anticipatory function within the narrative, as well as a retrospective one, though the connection only asserts itself once the reader has reached those later structures that are foreshadowed within the scheme. His subsequent encounter with the fountain itself can also be seen as a sort of entrance, not quite into the garden itself, but into a state in which he might be fit to see and travel beyond his present position. He encounters the stream before he meets the enclosing wall of the garden and speaks with Oiseuse, and he must stop at the fountain before he might seek the rose. The little trickling stream is, in this interpretation, portal-like in the same way that the Fountain of Narcissus is, and the narrator must pass 'through' without getting himself too wet, as we suppose

Narcissus must have done. The fountain sits within a set of deceptive surfaces that act as barriers and portals.

Guillaume's Fountain of Narcissus lies beneath an immense pine (ll. 1424-8), alluding to an ancient tradition which associated this tree with love. Tree-fountain combinations are in fact common in literary narratives, with the tree often specified as a pine, as in *Tristan* narratives. In *Floire et Blancheflor* the Emir of Babylon's garden features a great *arbre d'amours* above a bubbling stream, both of which are magic.<sup>57</sup> Guillaume de Lorris' tree therefore has a distinguished pedigree: it would in turn inspire future poets such as Guillaume de Machaut, who may be imagined picking up some of the fallen pinecones and perhaps even partaking of the nuts of the tree. William Calin sees in the *Rose's* pine the ancestor of a range of important standalone or landmark trees that appear in diverse texts by Machaut and others, including his *Dit dou Vergier*, as well as *Le Roman de la Poire*, *La Messe des Oiseaux*, and *Le Dit de l'Arbre royal* (Calin 1974: 30). Erich Köhler argues that '[d]ans le Roman de la Rose, l'accent principal est mis sur la source qui, maintenant, s'appelle Fontaine d'Amour, sous l'influence sans doute, de cette source de la connaissance qu'offrait au poète le mythe de Narcisse. L'arbre, bien que dépourvu de signification, n'a cependant pas disparu tout à fait. La fontaine est abritée par un pin que Guillaume de Lorris a même introduit dans son résumé du récit d'Ovide, récit qui, lui, ne mentionnait pas d'arbre' (Köhler 1963 : 93). The tree is significant

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<sup>57</sup> As noted above, Strubel seems to allude to the tree in *Floire et Blancheflor* as a pine (1992: 111 n. 1). For Strubel, the pine is 'à la fois un symbole de pérennité et de mort' and '[l]es occurrences de l'archétype pin/fontaine impliquent presque toujours l'union de l'amour et de la mort.' An association with death should not be stressed too heavily. The cypress, on the other hand, normally does have such connotations. Strubel notes that the pine was associated in Ancient Rome with the cult of Cybele, but it was also connected with Bacchus and his followers. Pinewood is both fast growing and flammable, suiting it to a range of ritual contexts. Cupid, too, was often depicted with a torch in traditional iconography, and the pine was used in nuptial ceremonies. The pine nut was considered an aphrodisiac, as in Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 2. 424. This association with amatory pursuits is still preserved in Boccaccio's *Teseida* (VII. 50), where the temple of Venus is shaded by pines: the poet there spells out the properties of the seed rather than leaving any ambiguity: on the connection between Ovid and Boccaccio here, see Watson 1979: 32-3, 135 n. 27.

and is itself a piece of garden architecture that, as much as the fountain with which it is so closely connected, would reappear in later romances and in the visual arts too.

The fountain itself is a site of great metapoetic significance for Guillaume de Lorris and for his section of the *Roman de la Rose*. Whilst the rose might generally be regarded as the principal image of the romance, the fountain, with its dreamlike and strangely intense image of that flower, also represents the poem, standing as it does both for its character as a dream narrative and as a sort of *objet d'art*. More than one *Rose* scholar, including John Fleming and David Hult, has cottoned on to this. For Fleming, the structure was 'in one sense, the central concept of the whole poem' (1969: 93). Hult suggests that 'Guillaume attempts' in this part of the poem 'to show us that the creation of poetry occurs at a supreme moment of Narcissism, [...] at a juncture where fictional projection necessarily adumbrates but never totally replicates a transcendent meaning – the deceptive surface of fiction whose overwhelming power to fascinate is matched only by its very fragility' (1986: 290-1). This is, however, a rather modern reading, shaped by a sense of 'Narcissism' to which no medieval poet could have fully subscribed. Camille was quite right to point out (presumably in response to such claims) that a 'Freudian notion of narcissism' is anachronistic (see Camille 1998: 45). Still, the 'deceptive surface' explored in this episode certainly does relate closely to the opening of the poem, and the troubling association that it sets up so forthrightly between poetry, dreams, lies, and falsehood. The whole garden appears in the crystals at the bottom of the fountain, just as it is does within the dream and the poem as a whole, since these receptacles or containers

of misleading images are also poetic constructs in themselves, even bearing in this case an inscription that, for a few lines, at least, actually *becomes* the poem.<sup>58</sup>

### 2.5. Controversial Crystals: The Fountain's Vision?

The rosebush remains the focal point to which those crystals direct the narrator, but the crystals are themselves an extraordinary inclusion, being natural but marvellous artefacts that are buried deep within another artefact, reflecting not just the rose and the garden, but also the concentric structure of the whole poem. It is therefore worth looking in detail at how Guillaume describes the crystals:

[o]u fonz de la fontaine aval  
avoit .ij. pierres de cristal,  
qu'a grant entente remiré.  
Mes une chose vos diré,  
qu'a mervoilles, ce cuit, tandroiz  
maintenant que vos l'entendroiz :  
quant li solaus qui tout aguete,  
ses rais en la fontaine gete,  
et la clartez aval descent,  
lors perent colors plus de .c.  
ou cristal qui par le soleil  
devient jaunes, ynde, vermeil (*Roman de la Rose*, ll. 1534-45).

These two crystals recall various other precious stones within the romance tradition, including the gems of all different kinds that pepper the bed of the stream in the

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<sup>58</sup> This is also the case with the tomb in *Floire et Blancheflor*.

Emir's garden in *Floire et Blancheflor*, which, we are told, is fed by the Euphrates itself, and the precious stones (again including rock crystal) that encrust the surface of the tomb in the same romance. Remarkably there are a few manuscripts of the *Rose* where the illuminator has taken a special interest in the *inner* workings of the fountain, and the 'colors plus de .c.' that are visible in it. In one case, the illuminator attempts to depict not just two magical crystals featuring a microcosm of the garden, but a whole "pic'n'mix" array of precious stones in a riot of different colours, drawing attention to the poem's emphasis on the depths of the water, now encrusted with brightly coloured stones, whilst the external features — including the stone container and inscription — are absent. Only the tree (not obviously a pine) remains, drawing attention back towards the fountain by its position directly above. A contrasting approach is taken in the Sainte Geneviève manuscript discussed in chapter one: there is a greater focus on garden architecture here, with the fountain and another building (the yet-to-be-built Castle of Jealousy?) solidly established within the frame. The miniature expresses the anticipatory function of the fountain effectively, giving the pine a gestural presence. It points directly towards the rose enclosure. The crystals are represented too, and with unusual faithfulness, their brightness conveyed by silvering and their reflective properties by radiating lines in red. The narrator stands with his arms and legs crossed, indicating his confusion.



Fig. 2.3. Multicoloured crystals. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1350, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Selden Supra 57, f. 12.v.



Fig. 2.4. Radiating crystals, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1350-60, Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève MS. 1126, f.10v.

Placed as they are at the bottom of what really ought to be called something like the “Narcissus Memorial Fountain”, these rainbow-hued crystals are really the most entrancing part of the structure and the episode that relates to it, distilling and condensing the illusory surfaces through which the whole poem is arranged into a pair of marvellous, but fundamentally natural objects, beyond, indeed, what art alone can achieve.

The crystals in the fountain have been the subject of substantial controversy, of which a good summary was offered by Larry H. Hillman in 1980, covering the scholarship up to that point. C. S. Lewis’ interpretation of these objects has been

extremely influential, and underpins all later scholarly readings of the episode that address the role of the crystals. John Fleming likewise remarked that ‘the crystals would seem to present a real crux for the interpretation of Guillaume’s psychology of love’ (Fleming 1969: 93). The crystals, for Lewis, represented the eyes of the lady within the poem’s allegorical scheme, and he supported his view with a quotation from the troubadour Bernard de Ventadour (the poem is ‘Quant vei la lauzea mover’) where the Fountain of Narcissus is explicitly associated with mirrors and with the lady’s eyes. Lewis suggested that this might be ‘the indirect source’ for Guillaume de Lorris (Lewis 1936: 128 n. 2). Other scholars, accepting that the crystals represent eyes, have argued that they are not the lady’s, but the lover’s own, since it would make sense for him to be seeing his own reflection in the fountain (Robertson 1962; Fleming 1969: 93). Erich Köhler (1963) opted for both, making the crystals a reflection of the Amant’s own eyes in his lady’s, whilst also stressing that the stones are in some way magical. Fleming, in a comparatively moralising reading (93-4), insisted that there is no magic function in the episode, and that the organ of vision is treated as fundamentally ‘fleshly’. Hillman (1980: 232) argued that an interpretation that relies upon ‘the tradition [...] which links the eye, as the path to the heart, with incipient love [...] fails upon careful examination of the text’ for two main reasons. The first is that the text itself is inconsistent about the plural nature of the crystals, dwelling on the duality but quickly reverting back to the singular. The first point raised by Hillman has been addressed by David Hult and Sarah Kay, who both argue that the shift in number is deliberate and part of a conscious strategy to heighten the subjectivity of the experience described, giving an extra layer of ambiguity to the episode and an impression that the narrator-Amant does not know quite what he is seeing (Hult 1986: 279; Kay 1990: 179). This view has been widely accepted, but

Félix Lecoy suggested a less contrived interpretation in his 1965 edition of the text (275): the shift represented for him a change merely from object to material composition. Given Guillaume's keen focus on materials, this is a more plausible reading here, and need not mean that the dual nature of the crystals – which is also the main reason for connecting them with eyes – is entirely undermined, as Hillman suggests.

The second objection raised by Hillman is that the Amant has not yet noticed his own particular rosebud in the reflections: 'a lover could not gaze into his lady's eyes', he argues, 'before he has chosen his lady' (1980: 232). Hillman (236) sees the fountain solely as 'a test of the Amant's ability to choose an appropriate love object and in so doing, prove himself worthy of being Amour's vassal.' This is a persuasive argument in many respects. We have seen that the interpretative boundaries encountered by the narrator are always a test of some sort, and I argue here that the fountain is no different. It should still be possible, however, to harmonise this reading of the episode with an interpretation that accounts for the obvious optical connotations of the crystal. Rita Lejeune (1973: 332) noticed the apparent discrepancy in chronological sequence, and suggested that the crystals are not literally eyes, but do offer a 'préfiguration' of the lady's eyes. Hillman dismissed this idea as too reliant, like Köhler's interpretation, on a magical function. Lejeune also noted (325), however, that 'le poète a pris la précaution de situer son aventure en dehors du réel, dans le monde de l'illogisme des rêves: c'est là un élément capital dont beaucoup de commentateurs n'ont pas tenu compte.' This is an important point, and worth restating here. The doubling of the crystals in fact responds to and forms part of a noticeable but slippery pattern of coupled or opposed elements that runs through the poem, where one ekphrastically treated object or allegorical

personification is often presented with a pendant object or allegorical personification. This is most obvious in the relatively ignored but important passage dealing with the god of love's two bows, one ugly and knarled, and the other beautifully smooth and decorated with 'Dames i ot de tuz sanz peintes / Et vallez envoissiez et *cointes*' (ll. 904-19; quotation 916-17 – emphasis mine). This relates obviously to the structure of the poem up to this point and repeats the opposition established between allegorical personages represented on the garden wall and in the *carole* that follows it. The figures on the garden wall are paired in a similar way with the more attractive figures inside the garden, but even here an overly literal and pedantic approach to the implicit correspondence between individual figures has proved difficult to apply, as Douglas Kelly found when attempting to connect each negative personification with one of the positive ones taking part in the *carole*: he concluded that there is 'no systematic pattern opposing the figures on either side of the wall' and that 'Guillaume has made a description, not a definition' (1978: 81). Hillman's idea that '[i]f the poet had ascribed a greater significance to the crystals, he would undoubtedly have made his intentions crystal clear' (238) suggests a curious failure to recognise one of the characteristic qualities of Guillaume's style. A certain 'illogisme' is allowable and necessary as a result of both the framing of the narrative (and its allegory) as a dream vision, and the playful reticence of the poet, who constructs but also deconstructs his conceits as he progresses. The crystals inevitably do suggest, but do not necessarily represent in straightforward allegorical terms, a pair of eyes. The episode as a whole is still presented as a test for the lover, but it is one that centres, crucially, around vision, reflection, and perception.

A more recent article by Marisa Galvez has taken a different approach, drawing out the unique 'duality' and 'heterogeneous effects of crystal' (2014: 19-

20), and dwelling on its refractive, distorting properties and capacity to give ‘sensual pleasure’ (15) to the observer, rather than its clarity, vaunted in the lapidary tradition and sometimes taken for granted in allegorical readings of medieval texts. Galvez argues that in courtly literature ‘moments when one particular gemstone, rock crystal, should symbolize a transparency associated with universal knowledge are the same moments that are least transparent’ (2014: 15). This lack of transparency she connects not with the deceptive qualities of the image as such, but with what she calls ‘substantive excess’, which she defines in relation to the fountain in the *Rose* as ‘the Lover’s active, phenomenological bedazzlement of the crystal’s physical properties’ (24). Galvez suggests that the crystal ‘resists the medieval *speculum* of truth or falsity’ (26), but these connotations are certainly present, and the antithetical arrangement of other ekphrastic episodes in the poem leads us to expect such a conflict. That conflict is deeply ingrained, after all, in both the dream vision and the poetic vision, and is advertised in the opening lines of the poem. Hillman’s reading of the fountain episode, by contrast, sees no evidence of such a sensory overload: ‘[e]ven when he [the Amant] describes how the crystals sparkle in the sun and reflect every object in the garden, he expresses no personal reaction; he neither comments on their beauty nor is unduly fascinated by them’ (1980: 234-5).

Galvez is right, however, to connect the crystals with a tradition of natural marvels rather than a simpler symbolic aspect derived from medieval lapidaries. If it is true that the garden of Deduit takes inspiration from Claudian’s *Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti*, with its golden-hedged garden of Venus (see chapter one), then Guillaume de Lorris may also have been aware of that same poet’s fascination with a particular stone: Claudian composed no fewer than seven poems on the subject of a piece of clear rock crystal with an interior cavity, where a drop of

running water was enclosed (33-39). The poet had taken the suggestion of this stone, explicitly characterised as miraculous (35.5), to imagine whole rivers and rainbows encased within rock (37.1-6). The *Rose* inverts this concentric layering of crystal and water, but preserves an element of the miraculous in making a strange dual microcosm out of the solid stone in the depths of the fountain. In the love garden of the *Epithalamium* the fountain itself is dual. Claudian describes not one but two fountains – one honey sweet, and one poisonous – where Cupid dips his arrows before administering them to his chosen victims (ll. 69-71). Guillaume is less concerned with the liquid qualities of the fountain's contents, and transfers that motif of sharply opposed functions to the god of love's two bows. The arrows are not explicitly connected with the fountain in his text, but all his ekphrastic objects, and the images on their surfaces, are still connected with each other, anticipating and recalling each other as the narrator advances through the changing landscape of the dream. The marvellous and pleasurable qualities associated with the fountain are still inextricably bound up with the dangers of nightmarish passion and attendant bitterness and destruction.

#### 2.6. Forty Winks by the Fountain: Dreaming with Guillaume de Machaut in the Garden

Illuminators could not possibly have picked up on all of the themes coalescing in this complex episode, and likewise in the later part of the poem that deals with the Fountain of Narcissus, but other poets were able to enter into a productive dialogue with Guillaume de Lorris precisely by returning to these structures or sites of perception and knowledge, truth and falsehood. Among those who responded to

these aspects of the *Rose* was Guillaume de Machaut, whom we have already mentioned above in connection with the pine tree. Machaut, in his own *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse* (1360-2), alludes constantly to Guillaume de Lorris' distinctive deployment of peculiar interpretative boundaries, forming an elaborate triangular intra-and-intertextual system of linkage between his own works — that is to say the *Dit dou Vergier* and the *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse* — and the *Rose*. The principal construction here is the 'Fonteinne Amoureuse' itself, the structure that lies at the centre of the *dit* of that name. This is a relatively late work for Machaut, representing the culmination of many years of composing and a developed iteration of many earlier works by him that had also exploited the garden theme, including the *Dit dou Vergier*, a youthful response to the *Rose*. Machaut conceptualises this later fountain in honour of his predecessor, Guillaume de Lorris, and his own princely patron, Jean, Duc de Berry; a man, as it happens, with architectural aspirations. Machaut describes this fountain, in an ekphrasis directly inspired by those in the *Rose*, as 'trop bele' (l. 1301), and claims that 'onques mais en jour de ma vie / Ne vi si bien oeuvre assevie' (ll. 1341-2). In other words, Machaut's 'fonteinne' is a better one than the one made by Guillaume de Lorris for Narcissus, but it too is a Fountain of Narcissus, and we are told that its setting was formerly the garden of Cupid, where the gods once came to enjoy 'le deduit'. Kevin Brownlee has very fittingly observed of the *Fonteinne Amoureuse* that the 'motifs ([and] even verbal reminiscences) from the *Rose* form, as it were, the visible building blocks of the description' Machaut gives of the poem's setting (Brownlee 1984: 197). At the same time, Machaut pits his *Dit* against the work of his predecessor. The new fountain, emphatically architectural, is 'compassez et fais a droit tour' (l. 1374), its design neither 'rude ne villeinne' (l. 1374) like that of

Narcissus, as we must read between the lines, made relatively plainly by Nature herself. Because these fountains relate so closely to the works of literature in which they appear, being in themselves literary constructs of meta-poetic significance, Machaut is here implying strongly that his own *Dit* – itself a literary fountain – also possesses these qualities of beauty, uprightness, and civilised refinement. The climactic point of the ekphrasis comes, however, with the claim that this fountain was ‘escheva’ (l. 1398) by the sculptor Pygmalion — best known from Ovid’s version of the myth — whose work came to life, its idealism becoming a reality: ‘temptatum mollescit ebur positoque rigore / subsedit digitis ceditque; [...] corpus erat’ (‘the ivory softens to the touch and, stiffness set aside, / it submits and yields to the fingers; [...] it was flesh’: *Met.* 10. 283-4; 290). Pygmalion also crops up at an important point in Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, where many lines (ll. 20802-21218) are given to the embellishment of the theme, even sliding towards the end, quite irrelevantly, into the story of Cinyras and Myrrha, which follows the Pygmalion episode in the poet’s source material (*Met.* 10. 298-447). In Jean de Meun’s hands, so different from Guillaume’s, the digression is brought to an abrupt halt, with no moral drawn from the myths. He ends by stating, hurriedly, that ‘Ne vous vueill or ci plus tenor: / A mon propos vueill revenir, / K’autre champ me couvient arer’ (ll. 21219-21), although the promised ‘revenir’ never comes. This is altogether different to how Guillaume treats the fountain and it is distant from his use of myth in the original poem, where it serves a more important and original role within the scheme than straightforward adornment or demonstration of learnedness on the part of the poet. As we have seen, Guillaume de Lorris makes his garden wall a structure built by Deduit himself, whilst his Fountain of Narcissus has been produced by Nature. In a sense, Machaut looks to outdo his predecessor:

this attribution of *his* Fonteinne Amoureuse to Pygmalion suggests a fluid relationship between art and nature, which changed places in that sculptor's work, and hints not so subtly that this fountain will likely provide a reversal or transformation of some kind as well.

Suiting the the invocation of that famous sculptor, who Jean de Meun had made a skilled artificer, or 'cutter' ('entaillieres', l. 20821) in many materials — 'en fuz et en pierres, / en metaus, en os et en cires / Et en toutes autres matires' (ll. 20822-4) — Machaut stresses that his fountain is decorated with figures in 'marbre' and 'esmaille' (l. 1313; l. 1310). It rests, also, on a pillar of carved 'ivoire' (l. 1395), which points to one of Virgil's famous 'geminae Somni portae' or 'twin gates of Sleep' – one of horn and one of ivory – through which true and false dreams are sent to mortals (*Aen.* 6. 893): for Virgil, the false visions proceed through the portal of polished ivory (*Aen.* 6. 895-6), and yet Machaut tells his reader that the dream vision that follows in his own text will be a true one. The noun *ivoire* is explicitly paired with *voire*, meaning *vrai* in this case, which noticeably forms an actual component of the former word, and there is a play here also with the verb 'to see'; Machaut makes Venus herself Pygmalion's patron, stating that: 'Et Venus le marbre et l'ivoire / Fist entaillier, c'est chose voire' (ll. 1395-6). Sight and truth are explicitly paired, and the employment of ivory involves a pun that had not been present in Virgil's Latin. The presence of ivory in the ensemble also connects the fountain structure with the kind of handheld mirrors and other *bibelots* produced in ivory during the fourteenth century, with which Machaut himself will have been very familiar, as we shall see; some examples will be examined below, later in the present chapter. Machaut makes clear that both the marble and ivory portions of the fountain, unlike Guillaume de Lorris' relatively unadorned Fountain of Narcissus, which had been decorated in a

way with the poem itself, are now richly sculptured with scenes from ancient mythology centring on the Trojan War, with Venus herself, Paris and Helen, and the story of Troilus and Briseyda (ll. 1338-40). Narcissus himself is commemorated on the structure and made immortal in the ivory section of its composition, underscoring the connection between this special material and the dream vision. The structure also points clearly, however, to the allegorical figures on the garden wall in the *Rose*, which have been, we assume, on a grander, larger scale; Machaut's fountain, it is implied, is small, almost like a table fountain (and it is noteworthy that the two characters debate drinking from it at ll. 1423-38), but no less elaborately worked.

Sylvia Huot (1987: 296) has drawn attention to some of the miniatures accompanying this text in one important manuscript of Machaut's works — Français 1584 — which was commissioned for an unknown patron between 1372 and 1377 (that is, within the poet's lifetime), and likely produced in Reims, where Machaut was living. As Huot notes, the miniatures in this manuscript present the Fonteinne Amoureuse in a unique way that shows a careful reading of the text and an awareness of its intertextual relationship with earlier literature. Other manuscripts tend to treat the fountain in a different way.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> see, for example, those in Français 22545, f. 127r or in Français 9221, f. 90v.



Fig. 2.5. The figures on the fountain, *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse*, Paris and Reims, c.1372-7, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 1584, f.163v.

The illuminator of Français 1584 presents the Fonteinne Amoureuse with pictures on its surface, connecting it visually with the *Rose's* garden wall, and the grisaille technique used here also effectively suggests masonry, stressing the architectural component within the scheme. Huot does not offer any explanation for this similarity between the structures in these two poems. Domenic Leo (2017: unpag.) had commented on Machaut's use of the word 'esmaillie' ('enamelled') to describe the carved figures on the fountain, which gives the structure an air of preciousness and

minuteness, as well as a polychromatic variegation of surface, since this is a technique only possible on a relatively small scale, and certainly not typical on large garden ornaments, or indeed, widely used in conjunction with marble. The same goes for the ivory, which must necessarily be only as large and thick as the elephant has been able to make it. Just as the *Roman de la Rose*'s sumptuously decorated garden walls hint to the reader that Guillaume's experience inside the garden will be enriching, the expensive ornamentation of Machaut's fountain gives a clue regarding the narrator's enrichment in the near future. Both structures encircle and enclose: the garden wall, of course, surrounds and demarcates the limits of the Deduit's garden, and the fountain holds and demarcates the limits of the watery element, no more capable of shapeshifting than the garden of the *Rose*. This similarity is by no means superficial or confined only to the outer surfaces of the box or cup-like containing structure, as the reflective water held within also represents a garden, illusionistically projecting the image of one to the viewer. Machaut cleverly combines Guillaume de Lorris' two most significant artefactual and liminal structures into one artistically designed and preciously ornamental composite construction that unites characteristics derived from both and in a sense surpasses its predecessors. As we have observed, the attribution of the monument to Pygmalion (ll. 1397-8), establishes an unavoidable expectation that the figures represented on its surface will, somehow, come to life.

The similarities between these structures also pertain to the narratological design of Machaut's poem. Crucially, both Guillaume's decorated garden wall and Machaut's similarly ornamented fountain mark the transition from frame story to narrative proper, and indeed into the allegory. As we have seen, the *Rose*'s narrator sleeps from the outset, only seeming to wake and clear his vision of slumber, and the

frame of the dream narrative is from the very beginning itself presented as illusory; still, it is the process of entering the garden which really commences the action or itinerary of the poem. On the other hand, Guillaume de Machaut complains of his insomnia in the *Fonteinne* (l. 1552), and enters the garden without difficulty, in a state of lucidity: he states that ‘nous trouvames / A l’entrée d’un trop biau parc /... Si me mena par la main nue’ (ll. 1294-9); the use of the qualification ‘main nue’ emphasises this ease: for him, the real transition occurs only when he is already inside the garden, not far from the strangely dreamlike and ekphrastically treated fountain that stands nearby. This fountain, in lulling our poet and his companion to sleep, serves a function strongly reminiscent of Guillaume’s wall, which appears just after the narrator has washed his face in the stream.

Machaut begins his principal narrative not by crossing a physical boundary into the garden space, but rather by crossing the metaphysical and perceptual one between sleep and wakefulness, between passivity and action. The fountain, however, with its illusionistic images on its outer surface, and its reflective pool, is crucial to this transition between states, since at least one of the figures he sees represented on its outer edges is one whom he will actually encounter in his dream. Machaut notes that he is lulled to sleep by the trickling water of the fountain and the dew in the garden (ll. 1558-63), expanding the fountain’s power over the senses beyond the visual alone. He has already cited a traditional association between water and sleep by mentioning the water in the house of Somnus — drawing again on Ovid (see *Met.* 11. 573-673) — and he gives water a similar soporific potency in his *Dit dou Vergier* also, where he stresses that ‘la froide rousse’ falling on the narrator’s face ‘mist hors dou transissement’ (*Dit dot Vergier* ll. 1201-9). Machaut has added another layer here to Guillaume’s allegory by granting the fountain such a central

and significant role, actually sending the narrator and his noble companion in the poem, who is identified from the outset with his real life patron Jean, Duc de Berry, to sleep.<sup>60</sup>

The fountain itself plays a key part in the transition between lucid frame story and dream narrative. Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet (cited in Leo 2017: unpag.) has observed that the aforementioned miniatures in Français 1584 seek to represent this literary function of the fountain in a clever way: two of these miniatures, 165v and f. 169r, actually mirror one another. In the first, Machaut covers the figure of his companion, Jean, Duc de Berry, who is asleep in his lap, with his own cloak, and both appear on the left of the miniature. Later we see the pair rearranged and flipped over to the right hand side of the miniature, with Machaut now resting on the Duc, who has his princely arm around the poet, his servant and good chum. The inversion of the image reflects the crossing over that takes place in the text, and refers perceptively to the *mirroring* that must inevitably be associated with the fountain. These manuscript miniatures represent in a sophisticated manner, in their related composition and arrangement, and not least in their use of the fountain itself, the crossing of that threshold between the frame story and the pair's shared dream, between reality and illusion, and between the mundane and the poetic, which is explicitly associated with the mirror world of the reflection.

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<sup>60</sup> The connection is established directly via an acrostic in the opening of the *dit*.



Fig. 2.6. Tucked up by the fountain, *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse*, Paris and Reims, c.1372-7, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 1584, f.165v.



Fig. 2.7. Transported by the fountain, *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse*, Paris and Reims, c.1372-7, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 1584, f.169r.

As mentioned above, Machaut and the Duc de Berry encounter in their slumber one of the very personages they have seen represented on the fountain, who — not unlike the figures on Guillaume’s garden wall — are capable of animation and now speech in a way that thoroughly stretches the bounds of art itself; the images have themselves passed over that threshold between nature and art as well as wakefulness and sleep, gaining in solidity and realism just as our two protagonists have sunk into the world of illusory visions. They meet and speak with Venus herself. To Machaut, the fountain’s images seem to have come to life. He declares

that ‘il n’est peintre ne masson / Qui leur biauté peüst descrire’ (ll. 1572-3): he tells us that no artist or sculptor could have rendered Venus more lifelike, and yet it is clear to the reader that Machaut and Jean de Berry, together, have in their dream themselves entered the ekphrastic dimension, becoming part of the decorative scheme of the fountain, and part of that artefact. The rhyming of a series of clashing opposites — ‘songe’, ‘mensonge’, ‘veritable’, ‘fable’ (ll. 1565-8) — strongly echoes the famous and playful opening of Guillaume de Lorris’ *Rose*, which toys in a similar way with the same concepts of reality and illusion, truth and falsehood.

This crossing over from life into art in Machaut actually reverses the state of affairs in the well known myth concerning Pygmalion, where art had rather come to life. William Calin has commented, a little tamely, on the ‘tension between illusion and reality’ in the text (Calin 1974: 18), but there is more than a tension here: there is something more like a chiasmic rupture or fluid melding of the two. The miniatures in Français 1584 show two artistically rendered personages on the side of the fountain who in pose and gesture closely mimic, or rather prefigure, the representation of Machaut and the Duc de Berry that appears in the next miniature (f. 163v., f. 164v): the resemblance is surely intentional, and it is extremely important to remember that the illuminators working on this particular manuscript are thought to have been supervised in their workshop in Reims by Guillaume de Machaut himself (Huot 1987; cf. Leo 2017).

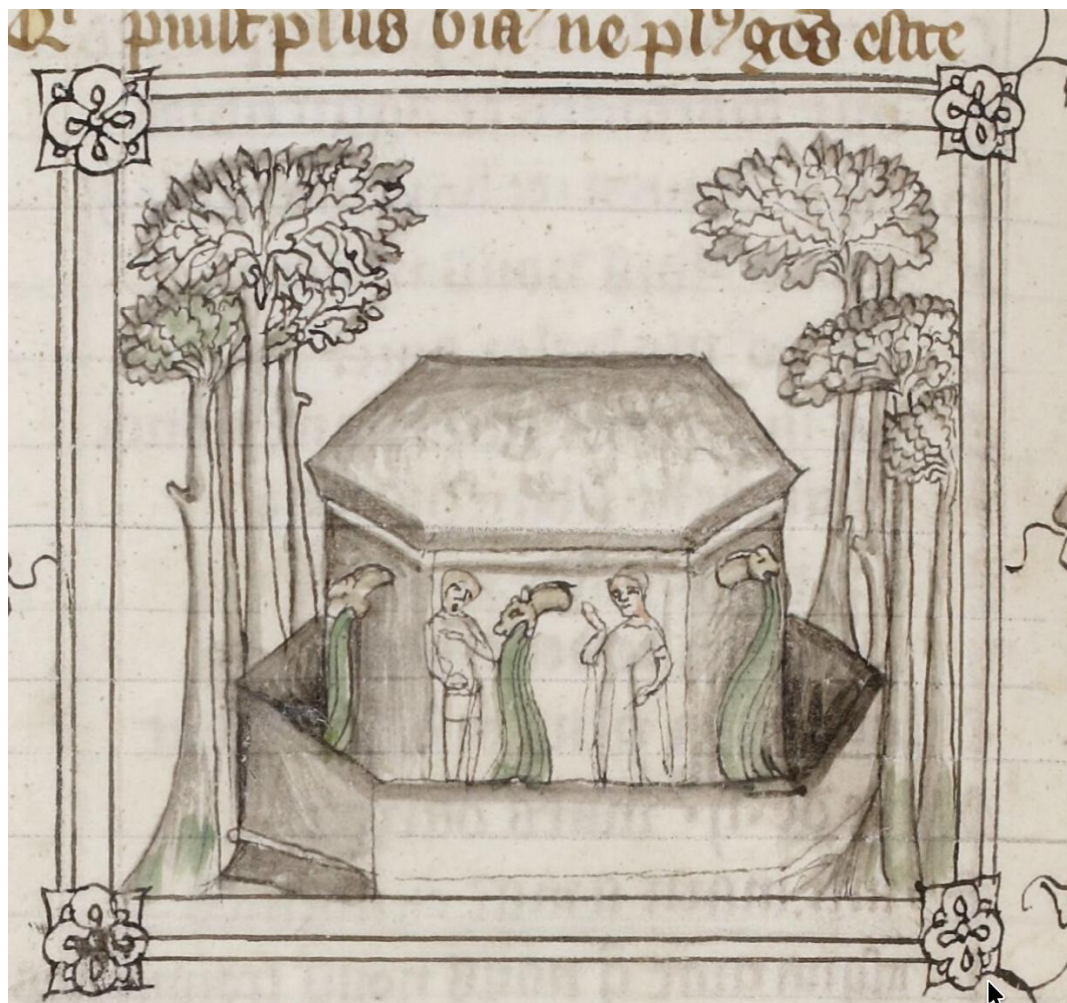


Fig. 2.8. The fountain and its pictures, *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse*, Paris and Reims, c.1372-7, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 1584, f.163v.



Fig. 2.9. The fountain and its pictures, *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse*, Paris and Reims, c.1372-7, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 1584, f.164v.

Other miniatures represent all the figures in the dream narrative alongside each other — Guillaume de Machaut, the Duc, and the two women they encounter — detached from the fountain itself, presenting an alternative interpretation of the boundary-crossing that has taken place; one, indeed, that comes nearer to Machaut's own perspective within the dream, but the depiction in Français 1584 offers a perceptive twist and an important gloss on the action and motive of the poem. The presence of painted images on Machaut's fountain here does not only recall representations of Guillaume de Lorris' painted wall, as Huot suggests, in a purely visual way, but also

develops a link between the two that is implicit in the text itself. Since the narrative that follows is an explicitly ekphrastic adventure, Guillaume de Machaut's reformulation of the process of falling asleep and entering the dream narrative without the direct assistance of a Oiseuse figure — though the ladies cannot but remind us of Guillaume de Lorris' leisurely gatekeeper — alters the allegorical shape of the poem and diminishes the role of idleness within the scheme.

Every structure made up of interpretative surfaces that our narrators stumble across, both in the *Rose* and in Machaut's *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse*, makes something of anticipatory images that indicate but perhaps also dissemble what is to come next in the allegorical narrative. Narratologically, these images are proleptic, actively shaping and directing our narrators and readers of poems, and hinting (or stating clearly) where and how the text will progress. Both the garden wall and the crystal-containing water in the Fountain of Narcissus in the *Rose* perform this function through the reflection and projection of images on their complicated surfaces: the wall's allegorical images represent those qualities that are anathema to love and unwelcome in the garden, and the narrator is only permitted to move between spaces once he has understood and avoided the dangers that would have made his exclusion final. The narrator can proceed, in due course, towards the rose, but the flower itself is only revealed to him through the reflection in the fountain, which itself present a potential pitfall. Both hurdles reveal as much as they conceal. In Guillaume de Machaut's *Fonteinne Amoureuse*, the garden wall and fountain of the *Rose* are artistically refashioned into a single garden ornament, at once streamlining and adding a further layer of complexity to the allegorical design of the earlier poem. By recutting and soldering the various boundaries together in an innovative manner and by changing the way the interpretative surfaces work,

Machaut reflects upon many of the themes prevalent in the *Rose* without simply replicating the earlier work. The narrative device of the boundary decorated with proleptic images is now linked with the very gateway into the visions of the dream world, and it is the watery element itself that by appealing to other senses than sight alone proves itself capable of leading the poet and his companion deep under the influence of the artistic representation, which can take on a new life in their own imaginative extrapolation from the initial visual prompt. The crossing of the boundary is therefore a full body experience, not just involving the organ of sight, though it leads the way; the powerful and beautifully worked image reasserts itself, actively moulding and populating the dreamer's dream.

### 2.7. The Fountain Foreshadowed: Oiseuse's Round Mirror and the Importance of Ivory

Guillaume de Machaut emphasises the connection between the fountain and sleep, and his poetic construct comes closer in certain respects to the garden wall than the fountain of the *Rose*. In the *Rose*, these two structures are not entirely separate from each other, and one of the things that links them together is the mirror carried by Oiseuse, who slips quietly away from the narrative at the end of the *carole*, taking no obvious part in the fountain episode. She leaves the narrator to be stalked, alone, by the predatory god of love, who is bedecked in flowers and birds. From this point, the god of love takes the place of Oiseuse, whose own association with birds has been emphasised. Representations of mirrors have been explored in the previous chapter in connection with manuscripts produced by the Fauvel master. It is necessary now to return to the mirror in connection with the fountain, and without setting the codex

aside altogether, to look beyond the manuscript page towards actual ivory mirror cases that feature representations of fountains. The step here is in one sense simply a substitution of surface and mode of representation, but the material context has changed and in a sense gained in significance because, as I have shown, ivory is itself deeply implicated in the symbolic and physical constitution of literary fountains like Machaut's.



Fig. 2.10. Oiseuse and her mirror, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1380. Oxford,

Bodleian Library, MS E Museo 65, fol.7r.

In the opening of Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, as we have seen, the lover is let into the garden by the figure of Oiseuse, whose name puns simultaneously on the word Guillaume uses for door, 'uis' (l.632), and on 'oissiaus' – the animal most renowned for its unique ability to cross human boundaries, disregarding obstacles, barriers and borders that are for the poet and the lover in particular sometimes impossible to traverse.

Manuscript miniatures representing the opening of the *Roman de la Rose* frequently depict Oiseuse holding a key to make really clear her role as gatekeeper within the allegory, and she is sometimes even shown inserting it into the door of the garden, though no such object is actually mentioned in Guillaume's poem – indeed the door which initially bars access turns out to be a relatively humble and even permeable wicket ('guichet' l.524) rather than something more threateningly fortified as we might at first have been led to expect given the strength and grandeur of the wall, and the lady, we find, actually requires no further accessory to assist her in unlocking it. She simply pushes it open. Still, Oiseuse's appearance with a key in the context of manuscript illumination picks up on an episode that follows later in the poem, when the god of love produces just such a key and with it 'locks' the heart of the Amant. As we have already seen, Oiseuse is sometimes represented with other paraphernalia symbolic of her role within the dream narrative and its allegorical structure, her hands occupied either with a comb or a mirror, and in rarer cases both. In the poem itself she holds a mirror that is not only a sign of leisure – true to her name and allegorical function, she spends her time tending to her appearance – but also in symbolic terms a miniature portal through which the lover must pass. It is this

mirror, as much as any door, gate, or wicket, which marks and makes possible the lover's entrance into the garden of Dedit (or Diversion), and into the doubly reflective state necessary for love. At the same time, this mirror foreshadows, or rather prefigures, another reflective surface – that of the Fountain of Narcissus – which has a closely related function as well as form within Guillaume's highly self-aware and tightly structured poetic scheme. The mirrored surface has a special place within the *Rose*, as we have seen, but also within other more or less literary gardens of the medieval period, so strongly influenced by it and always in dialogue with it. C. Jean Campbell has fittingly observed in a different, though not unrelated, context, that it is 'in the realm of *diversion*' that 'the art of the ivory carvers finds a home' (1995: 18 – emphasis mine); this was an art that was particularly employed on mirror cases, after all.

The miniature above comes from one of the many manuscripts in which Oiseuse's mirror, often taken merely as a symbol of vanity, is given particular prominence – indeed, she holds no key here; her left hand clutches a comb that is being put to use even as she stands conversing with the narrator. At the same time, it is in this illumination the mirror which fulfils the function of the wall – presenting as it does a simulacrum of its owner – whereas the garden wall itself, which in the poem and in most illustrated versions is richly decorated with representational images, is bare. That the images on the garden wall were elsewhere represented precisely as circular portals or even mirrors is shown in several manuscripts where a series of faces peep out of round frames within a decorative border, making up a device generally referred to as an *encadrement à médaillons*, though the name rather obscures the resemblance between these decorative devices and the handheld mirror. We have already explored some manuscripts which make use of this type of

marginal border, of which important examples can be found in a range of mid-fourteenth-century manuscripts.

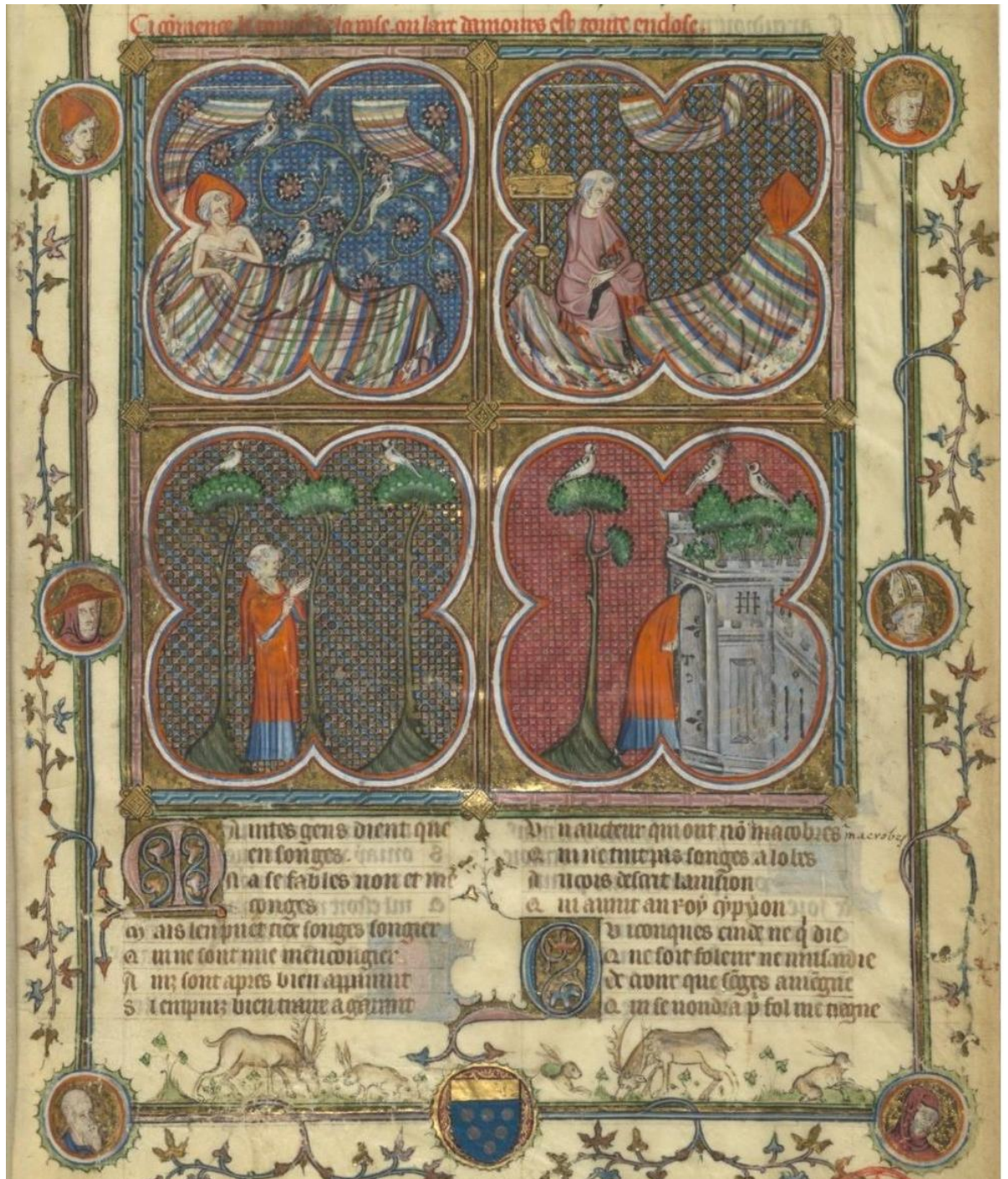


Fig. 2.11. L'encadrement à médaillons, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1352. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 1565, f.1r.



Fig. 2.12. A frame of medallions, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c.1350. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, W.143, f.1r.

Though normally interpreted as ‘medallions’, there is a striking similarity between these round openings and the way in which ivory mirrors are typically represented in manuscript illumination, as simplified objects of circular form without corner

terminals, such as is seen in the hand of Oiseuse in the illustration above from the Bodleian Library's MS E Museo 65, or in many of the miniatures from the Français 146 manuscript of the *Roman de Fauvel*, in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. In this last manuscript, the name manuscript of the so-called Fauvel master, who was, as we have already seen, particularly fond of representing mirrors, these objects are represented as encased circular discs backed with ivory which rhyme in form with the rounded arches that make up the architectural frames of the miniatures, suggesting a connection between windows and mirrored surfaces.



Fig. 2.13. Arches and mirrors, *Le Roman de Fauvel*, Paris, c.1320. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 146, f.12r.



Fig. 2.14. The circular form, *Le Roman de Fauvel*, Paris, c.1320. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 146, f.12v.



Fig. 2.15. Ladies, arches, and mirrors, *Le Roman de Fauvel*, Paris, c.1320. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 146, f.12v.

Setting aside the mirror itself just for a moment, we may note that Michael Camille has seen a wider connection between the circle and the *topos* of the ‘garden enclosed’ (1998: 75) that so often takes that form in medieval iconography. The circle, even when broken into smaller lobes or arches, is indeed a form which ripples across medieval art and culture, carrying connotations of reflection, expansiveness, and inclusion, as well as enclosure, entrapment, and hemming in, positive and negative associations which can seem inseparable from each other and as alternative sides of a single form. In the context of mirrors and the richly ornamented ivory cases in which they were commonly held, the circle is also imbued with significance of a self-reflexive kind, since these artefacts are in a sense already innately associated both with the beauty of surfaces, heavily worked or smooth, and with the

crossing of boundaries, between one dimension and another, or between giver and receiver, since this seems to have been an important aspect of their wider function and use. The self-aware play with multiple dimensions and contrasting textures would have been more complex than is immediately apparent from many of the surviving ivory panels that served as part of a mirror case, now separated from their partners and the all important looking glass itself – which, however, would have been of polished metal. These were boxes as well as examples of small-scale relief sculpture, designed to be opened and closed, and capable of showing or screening from view. Campbell's suggestion that '[w]hat may be gained from a consideration of the art of Gothic Ivory carving is an appreciation of its lively discourse on the limits of art, related specifically to the imaginative products of courtly culture' (1995: 11), is a perceptive one. It is precisely at the 'limits of art' – those boundaries where one art seems to encroach upon another, even straining the possibilities associated with each medium's proper channel of expression – that we often encounter either comprehension or incomprehension, at least in romance literature where the highly worked artefact or structure often serves an important narrative function; at the same time, these *limites* or *limina artis* frequently present access points or entrances through which multiple art forms can come together and interpret one another, and nowhere are these limits more clearly explored than when the enclosed garden setting – a site common to manuscript and ivory – is implicated, bringing the complex relationship between nature and artistic creation to the foreground.

If illuminators and ivory carvers often seem to mirror or reflect one another when dealing with such settings, this is not a simple coincidence, but rather a sign that the art forms were in fact closely connected. One case where the connection

between workshops dealing with different materials but similar iconography seems particularly clear was explored in an important 1989 article by Richard H. Randall Jr., who, drawing attention to numerous similarities between one and the other, proposed a shared origin for a group of nine extant ivories and certain mid-fourteenth-century manuscripts. Chief among these is the famous codex containing Guillaume de Machaut's works that was produced for Bonne of Luxembourg during the 1340s, which is now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Français 1586). This is believed to be the earliest Machaut manuscript, and one whose production was overseen by the author himself. This sumptuously crafted codex was passed on after Bonne's death in 1349 to her son, the future King Charles V. A key part of Randall's argument rested on similarities in the treatment of the garden settings in which the figures appear, whether painted or carved (1989: 30). More recently, a number of stylistic similarities between the same manuscript and a fragmentary *aumônière*, or alms pouch, probably made in Paris between 1340 and 1350 and now preserved in the Musée de Cluny, have been noticed, suggesting an even closer relationship between an even wider range of different craft industries practised in Paris during the mid-fourteenth century for an elite and cultured audience.<sup>61</sup>

That ivories were produced to appeal to an audience familiar with romance manuscripts is confirmed by a slightly later but fascinating record concerning another of Bonne's most prominent sons, Jean, Duc de Berry, whose fame now surpasses even that of Charles, his brother, and who also, we must note, inherited from his mother the service of none other than Guillaume de Machaut:<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Musée de Cluny, Cl. 13533 a-d. The pouch survives in four pieces, of linen canvas, worked with coloured silk and gold and silver thread; the iconography is mysterious, but evidently involves a dream vision: see Huchard 2001: *passim*; also summarised in Descatoire 2019: 63 cat. 34.

<sup>62</sup> After Machaut's long service under John of Bohemia, he was shared among John's family, serving his daughter Bonne, her sons, Charles V and Jean de Berry, as well as Charles II of Navarre (married to Bonne's daughter Joan), and Yolande of Flanders (married to Philip of Navarre, brother of Charles

A Jehan Cyme, de Paris, pour un bel miroer d'ivoire, garni de deuz pignes de boès, pour un estuy de cuir bouilly à tenir ledit mirouer et pignes, pour six palettes d'ivoire et de boès pour tenir chandelle de bougie à lire romanz, que Monseigneur meisme prist et achapta de lui a Paris, le 4<sup>e</sup> jour de fevrier 1378; pour tout 9 liv. t.

This entry comes from one of the inventories of Jean de Berry's collection, which were compiled in 1401-2, 1413, and after his death in 1416 (Guiffrey 1894-6: 2. 327). Jean de Berry was a returning customer, having already purchased from this Jehan Cyme, who is documented between 1371 and 1378, and described in accounts as a 'mercier et bourgeois de Paris', various board games and chess sets, mostly in cypress wood (Guiffrey 1894-6: 2. 325, 333); Cyme evidently made and sold articles in diverse materials, including vanity sets in bone and ivory, wrapped in specially prepared leather cases, such as that described above. Koechlin regarded Cyme as an ivory cutter as well as a shopkeeper (Koechlin 1924: 1. 362). The record here indicates, however, that he has also sold at least one manuscript to Jean de Berry, who, for his part, was intending to use the objects together rather than for disparate purposes. This highly significant statement, made so casually in the account, suggests rather more than a simple familiarity with romance literature on the part of those who sold and collected carved ivories, and indicates quite overtly that manuscripts containing romances and ivories inspired by them were brought together to be read and interpreted in company with each other, the reader straddling the boundary between the two interconnected art forms and enhancing the experience of

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II). Andrew Wathey has recently discovered documents proving that Machault served, along with his brother Jean, for a relatively brief period under Yolande of Flanders, Countess of Bar, in between his service to Bonne and Charles of Navarre. Machault was already in the service of Yolande in May 1349 (four months before Bonne's death), and must, according to Wathey, have entered Charles' service in the summer of 1353 or later. Yolande was married, that year, to Charles' brother, Philip of Navarre. For a summary of these discoveries see Earp 2021: 48-9.

each through an implied comparison and association between both kinds of ‘imaginative product’.

## 2.8. The Face in the Fountain: The Orchard Rendezvous on Fourteenth-Century Ivory Mirror Cases, Part One

Interpretative boundaries or surfaces, both reflective and representational, are often the focal point in a certain class of artefact influenced by romance literature, as indeed they are within the romances themselves. There are three extant examples of fourteenth-century Parisian ivory mirror cases decorated with the famous ‘orchard rendezvous’ or ‘tryst beneath the tree’ of Tristan and Iseult, a scene that was, for workers in ivory especially, more popular by far than any other episode from the related legend which might have appealed to artists,<sup>63</sup> and the reason is perhaps not entirely difficult to detect. These objects not only explore the limits of artistic representation in an exceptionally playful manner, but also seek to represent the (not always successful) processes of interpreting and of seeking to gain knowledge.

The scene, traditionally set in a garden or orchard, depicts the two tragic lovers attempting a clandestine tryst. Typically, the lovers stand by a fountain,

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<sup>63</sup> The legend of Tristan and Iseult has been tentatively assigned to two other mirror cases – one in Antwerp, in the collection of the Museum Mayer van den Bergh, and the other in the Musée de Cluny. The first depicts an enclosed garden in which two lovers are shown meeting under a tree. There is some scholarly debate as to whether the figure hiding in the tree is King Marc, which would make this a depiction of the orchard rendezvous scene, or whether it is in fact the god of love: see Lam (2011: 302) for a detailed discussion. Due to the absence entirely of the fountain, and therefore of the reflected face, as well as the crowning action of the figure in the tree, it seems unlikely that this mirror back was intended as an illustration of Tristan and Iseult even if some later prose versions of the romance did describe the lovers looking up into the tree and seeing King Marc directly – without the help of any reflective surface. The second mirror back has been identified by Koechlin, Williamson, and others as representing the forest meeting of Iseult, Tristan, and the hermit Ogrin and it is currently catalogued as such by the Musée de Cluny. Michael Camille makes some convincing arguments against this attribution, suggesting that it shows the ‘churl Resistance and the lovers’ and that it is closer to the character of Dangier or Resistance in the *Roman de la Rose* (1998: 131). Even if it is a depiction of Tristan and Iseult, which as Lam notes, does seem less probable given the lack of any crown on the lady’s head (2011: 302), it would represent a different scene from the romances and would therefore fall outside of the scope of the current discussion. Lam only includes two of the three mirror cases in his 2011 article, despite the fact that the Hamburg example is referenced in Koechlin (1924: 393).

shaded by a tree – normally a pine, the tree most associated with love – in which Iseult’s jealous husband, King Marc, has concealed himself. The King pushes aside the branches before his face to facilitate his peeping at the couple below, but in so doing blows his cover – Iseult catches sight of her husband’s reflection in the fountain and subtly indicates the presence of an eavesdropper to Tristan, allowing the two, through dissemblance, to assuage the King’s fears, evade capture, and turn the King’s attempt at entrapment on its head: the spy is spied on, the watcher watched. Because of the popularity of this episode for artists, it has frequently been characterised as an emblem for the whole romance (see, for example, Walworth 1995: 258; 279), in an interpretation that fails to account for the self-reflexive sophistication implicit in many visual treatments, which should not be understood as solely reliant upon textual sources or as attempts to summarise them. Despite the work done by scholars such as Frühmorgen-Voss (1973), Walworth (1995), and Stones (1987) to advocate a more nuanced approach, there has been a persistent tendency to revert to a narrow understanding of the relationship between visual and textual treatments of a scene in which the latter are given primacy and the former seen as straightforwardly illustrative, despite the fact that confident identification of any specific source text is so often impossible. Tellingly, Élisabeth Antoine (in Morrison and Hedeman 2010: 292) has noted some ‘iconographic slippage or “contamination”’ within visual representations of this trysting episode, wherein the lovers might sometimes be conflated with other couples – especially Adam and Eve – known for pausing under a tree, a phenomenon that she suggests was almost unconsciously achieved (‘out of instinct or because it was easy’, she posits). I would argue instead such merging of iconographies was in some cases deliberate and meaningful. If Adam and Eve sometimes enter as intruders into the orchard where

Tristan and Iseult hold their spied-on conference, the reverse also takes place, with the lovers of romance wandering into the garden of Eden, or indeed, into the gardens of other romances. There is an early fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Rose*, too, probably of Parisian manufacture (MS M.245, c. 1405, now in the Morgan Library) where the Fountain of Narcissus becomes (fol. 11r.) – without textual authority – the site of a somewhat passionate tryst.<sup>64</sup> King Marc appears there as well – an impostor twice-over – in the pine tree and the reflective water. He is shown as seemingly more concerned with his own appearance than the extramarital goings-on just nearby. The iconography is not entirely conventional in this case, in part because Tristan and Iseult are normally shown keeping a judicious and dissembling distance from each other: the miniature deliberately rearranges the inherited elements to complicate the *exemplum* offered in the poem further. A little scroll to the side of the miniature identifies the couple as Narcissus (an unwilling participant) and his (keener) ‘amie’. Narcissus’ interaction with the perilous fountain is transferred to King Marc, allowing the illuminator to depict a moment of pursuit and rejection as well as reflection.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> This specific example of ‘contamination’ is discussed by Jacqueline Thibault-Schaefer in her 2005 essay on the relationship between secular ‘tryst’ and biblical ‘temptation’ iconography (139-48).

<sup>65</sup> MS M.245 (Morgan Library) was acquired by William Morris at some point after 1865 and was sold on by him in 1876. Between 1866 and 1870, Morris was at work on *The Earthly Paradise*, and in ‘The Doom of King Acrisius’ he invented a fountain scene involving Perseus, Andromeda, and the head of Medusa that is unrelated to previous versions of the myth. Through Burne-Jones’ multiple illustrations of this episode (1875-1887), the King Marc motif would very belatedly come to ‘contaminate’ the Perseus myth.



Fig. 2.16. King Marc in the Rose, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1405, New York, The Morgan Library and Museum, MS M. 245, f. 11r.

Still, the mixing of numerous versions of the Tristan and Iseult narrative even without ‘contamination’ by foreign bodies or religious overtones unfitted to it may be expected, and a certain amount of freedom must be accorded to artists and craftsmen engaging with the story without imputation of ignorance or laziness on their part. Correspondences between text and image evidently allowed each to aid

the interpretation of the other. Lam has rightly suggested that the works of ivory carvers ‘témoignent plutôt d’une appropriation et d’une interprétation de l’épisode littéraire’ (2011: 305). These objects do mirror the literary sources, but there should be no surprise if any given image representing Tristan and Iseult does not correspond with the text of Bérroul, for instance, word for word, and it should be acknowledged – especially given the presence of similar fountains under tall trees in other places – that at any one moment such an image may contain reflections or resonances of many different romances.

The mirroring incident that forms the core of the ‘orchard rendezvous’ scene also involves a common metaphor for intertextuality, and the fact that an image reflected in the centrally placed fountain forms the focal point of the scene depicted on the objects in question demonstrates an impressive insight on the part of the carvers, who were evidently capable of exploiting that metaphor. Natanson has fittingly described the carving of gothic ivories as an art specifically ‘of the imagination’ (1951: 12). Accordingly, the fountain, with its rich history as a metaphorical source of poetic and indeed artistic inspiration, occurs as a distinctly playful and self-reflexive way for an artist to explore a contrast between those familiar themes of concealment and revelation, and to express ideas about the connections between one art form and another in an imaginative manner that exploits fully the unique possibilities of the medium and creates a stimulating dialogue between form and function. The focus in the scene on reflection, interpreting, (mis)understanding, and artifice make it a peculiarly apt choice to accompany and even adorn an actual mirror, where the boundary between truth and falsehood has traditionally been blurred. That the object’s function has, in these instances, so little influenced the scholarly understanding of the scene is remarkable.



Fig. 2.17. Orchard Rendezvous. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, One half of a mirror case, Ivory, (Paris, fourteenth century).

The first of these three mirror cases, now in the collection of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, is so explicitly concerned with the act of looking (and the experience of being watched), that it is clear that the object's function as a mirror provides the interpretative key to an understanding of the object as a whole.

Four hybrid beasts here constitute the corner terminals of the mirror, excluded from the interior space, presenting a contrast with the civilised scene presented within the enclosed garden and emphasise the symbolic role of the encircling boundary – access is not intended for all. Two borders enclose the central scene – the outer circular rim of the mirror and a lobed octofoil frame just inside it. It is common enough in gothic art to find architectural forms taking on an anthropomorphic shape, but here the eight interested faces which fill the cusps between the leaves of the octofoil both mirror the scene within and interact closely with it, appearing to be simultaneously captured in their confining frames – not unlike King Marc himself – and also captivated by the latter’s apparent conversion into one of them. In their repetitively voyeuristic mimicry of the King’s ham-fisted intrusion on the tryst, they do not only intensify his presence, but also emphasises the replication of his face in the fountain and therefore the theme of imitative representation. The scene itself is unusually crowded as Tristan and Iseult are joined by companions and their pets. Precisely what contribution these figures make to the general understanding or misunderstanding is unclear – are they in on the secret? Indeed, has the adultery between Tristan and Iseult been kept from anyone but the King? Either way, they add to the number of mute observers, and if King Marc’s reflection and the hybrid beasts are counted, this ivory includes no fewer than twenty-two pairs of eyes. The mirror affixed to the reverse of this ivory would, of course, have provided a space for the expansion of this total.

King Marc is not as well concealed as any of the faces that peep out between the leaves of the octofoil: instead, he is shown pushing away the dense covering of branches – his crowned head and shoulders are clearly visible to the viewer as he pops up out of the crown of the centrally placed tree. Here a certain ‘contamination’

has been detected, because his pose is a direct imitation of one normally given to the god of love, who is so often depicted perched atop a tree, holding his bow and arrows and ready to fire them at any passing couple below. The presence of the winged deity in the branches would certainly be a more welcome sight to the lovers. Lydia Yaitsky Kertz has also noticed this iconographical parallel, and, disagreeing with what she regards as a ‘negative’ reading of the composition type offered by Michael Curschmann, who has suggested that a similarity with the iconography associated with Adam and Eve lends it a certain ambiguity,<sup>66</sup> argues instead that the composition type has ‘entirely positive’ connotations in the most obvious parallels, which are the many artistic depictions of the god of love in manuscripts of the *Rose* (2014: 136). Whilst accepting similarities with other iconographical traditions, Yaitsky Kertz elects not to pursue those connections further. Other scholars have sought to complicate interpretations of this type of composition by pointing out yet other connotations whilst avoiding the question of facilely ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ readings, and key to this has been a more sensitive recognition of the overtly humorous nature of these borrowings. Walworth (1995: 283) and Williamson (2018: 579) both propose that part of the scene’s appeal lies precisely in what might be regarded as its almost inappropriate reuse of conventional motifs derived from multiple sources.

The blending of iconographical traditions may be seen as pointing to the similarities between various stories and serving as a commentary on these perceived connections. This is particularly apparent in the ivory carvings that make up the surfaces of the boxes that have become known as ‘composite caskets’,<sup>67</sup> eight of which survive in various collections, and all of which make use of the ‘orchard

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<sup>66</sup> On this point cf. Antoine, in Hedeman and Morrison 2010: 292.

<sup>67</sup> This term was first coined by Koechlin to describe caskets carved with episodes from many different romances.

rendezvous'. The composite caskets not only present an eclectic jumble of episodes derived from diverse romances, but also joyfully borrow elements from one story for the illustration of another, the composite caskets often consisting of scenes that are themselves in some sense composite. While the compositional devices might not always be completely similar, we do sometimes find, for instance, Alexander in a tree watching Aristotle and Phyllis, rather than peeping over a wall as normal, and it is also common to find Thisbe hiding from the lion in the branches of an overhanging tree, both narratives having been shaped by contact with the meeting between Tristan and Iseult. In the 'orchard rendezvous' itself, both Walworth and Williamson see King Marc's pose primarily as a rather grotesque parody of that associated with the god of love, and the correspondence between the two figures is particularly apparent on the mirror case in Hamburg. King Marc sits most uneasily in the god of love's arboreal throne, suggesting that love triumphs over jealousy. As multiple narratives come together on objects like this, the scenes inform one another, with elements crossing over to form a dense web of visual citation and transformation.

Kenneth Tiller observes that 'scenes with wells and fountains in Tristan literary narratives serve as interpretative sites where characters either learn a truth or fail to do so.'<sup>68</sup> In this respect Tristan narratives have a share in something that is prevalent in romance literature more broadly, including the *Roman de la Rose*, where the Fountain of Narcissus offers what is really the archetypal construct of this kind. Although Tiller is thinking of literary treatments of the theme, his idea is nowhere more relevant than in the context of the present discussion concerning the appearance of the 'orchard rendezvous' on ivory mirror cases. Here, more than

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<sup>68</sup> From a paper at the 23rd Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society (July 2011), 'Reading like a Knight in Malory's Book of Sir Tristram', cited in Lydia Yaitzky Kertz 2014:136.

anywhere else, the fountain's operation as an interpretative portal through which accurate comprehension is simultaneously reached and not reached is encapsulated on the closely connected surfaces of an object that itself mimics the fountain, not only through artistic representation, but through its analogous shape and function. Mirrors can, of course, carry ostensibly contradictory connotations at once of both truth and falsehood. Their capacity – both to lead and to mislead, to replicate and to distort, to reveal and to deflect – was well understood by ivory carvers with a keen sense of irony and a fondness for inversion as well as reflection in their reuse of iconographical types.

The fountain represented on the Hamburg mirror case – as on other extant examples – is manifestly an interpretative site through which the protagonists, Tristan and Iseult, are able to learn a truth, whilst the intruder who has set out to uncover some unpleasant facts fails to do so. Whilst the protagonists learn of the intruder's presence early enough to modify both their behaviour and speech as a direct result of the image in the fountain, King Marc fails, and fails almost impressively in the same moment, to realise that he has been spotted and outwitted, though his deception necessarily comes at a removal from the fountain itself, which can only be said to confound the King through the mediating recognition and dissimulation of the lovers. Yaitsky Kertz points out that in portraying this moment the carver of an ivory casket connects 'sight to intellectual prowess' (2014: 136).<sup>69</sup> The moment captured is indeed one of simultaneous interpreting and misinterpreting of visual signs – whilst King Marc's suspicions are unceremoniously revealed, he unwittingly allows the two protagonists to conceal their adultery by his failure not only to interpret their actions correctly but also by his failure to notice his own

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<sup>69</sup> She refers specifically to a casket in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

reflection. There is, in effect, some play respectively with both the receptive and perceptive abilities of the three characters that highlights an important irony that pervades the scene: a light is figuratively cast on the jealous intentions of the former, whilst the amorous nature of Tristan and Iseult's relationship is further obscured. Crucially, however, there is a mirrorlike and almost chiasmic inversion taking place in the scene: the lovers are able to keep their deeds in darkness precisely as a result of their enlightenment, whereas the comparatively floodlit King is left in the dark.

Raymond Koechlin, widely recognised as the 'patriarch of ivory scholarship', lamented in his seminal three volume work on French Gothic ivories that there is 'rien plus lourdaud que la scene de la Fontaine au Vatican' (Koechlin 1924: 393; see also Cutler 2016: 1130). Despite the clumsy execution, however, the design remains legible and easy to interpret, especially in its treatment of the conversation of the two lovers, itself a show of interpreting through easily legible gestures. The idea of communication is transmitted to the viewer by a pair of visual indicators that form almost as much of a (double) focal point within the composition as the similarly duplicated image of the King that occupies its vertical axis. In the Vatican example perhaps more than any other, Tristan and Iseult's clandestine dialogue with each other is given primary importance by the increased size of the lovers within the frame, whilst King Marc himself, both the real one and the reflection, are squeezed to a most uncomfortable compactness within the design. The lovers' gestures of shared recognition and understanding form in many respects the dominant feature of this mirror case, their shared act of interpretation rendered with almost triumphant clarity. Marc's misunderstanding, however, is also given emphasis, even if clumsily depicted by the carver, by the unusual detail of his having lost his footing as well as his cover. This actually brings us rather close to one of the high points of dramatic

irony in Bérout's version of the story, where King Marc admits – after the fact – to having been so moved by Tristan's (seemingly) honourable words down below that he had almost lost his perch in the pine: 'Qant j'oïe a Tristran retraire / La batalle que li fis faire, / Pitié en oi, petit falli / Que de l'arbre jus me chaï' (ll. 479-83). This would be a very tidy point of contact between text and image, but the suggestion on the mirror case of not particularly kingly or dignified ungainliness also gives the impression that the furtive Marc has truly bungled what ought to have been a stealthily executed operation, and if the carving itself lacks grace this may even be seen as aiding in the expressive transparency of the representation. Here there is, one might observe, *rien plus lourdaud que Marc*.



Fig. 2.18. Orchard Rendezvous, Vatican Museum, Vatican City. One half of a mirror case, Ivory, (Paris, fourteenth century).

Crucially, on the mirrors which depict the orchard scene, the ‘interpretative site’ that has the fountain at its centre is not enclosed by the basin of the fountain itself, but extends in a broader circle to include almost the entirety of the surviving artefact. With these mirror cases, however, the simultaneous exercise of interpretation or misinterpretation of an image does not, of course, end even at the boundaries of the object itself: in a single artefact a representation of the orchard tryst is brought into close contact with a reflection of the object’s owner, who is consequently invited, by the close interrelation of the various parts of the mirror case

and its contents, to reflect on the themes depicted in the context of his or her own life.

### 2.9. Misunderstanding the Image: The Fountain as Interpretative Site

As I have suggested above, Tiller's important observation concerning fountains in the Tristan literature troubles the surface of a much more substantial ekphrastic tradition in which individuals fail – partially or completely – to interpret an image correctly. For the purposes of this tradition, reflections and artistic representations, which are similarly imitative, sometimes possess an implied or even explicit equivalence. One of the most prominent examples lies in the *Roman de la Rose*, when the dreaming Amant catches sight of the rose reflected in the Fountain of Narcissus, whose story is also recounted but refashioned to suit the context of the new work. Other artefactual surfaces often provoke this kind of response from protagonists in romance literature. Indeed an early and famous example, in some ways a prototype for many similar moments in medieval romances, occurs in Book One of Virgil's *Aeneid*, when the protagonist, Aeneas, misinterprets a frieze on the temple of Juno in Carthage that represents events from the Trojan War that are for him all too familiar. Aeneas, weeping, sees in the 'pictura [...] inani' signs of Carthaginian empathy for him and his people, without realising that the very goddess to whom the temple is dedicated has sought his destruction, making the building as a whole a site of unrecognised hostility. Upon catching sight of the monument he famously exclaims the phrase 'sunt lacrimae rerum', indicating what turns out to be on his part a false sense of security in this place (*Aen.* 1. 462).

Ovid's Narcissus, of course, whilst several leagues away from the soldierly Aeneas, must be regarded as the archetypal boy who misunderstands an image,

subsequently meeting his doom largely because of his imperfect understanding of the difference between reality and reflection. Other noteworthy examples occur in the twelfth-century tale of *Floire et Blancheflor*, discussed above, which contains many richly worked artefacts whose two-dimensional surfaces are somehow double, leading to misunderstanding. The monumental memorial tomb of Blancheflor has already been cited above, but another such object comes later on in the narrative in the form of an ancient and elaborately worked lidded golden cup, once again decorated with scenes taken from the Trojan War, which is so often implicated in these moments of miscomprehension and false impressions. The famous Trojan horse seems to hang over the whole cycle of stories associated with the city of Troy, even if it is not mentioned directly, extending the themes of false appearances and potentially disastrous misunderstanding that is so concretely embodied over anything connected with it. We may think back to Machaut's (later) 'Fonteinne Amoureuse', which is also ornamented with episodes derived from the same ancient conflict. Again, in *Floire et Blancheflor*, the artefact in question is said to be, mysteriously, just as old as the events depicted on its surfaces, representing through strange artistry the very events through which it has passed, as though images of antique personages and events are an actual proof of antiquity.<sup>70</sup> Importantly, in the long ekphrasis devoted to this cup, it is given an impressive but anecdotal provenance stretching back to Aeneas himself (ll. 435-504).

Like Aeneas, and a little like the narrator of the *Rose*, who must dodge Narcissus' fate, Floire struggles, at least at first, to interpret the images on the cup, which in a sense are there to aid him. As little as the passage of time during a meal

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<sup>70</sup> Hubert (1966: 18) comments flatly of one of the artefacts in *Floire et Blancheflor* that it 'is fascinating, for all the strain it puts on our credulity.' Of the cup in particular he points out that '[w]e are not told how he [Aeneas] managed to get it completed in time.' This impossibility is a recurring and self-conscious feature of such ekphrastic constructions.

hampers his ability to interpret, but significantly, Floire finds the pictures on the cup easier to comprehend than any of the other ekphrastic artefacts that the poet treats in similarly comprehensive detail, such as the aforementioned tomb, which produces only despair in the young protagonist. Filled as it is with clear wine which points forwards in the narrative to the clear stream that runs in the Emir of Babylon's garden, the cup is compared, crucially, to a 'fontaine' (ll. 435-504), linking it with larger fountains in other romances that perform a comparable function within their narrative contexts. Cup and fountain are made similar, just as fountain and mirror are in the *Rose*. Again, we may think of Guillaume de Machaut's later Fonteinne Amoureuse, made of diverse but precious materials like ivory and enamel that might be thought more at home as a table ornament than as a piece of garden architecture, however splendid.

As in other cases, this elegant simile that turns the cup momentarily into a fountain signals a turning point in Floire's state of mind: the object prompts contemplation of an unprecedentedly productive kind, and the protagonist suddenly sees clearly, taking inspiration from the representations of Paris and Helen which (as with Machaut's Fonteinne) encircle the cup, and discovering in the object's ornamentation a sort of mirror of his own situation that allows him to reflect more positively on his quest. In a sense, it behaves just as Aeneas' empty images do, by giving hope to the poor, confused hero, although the positive result is not in this case so illusory. The clarity it produces is real clarity. The cup is as much an 'interpretative site' within the context in which it appears as are the fountains within *Tristan* narratives, associated as it is with reflection of both kinds, and even resembling in miniature a structure of that sort. Instead, however, of crediting the cup's reflective contents with Floire's perceptual breakthrough, and exploiting the

allegorical potential of the protagonist finding an incentive in his drink, however clear it might be, the poet makes the vessel itself and the mimetic, moralising images on it the source of fresh perspectives and new understanding. Reflectiveness, then, can come about through artistry as well as natural phenomena.

#### 2.10. A Crystal Cup: The Fountain in Miniature

The perceived similarity between cups and fountains did not remain a poetic conceit only but found expression in the work of actual craftsmen during the fourteenth century, when tableware consciously borrowed many of its forms from architecture, looking at the same time to romance literature and associated iconographical traditions for decorative motifs with which to enliven its gleaming surfaces and entertain elite audiences. Table fountains and similar centrepieces were frequently ornamented with familiar characters and episodes associated with secular literature, even when used by clerics. Ronald Lightbown noted in 1978 that in this class of object ‘Tristan and Yseult seem to have provided many of the scenes drawn from courtly romances’, although antique personages like those on the cup in *Floire et Blancheflor* were also used, as were other figures from Arthurian legend and alternative romance cycles, among them Charlemagne (Lightbown 1978: 71);<sup>71</sup> Lightbown was thinking especially of some of the extravagant tableware owned by Jean de Berry’s brother, Louis d’Anjou – described in detail in a contemporary (1365) inventory – that is known to have made particular use of the ‘orchard rendezvous’. It appeared, fittingly, on a table fountain, two covered cups in gilt

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<sup>71</sup> Lightbown cites a pair of gilt silver *thiphanies* – a kind of vase or *drageoir* used at Epiphany – that also appeared in Louis d’Anjou’s collection, one enamelled with male and female characters from the *Roman de Troie*, including Paris but perhaps not Helen, and the other with Charlemagne, King Arthur, Tristan and other ‘modern heroes of the cycles of romance’, all set in medallions ‘with rose-leaf borders’. Two more *thiphanies* bore labelled images of the Nine Worthies with some corresponding ladies thrown in for good measure (Lightbown 1978: 71-2).

silver, a gilt silver bowl, and, especially on an elaborate salt cellar – the ‘pelican salt’ – which united imagery suggesting self-sacrifice with an eclectic combination of architectural forms and natural motifs and materials derived from land and sea, with the pelican itself resting on an oak tree at the edge of a ‘pearl-shell cellar’, its own branches hung with pearls. The whole rested on a foot fashioned as another tree, with King Marc hiding in its canopy, while figurines of Tristan and Iseult appeared at its base along with an inlaid piece of crystal, ‘in the manner of a fountain’. In that fountain, we are told, the head of King Marc appeared (Laborde 1853: 2 no. 312; Morainvillé 1906: nos. 664, 763, 878, 882, 2364; Lightbown 1978: 58; see also Antoine in Morrison and Hedeman 2010, 292).

The pelican salt-cellar is, alas, not available to us except through description, but there is a surviving fourteenth-century cup, made in Avignon about 1330 and now in the Poldi Pezzoli collection in Milan, which also played with the iconography and implications of the ‘orchard rendezvous’ of Tristan and Iseult. Again, the tryst appears alongside numerous scenes derived from other sources, as is the case on the composite caskets in ivory, but it and the garden setting that is so integral a part of the iconography are given greater prominence than any of the other courtly motifs of exchange or combat engraved and enamelled on the cup’s base: it is the only episode to take up not one, but two of the eight webbed segments, the central tree wittily having been substituted for the champlevé boundary that separates each vignette from its neighbours. Even the lid of the cup alludes to the story, with a green chaplet inset with golden flowers encircling a raised section covered in fleeing rabbits and pursuing hounds that direct the eye around the central towerlike finial: this little architectural feature is topped, appropriately, with a pinecone ornament that stands, like the pine tree in the narrative, for love. Discussing the appearance

of Tristan and Iseult on this cup, Michael Camille suggested that the tryst was a 'perfect subject for a drinking vessel since it invokes the virtue of attentive moderation in pleasure'; imagining how the owner might have engaged with the imagery when the object was in use, he mused that 'as we lift the cup to examine the subject or to drink from it our own reflections shimmer in the mirror-like metal, suggesting that we too are eavesdropping on the glistening lovers' tryst below (1998: 44). The cup must actually have toyed even more playfully with the expectations and interpretative sympathies of anyone who used it, since it certainly exploited the unique qualities and symbolic connotations of the materials from which it was crafted in a sensitive and intelligent way. The cup itself, though held in a setting of gilt and enamelled silver, is of rock crystal, meaning that any shimmering reflections in the metal form a counterpoint to the wonderful transparency of the vessel itself, where nature, artfully worked, has provided the effect. Again, the clear but reflective water of the fountain below is inset in crystal, establishing a material connection with the cup as a whole, which contrasts the polished shine of its varied surfaces with transparency to heighten the themes of the episode depicted, enlarging upon its concern with seeing and failing to see, with concealment, dissimulation, openness and revelation. The concern with transparency as well as reflection is actually carried right across the richly ornamented surfaces of the cup's setting, since the *basse-taille* enamelling employed throughout is translucent rather than opaque, the finer engraved details in the worked metal directly visible only when left in reserve (or lost, as is the case in places), and otherwise seen only through the discrete pools of bright vitreous colour that give the object as a whole so much of its undiminished glow and glamour.



Fig. 2.19. So-called 'Tournament Cup' featuring the 'orchard rendezvous' scene. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Sala degli Ori, Milan. Cup, Gold, silver, rock crystal, and coloured enamel. 25cm, (Avignon, c.1330-50).



Fig. 2.20. Detail of the Orchard rendezvous scene. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Sala degli Ori, Milan. Cup, Gold, silver, rock crystal, and coloured enamel. 25cm, (Avignon, c.1330-50).

2.11. The Face in the Fountain: The Orchard Rendezvous on Fourteenth-Century Ivory Mirror Cases, Part Two

Camille's comments about the cup in Milan, and also the sophisticated way in which

its materials were employed, surpassing even his observations, make the fact that scholars have not yet fully explored the implications of the scene's appearance on ivory mirror cases all the more conspicuous, though transparency is of course not a quality that can obviously be associated with them. Ivory carvers had to achieve their intended results by other means. Julia Walworth's comment on the subject, that 'the importance of reflections for the narrative implied in the orchard scene may have added piquancy to the use of the motif on a mirror case' is representative (Walworth 2002: 283), closing the case, as it were, almost before it has been opened. The function of the object adds more than just spice to the interpretative broth.

The most important implications of the appearance of the 'orchard rendezvous' on mirror cases – artefacts expressly designed to enclose reflective surfaces – can best be considered in the light of the third ivory mirror back that tackles the subject. This example, once again the surviving half of a folding mirror case, now in the Musée de Cluny, may be regarded as the most openly self-reflexive of the surviving mirror cases that depict Tristan and Iseult at the fountain. Here, the owner or viewer is not only invited in a more obvious way than usual to play the role of King Marc, but is also made complicit in the object's exploration of the limits of art – an exploration in which the famously thin boundaries between reality and illusion; truth and falsehood; reflection and mimetic representation, are rendered at the same time permeable and disconcertingly solid.



Fig. 2.21. Orchard Rendezvous, Musée de Cluny, Paris, Mirror case, Ivory, (Paris, fourteenth century).

Among surviving examples, this ivory relief employs – to borrow a phrase used elsewhere by Martha Dana Rust (2007: 118) – perhaps the fullest ‘lexicon of graphic indicators’ possible to amplify the scene’s own focus on representation, and it does this in a markedly self-reflexive manner. However gauche the technique of the carver might, yet again, have been, the mirror case makes an extravagant show of

this self-reflexivity, carrying a lasting imprint of the designer's own raised eyebrow. Instead of four hybrid beasts such as those present on the Vatican example and found on many other extant mirror cases, this example is, like the Hamburg case, framed by foliate terminals which playfully reflect the garden setting of the scene depicted within. The terminals in both cases serve to give a compositional coherence to the design of the object as a whole, but also to establish a relationship between the scene as it is presented to the viewer and the view revealed to King Marc through the leaves which surround him: this too is a frame of sorts. Encircling the window itself through which the lovers and the eavesdropper may be seen is another frame or threshold composed of eight leaves – an octofoil – that mirrors the correspondingly octagonal fountain from whose contents King Marc's reflection appears to be a-leaping and a-peeping. There is in both cases an implied equation of the structure depicted (be it tree or fountain) and the object on which the depiction is carved. This playfulness with concentric frames and successive forms of mediation can only have been confirmed by the mirror itself inside: the possessor of the mirror, upon looking into it, would not only have been greeted with a view of him or herself, but also with an image that would have reflected and added another layer of interpretative gloss to the reverse of the object. To look into the mirror is to find oneself in the dubious (and duplicate) position of the King. That the mirror case is concerned with replication in more than one sense is amply demonstrated by the inherently interactive aspects of its design, and by the emphasis it places on its own accumulation of frames, perspectives, and different forms of representation, which, however, neither dilute nor weaken the semblance of reality.

On these ivory mirror cases – the Vatican and Cluny examples – the treatment of the reflection of King Marc is remarkable for the sculpturesque way in

which it breaks free of the notionally two-dimensional plane to which it properly belongs. His face is not overlaid on the surface of the water as is usual in painted depictions of this and indeed other scenes involving reflections, but it stands, especially for a mere semblance of reality, ostentatiously proud – an ivory carving within an ivory carving. Proving that more than the simple necessity of legibility lies beneath the surface of this extraordinary violation of the fountain’s otherwise impermeable boundary, the Hamburg case displays the alternative option, dispensing with the artificial fountain basin in favour of a flowing stream where the image of the king’s head tentatively appears – in relief, as necessary – but emphatically superficial and inseparable from the water. In both the Vatican and Cluny examples, the carver has sought to make the self-reflexive relationship between it and the artefact on which the scene appears as crystal clear as the King’s reflection by the inclusion of another *mise en abyme* in the fountain’s sculpturesque basin: in the latter case, this relationship is established through the octagonal form of the fountain; the bucket-like fountain on the Vatican mirror case is itself carved with a leonine spout that knowingly meets the viewer’s gaze as it spits forth a rushing volume of water – enough wash away any bobbing reflection, however concrete. In these two objects especially, artistic representation and reflection are brought together in a single interpretative site that simultaneously hems in and lets out, encloses and exposes. In the merging of these two forms of imitation, the fountain and the mirror allow each other to transcend their own limits, and simultaneously invite the viewer to enter, to observe, and to reflect.

2.12. Walls as Windows, Window as Water: The Orchard Rendezvous at the Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne

Depictions of the ‘orchard rendezvous’ episode are not only almost ubiquitous on ivory boxes or on mirror cases, as explored above, where the object and the scene depicted interpret and reflect one another in ever more playful and sophisticated ways, but it also appears in other contexts where the treatment is similarly witty and even mischievous, albeit in differing ways, according to the specific conditions imposed by the medium and intended function of the object in question. We have already encountered its treatment on the spectacular gilt and enamelled silver cup in Milan. This was made within the courtly context of the Avignon papacy, whose momentous contribution to the culture of the fictive garden would exercise a tremendous influence on subsequent representations of gardens within domestic settings in France and Italy. This context will form the subject of the final chapter, but one last, and particularly important representation of Tristan and Iseult at the fountain must be addressed beforehand, not least because the decorative context within which it appears has likewise been connected in several respects with Avignon, and with Pope Clement VI (Luyster 2012: 148, 169-70). This version of the rendezvous comes within a complex cycle of murals within a single room that nevertheless makes an exceptionally sophisticated use of the architectural structure on which the whole has been executed, that architecture even contributing itself to the illustration of the narrative and playful enlargement of its themes. These are themes that we have already seen being exploited and treated with humour in comparatively small-scale, hand-held objects. Here, some of those same phenomena appear again, but on a much grander scale, still retaining the experimental and almost subversive playfulness that characterises the episode when treated as part of a vanity set or luxurious item of tableware.

The room in question is in the Château de Saint-Floret in Auvergne, a

relatively small but fortified structure set above the Couze Pavin, several kilometres to the west of Issoire. Since the discovery of the paintings here in 1862, Saint-Floret has been credited with possession of the largest surviving mural cycle in France treating Arthurian subject matter (Allaire 2014: 215). Still, it has in general been little studied, with only a handful of scholars devoting serious attention to the paintings; the most important of these have been Roger Sherman Loomis and Laura Hibbard Loomis (Loomis and Loomis 1938), and more recently Amanda Luyster (Luyster 2012). Most discussion, as Luyster has observed, has focused intensely on the passages of text that form part of the painted ornamentation of the room (Luyster 2012: 150), but has so far failed to identify any single textual source for the whole ensemble: Luyster's (largely persuasive) solution, following that of the Loomises in many respects, is to see an origin for the cycle as a whole in the late thirteenth-century (1270-3) *Meliadus* of Rustichello da Pisa (also called Rusticiano), though a single important episode represented in the room – precisely that of the meeting at the fountain – is absent from surviving manuscripts of his text, which is a compilation in French of numerous accounts concerning not just Tristan, but, as the title indicates, his father Meliadus and other figures of the wider Arthurian landscape. Luyster proposes that the 'orchard rendezvous' has here been brought in from another source, perhaps the French prose tradition or a necessarily more intangible 'circulation in oral or visual media' (Luyster 2012: 154). Gloria Allaire, on the other hand, has suggested that Luyster 'insists overmuch on the prose *Tristan* as source' and cautioned that '[s]everal critical studies refer to [the 'orchard rendezvous'] and include photographs of it without mentioning Bérout' (Allaire 2014: 216). There can be no question, all the same, the Bérout was not the principal source, even if his version was known to the deviser of the decorative scheme. The

inscriptions themselves, which accompany the episodes depicted on the wall, are in fact no mere quotations from *Meliadus* or any other extant text concerning Tristan. What is clear is that the depiction at Saint-Floret does not follow any known textual prototype directly, but until a perfectly corresponding and hitherto unknown text turns up, which is not likely, it would perhaps be unreasonable to expect it to do so, given the prominence and popularity of that broader visual tradition across media, where the rules of engagement with the story, as it were, or rather the episode's own concern with representation, with clarity of vision and knowledge and with misconception, would really seem to demand a certain creative reimagining of any inherited outline. Fountains and springs have long been recognised as sites, after all, where poets can figuratively draw inspiration and communicate with each other across time, and the same is true in the visual arts, which by no means live by the production of only mirror-image facsimiles of what has been done already, especially when an entirely different medium is implicated. Once again, then, a degree of 'slippage' or 'contamination' might be expected in the still or gently trickling waters of the iconography.



Fig. 2.22. Upper section of north wall of main hall with vaulting, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.23. Vaulting of main hall, with north and east walls, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.

Luyster's principal contribution has been to draw attention to the narrative sophistication of the cycle, showing through careful description and marrying of the seemingly disparate parts of the decorative scheme with the structure of the *Meliadus*, as well as through photographs and diagrams, how the images wrap cleverly around corners and angles, using the space – a vaulted hall whose walls are segmented by the ribs and embrasures that descend from above – to enhance the dramatic effectiveness of its storytelling. This applies to the inscriptions as well as the images, which forcefully direct the viewer to move around the hall in order to make sense of the narrative. The text-bearing scrolls are arranged in an extremely playful manner, turning abruptly round acute corners mid-line, as though wandering

impertinently from recto to verso and back again, or meandering diagonally around windows. The corners and ribs that support the dodecagonal vault become in places like the folio edge or margin, and the varied planes like pages, but the *ductus* of the scheme requires the reader to work harder than is usual in the context of the codex.



Fig. 2.24. Detail of painted inscription wrapped around embrasure, face and side of rib, north-east corner of main hall, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.25. Detail of painted inscription on side of north-east rib and east wall of main hall, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.26. Detail of meandering painted inscription above window embrasure on east wall of main hall, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.

An equally assertive but still playful directorial quality is discernible in the figural action that takes up the greater part of the ornamental scheme at Saint-Floret. This too leads the viewer around the space in a deictic and sometimes gestural way. A possible connection with papal example was mooted by Anne Courtillé in 2002, who praised the management of perspective in the various scenes that make up the narrative, detecting in them ‘un certain degré de pénétration des recherches italiennes par l’intermédiaire vraisemblable d’Avignon’ (Courtillé 2002: 67). The idea has been taken further by Luyster, who has seen in the complexity of the arrangement a debt to the chapels of Saint Martial (c. 1344-46) and Saint Jean (c. 1346-8) in the Papal Palace at Avignon (Luyster 2012: 169), linking the secular painting of Saint-Floret with the religious painting of the papal seat, but without

commenting, curiously, on any potential relation with the *secular* decoration at Avignon, in particular that of the Chambre du Cerf, which we shall discuss in greater detail in the next chapter, and which exhibits many of the same characteristics as those she cites as peculiarly significant in the chapels. There too the ‘walls are not flat surfaces but rather windows behind which a three-dimensional space is suggested’ (Luyster 2012: 169), and the garden there represented also has a ‘false architecture’ of its own, with, for instance, trees placed at corners to camouflage and capitalise on the actual cast of the room. The connection with Avignon is, however, established in other terms too, and here lies the second really important contribution that Luyster has made, since she has drawn attention to some of the real links between the lords of Saint-Floret and the papal seat which justify a conclusion that the patron – and perhaps painters also – were familiar with the extraordinary artistic developments that took place in Avignon during the 1330s and 1340s (Luyster 2012: 169). Indeed, it is recorded that Athon de Saint-Floret was present in the city in 1353 to attend the wedding of Guy de la Tour and Marthe Roger de Beaufort, a niece of the future Pope Gregory XI and a grand niece of the then recently deceased Pope Clement VI himself, who had commissioned the Chambre du Cerf as well as work on the aforementioned chapels.

The actual commission, which is presumed to have taken place around 1370, has been attributed to Athon and his second wife Galiane de Châlus (Courtille 2002: 67), possibly in preparation for a visit by Jean de Berry, who had received Auvergne as an appanage to his dukedom in 1360. The decorative scheme in its totality does not directly concern us here, except in relation to that interpolated representation of the tryst beneath the tree, which, if it is not now the most obvious and eye-catching episode depicted, is certainly still one of the most playful, as we might expect from

the nature of the tradition as seen elsewhere.

The rendezvous occurs at – but not quite on – the south wall of the hall, neither occupying a single space nor easily legible from any single vantage point, but broken up around a window embrasure that cuts rudely into the narrative. The surrounding wall itself, seen from a distance, is painted with a marvellous depiction of Marc's castle at Tintagel, whose grey battlements and towers spread to left and right of the window. The orchard, on the other hand, where the meeting takes place, is at once set within this encompassing context of fictive walls and ramparts, built up on the inner face of the actual wall, and projected out beyond its confines, reflecting its usual situation in literary narratives just beyond the boundaries of the castle itself. Though the orchard is placed up above these walls, whose crenellated and buttressed surfaces fold into the embrasures, the viewer is positioned on the other side of its towers to the lovers, as though looking down from a high vantage point at events taking place below, not entirely unlike the bird's eye view normally given to the young Alexander, watching Aristotle and Phyllis, or King David, prying on Bathsheba, in traditional iconography. The figures, enlarged and important, appear around the window, Tristan to the left, and Iseult to the right, actually facing each other directly on the embrasure walls rather than set beside each other as is usual in depictions of the 'orchard rendezvous'. The famous pine tree, which for once, almost, is clearly presented as such, with its large pinecones and brushy needles indicated, grows upside down on the ceiling of the embrasure, its trunk springing from the interior towards the exterior of the room, rather than the other way round, as might be expected, and the recognisably crowned and bearded head of King Marc appears there, also upside down and foolish, unless we turn our backs to the wall in order to set him relatively straight, if not quite on his feet. To see Marc clearly the

spectator must stand relatively close to that wall, looking straight up into the embrasure, because he will remain hidden, as planned, any other way, but the whole arrangement plays wonderfully with the oppositional themes of concealment and revelation, privacy and illumination, obscurity and clarity.

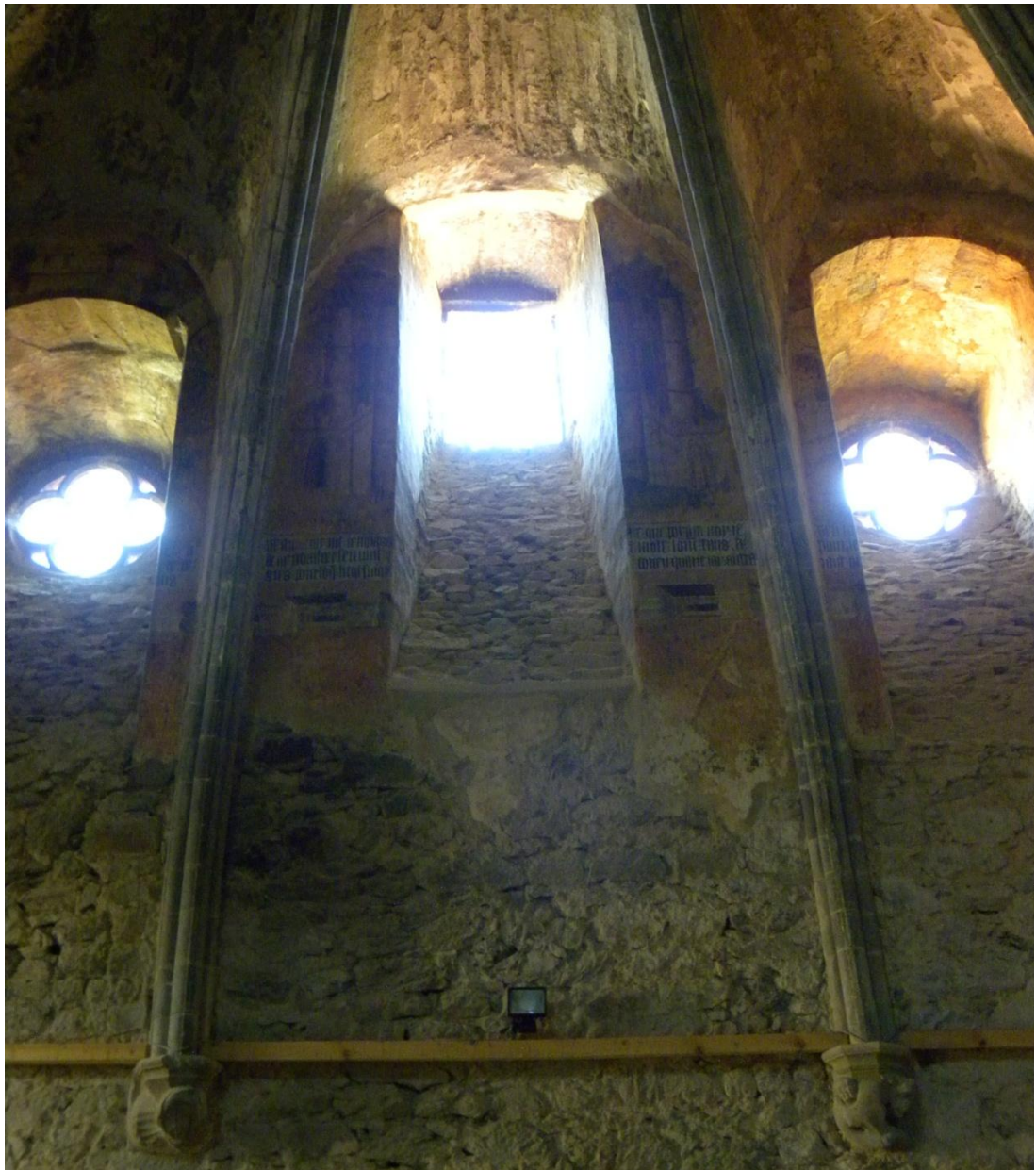


Fig. 2.27. Position of window embrasure featuring ‘orchard rendezvous’ on south wall of main hall, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.28. Tristan in window embrasure, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.29. Detail of Tristan, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.30. Iseult in window embrasure, *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.31. Detail of Iseult (shown pointing towards the fountain). *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.32. Detail of King Marc on ceiling of window embrasure (shown upright), *fresco*, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.

The centrepiece of the tryst scene at Saint-Floret is of course the window, through which the clarity of daylight enters the room and the narrative, and by an admirable stroke of ingenuity that has not been sufficiently noted by previous scholars this window is given the place of the fountain itself. As in the mirror cases we have discussed and even more particularly in the cup in Milan, there is a fascinating interplay here between the different media and materials employed, since the painted walls here break out from one art form and into another, co-opting the transparency of glass to express the incident more effectively, just as the cup had exploited the clarity of the precious rock crystal and reservoirs of translucent enamel on its richly worked surfaces, likewise emphasising the central themes of the story and extrapolating from them a droll but perceptive proof of the expressive power of the visual arts, especially when combined in a liminal region between interior and exterior as well as alternative crafts.

Again, however, it is nature that suffuses the artistry with so much of its expressive force, illuminating the represented personages and banishing the cosy privacy that is implied and almost reached by the nooks and turnings of the architectural arrangement. That the wall is south facing is significant, of course, since this guarantees the most even and consistent natural light throughout the day and ensures that the scene is not legible only in the morning or evening, nor indeed rendered unintelligible by excess of light at any particular time. It is the principal window of the hall that has been selected for the 'orchard rendezvous', flanked as it is by two smaller quatrefoil openings on the same south wall that help to light the pictures advantageously, while the northern and east facing walls bear, respectively, two windows, and another three. Light, then, and the clarity of glass, take the place of the still and reflective surface of the water in literary – or indeed many artistic –

accounts, where it is the mirror-like image in the fountain rather than the broad continuous illumination of daylight that reveals King Marc to the lovers. In Béroul the word used by Iseult herself for that reflection is ‘shadow’: troubled by her close scrape with being caught red-handed, and recounting the episode to Brangien, she declares simply of her husband, King Marc, that ‘Je vi son onbre en la fontaine’ (l. 351). The ‘onbre’ has been transformed at Saint-Floret into its opposite: Iseult points with both hands directly towards the window – a rectangle of the blue sky – confirming that this is the site where her husband’s image is visible; Tristan likewise gestures towards the window.

The very instability of the mimetic image and its mode of representation draws attention to the connection between the reflected image and the artistic treatment of surfaces, which are in the process of painting simultaneously reshaped with ‘shadows’ of reality and illuminated by the bright and shining materials, as well as the intellectual insight, of the painter. The painting at Saint-Floret comes very close indeed to manuscript illumination, not least in the presence throughout of the inscriptions that explain and justify the images, establishing connections between the scenes and leading the viewer through the intended narrative sequence. Here an inscription survives beneath the figure of Iseult, which gives the lovers the power of speech: ‘dit ela: tristran que poyson uoy ie? ie ne ui tel molt lonc tans. a. dama, ie le bien coneu quar ie lay autrefois ueu’ (as given in Luyster 2012: 172). As mentioned above, a great deal of the scholarly interest that has already been devoted to the mural cycle at Saint-Floret has centred specifically on the inscriptions and on the connected puzzle of identifying a source text, and unsurprisingly this particular piece of dialogue, which has no surviving textual root in any French version of the story – or indeed any treatment of such early date – has generated some disproportionate

interest (Frühmorgen-Voss 1973: 129; Luyster 2012: 154, 175 n. 12; Allaire 2014: 216). On the other hand, an obvious question has been neglected: where is the ‘fish’? It is usual in visual treatments of the ‘orchard rendezvous’ that even when the water is treated as a transparent medium – as in the case of the cup in Milan, where it is set in among the coloured pools of enamel in crystal – the reflection of the king is visible to the viewer as well as the illegitimate lovers. This naturally opens up a question of whether the window originally contributed in a more obvious way to the narrative presented in the hall: not, it may be, only by the introduction of light into the chamber and onto its painted surfaces, but also by some sort of duplicate portrait of the king. The window is placed high up on the wall and was, in all probability, not readily reachable from the exterior, meaning that it is not likely that an actor, say, could have played the part of King Marc for special occasions, though such a leap from painting to another art form might have made for a real *coup de théâtre*.<sup>72</sup> More likely, the mural paintings would have given way to painted glass, retaining the special qualities of transparency and illumination that are still observable in the clear panes of the lattice window that now occupies the space of the fountain.

There was, it would seem, one more important source of (actual) illumination in the hall, which must have hung from a cord emerging from a hole in the central keystone up above. This keystone is ornamented, startlingly, with a circular boss that has at its centre a face – yet another peeping Tom – surrounded by an undulating fringe of crumpled rays of light or wobbling leaves. The cord would have emerged from the open mouth of this face, which, now painted gold, would appear to represent the sun, resting at the crest of the vault as his counterpart does the vault of heaven, and bringing light into the room. In relation, however, to the nearby

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<sup>72</sup> Such a leap is not as far-fetched as might be assumed. At the famous garden park of Hesdin in Artois there was a trick window that played similarly with expectations. If a visitor attempted to open it, a mechanical figure appeared on the outside to close it again: see Dunlop 2009: 65.

representation of the ‘orchard rendezvous’, it is easy to see the face in the boss as another King Marc by association if not in actuality, and it is worth noting that the traces of gold, which seem to be from the nineteenth century, are surrounded on the boss itself by a ring of green that continues into the ribs of the vault, opening up another possibility that the keystone has been carved precisely to allude to the story of Tristan and Iseult. The architectural ornament, which comes so close to the representations of King Marc that we have seen on ivory mirror cases, here plays a part in the playful reimagining of the scene in the context of the hall and its painted decoration, and takes the themes yet again into new artistic territory. The well read and sophisticated patrons and intended inhabitants or visitors to the Château de Saint-Floret would have enjoyed the playfulness of the architecture and painting, revelling in the surprises grand and small, and the wit with which the decorative scheme teased at and refashioned what was for them a familiar narrative.



Fig. 2.33. Ceiling boss on the hall’s central keystone, stone, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.



Fig. 2.34. Ceiling Boss on the hall's central keystone (detail), stone, gold, and paint, Château de Saint-Floret, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Puy-de-Dôme, fourteenth century.

As we move towards the final chapter, which will deal with mural painting in a more sustained way, and to Avignon itself, which will furnish the case studies to be explored in depth, we shall find that windows, like fountains, remain sites of particular interest and significance when it comes to representations of gardens,

standing as they do as further thresholds between interior and exterior and as places where an imaginative and playful approach to art and nature is really required.

## Chapter Three

### The Enclosed Bower and The Open Park: Poeticised Painted Gardens at Avignon and the Culture of Romance under Benedict XII and Clement VI

#### 3.1. Introduction

In the context of the ever-expanding, ever-growing, and evolving garden environment that we have encountered in Guillaume de Lorris' initial *Roman de la Rose*, and in so many other sources that were either part of the same culture already or shaped by its continuing influence, this chapter continues the exploration of the liminal regions of the *hortus conclusus*, taking these thresholds, however, in a much wider, more expanded sense, beyond the confines of the text or the borders of the miniature or manuscript, and into an even more immersive experience for readers and viewers alike. The liminal zone will remain in the foreground, but the chapter will examine the shared culture that united manuscript production and interior decoration in the most prestigious of spaces, bridging that threshold between the manuscript page (with its combination of text and image), textiles, and the frescoed wall, where literary influences would still be inscribed in the complex decorative schemes we shall encounter, and preserved in the varied gardens we find represented or cultivated in reality. The chapter aims to draw and re-establish connections between the interior decoration of the Palais des Papes at Avignon and the literary and artistic culture that centred around the *Roman de la Rose*.

Anne Dunlop begins her 2009 monograph, *Painted Palaces: The Rise of Secular Art in Early Renaissance Italy*, with a quotation from Eugenio Battisti that is extraordinarily apposite in the context of the present discussion. Battisti conceptualises the problems facing the scholar of secular Italian wall painting as a

labyrinth that can send one in circles, attempting to address different viewpoints and entering into many different layers of competing interpretations. As he puts it:

‘La decorazione profana è un luogo non molto frequentato dalla critica...un labirinto non facilmente percorribile, in quanto ha motivazioni estremamente mutevoli e spesso difficili da interpretare... ogni ciclo ci rinvia ad una biblioteca, ad un modo di leggere (e prima, di essere stati educati), ad una finalità sociale’ (Battisti, in Dunlop 2009: 1).

A labyrinth is normally a place *devised* to confuse, but Battisti’s ‘labirinto’ closely resembles the *silva* of medieval thought, as it is characterised by Mary Carruthers, ‘a pathless forest of chaotic material’ lacking ‘conscious design [...] like an uncatalogued library’ (Carruthers 1990: 39). This is a space that is also, to a degree, the antithesis of the ordered garden, though we should be conscious of greater variety and complexity within that special environment, which is often designed and subdivided into smaller compartments in such a way that artifice and order may be disguised.<sup>73</sup> Thomas Hinton has drawn attention to Dante’s presentation of Italian vernacular speech as a kind of *silva* in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, where he pictures himself weeding, pruning, and otherwise tidying up the wilderness of the language in order to clear a path for the hunt (Hilton 2016: 182). For Dante the hunt signifies poetic activity, which requires trimness and a guiding structural principle as much as any expansive encyclopaedic aim. Still, the tangle of overlapping and competing ways of reading that are encountered in the dense field of secular iconography, when more rigidly theological frameworks have been set aside, can seem mazelike, and some scholars have returned, as a result, to

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<sup>73</sup> As noted in chapter one, the shapeshifting garden of the *Roman de la Rose* has been characterised in a remarkably similar way. Suzanne Lewis finds in the poem ‘a thicket of contradictory meanings, exploratory ambiguities, and shifting perceptions [...] and] a web of closures or impossibility of meaning’ (1992: 215).

those familiar frameworks even when they are not wholly appropriate to the work in question. A similar problem has been identified in the study of medieval libraries, where books are sometimes treated as containers of a mysterious and undefined ‘secular knowledge’, meaning that the ideas and images held within go unexamined, whilst faulty conclusions about their significance for economic and social history are drawn from the bare fact of their existence.<sup>74</sup>

In both cases, the secular presents a problem, and this is particularly apparent in relation to existing scholarship on the decorative scheme in the papal palace at Avignon, where the central role of secular literary culture in shaping artistic expression has often been glossed over, whilst the resultant iconography, which is of an avowedly secular nature, has been forced to offer up simplistic political and religious readings. Where direct connections between the gardens of secular romance literature and the monumental but domestic decorative garden-themed programmes visible at Avignon *have* been suspected or proposed, they have been mentioned only in passing and in reference to the *Chambre du Cerf* alone, without acknowledging that room’s immediate context – built, planted, and inhabited – or the role that a romance like the *Roman de la Rose* must have played in setting the terms in which such a space could be conceived. This is exemplified by Paul Binski’s casual remark that the subject matter treated in the *Chambre du Cerf* alludes to ‘the seigneurial culture of the *Roman de la Rose*’ (Binski 2000: 223). The connection is established in sociopolitical, but not artistic or intellectual terms.

This chapter tackles the problem by reinstating the literary and artistic culture that would have been understood by the contemporary viewer well versed in romance literature and the wider culture of imaginative production that came with it.

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<sup>74</sup> See Sunderland 2016: 160. As noted here, the result is that medieval libraries are often excluded from the history of ideas.

My aim is not so much to hack a path through that maze or labyrinth, complex as it might be, but to reestablish some routes through what may first appear a wilderness, drawing attention to connections that have become occluded or lost, and tracing the disconnected branches back, in places, to points where they unite to demonstrate a shared growth and origin. We shall pay particular attention throughout to the many sites and surfaces where outside and inside meet, since it is especially through the shared interest in such sites and surfaces that manuscripts of the *Rose* and other texts are united with the more monumental artistic productions of the mid-fourteenth century. The chapter will show how spaces often treated in isolation relate to each other – just as they do in the text on its own or, more particularly, in the codex as a whole – drawing on and demonstrating connections with manuscript culture and romance. These connections flowed both ways, with the poeticised gardens of the papal palace being shaped by the influence of the codex and the manuscript in turn transformed by the culture of the court. The garden undergoes a complete rotation through these interconnected spheres, passing from literature, through painting (both on the page and the wall), and reality, and back again to a literary environment.

### 3.2. The Palais des Papes at Avignon: Exterior and Interior at Odds

There is a marked contrast between the forbidding walls which make up the exterior of the Papal Place at Avignon — the largest, ‘most beautiful, and strongest’ gothic palace in the world — and the private apartments of its most important occupant.<sup>75</sup> Its construction took place in less than twenty years from 1335 to 1352 and was mainly the work of two popes: Benedict XII (1334-42), who built a rich and

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<sup>75</sup> Froissart, *Grandes Chroniques*, in Kervyn de Lettenhove 1967 (reprint of 1876-7): 129.

imposing Pontifical Palace (known as the Old Palace), and Clement VI (1342-52), who built the Opus Novum (known as the New Palace).<sup>76</sup> As it now stands, the imposing public faces of the edifice are not obviously organic and are, furthermore, spare of ornament: externally, it is hard and fortified – strictly austere, military, and functional – yet the interior walls of the pope’s private apartments present something entirely different. Here, in the more private quarters, which would, however, have been seen by some visitors, one room is richly painted with a pergola or bower made up of pliant saplings and fruiting vines set on an azure ground; another is sumptuously decorated with healthy foliage, productive trees, verdant meadows, and parkland filled with birds, small mammals, and courtly figures seeking sport and sustenance; there is even a loudly stone-paved rectangular pool in whose waters, brimming with diverse fish, the well-dressed pleasure-seekers cast their nets. While it was not uncommon for palaces and castles to present such a contrast — the Castello della Manta in Piedmont, for instance, also has a rather defensive exterior, that reveals nothing of the civilised and sophisticated pictorial adornment within — it is in part the sheer scale of the largely flat façade and the commanding position of the papal abode, jutting out from and expanding as it does the high and naturally fortified Rocher des Doms, towering above the clear green waters of the Rhône and the gentle Provençal landscape beyond, that makes the transition between these inside rooms and the outside of the building so stark.

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<sup>76</sup> The relocation of the papal Curia to Avignon in 1309 was largely influenced by the fact that the surrounding country, the Comtat-Venaissin, was already territory belonging to the pope, having been left to the Holy See by Alphonse de Poitiers in the 1270s. The connection would be fortuitous, but early scholarship on Guillaume de Lorris actually sought to identify the poet with an individual of the same name documented as having been in the service of Alphonse a few decades earlier: see Guillon, 1881; Jarry 1881: *passim*; idem 1882: 477-87, esp. 480; on attempts to identify Guillaume de Lorris, see also Lejeune 1976: 5-17.

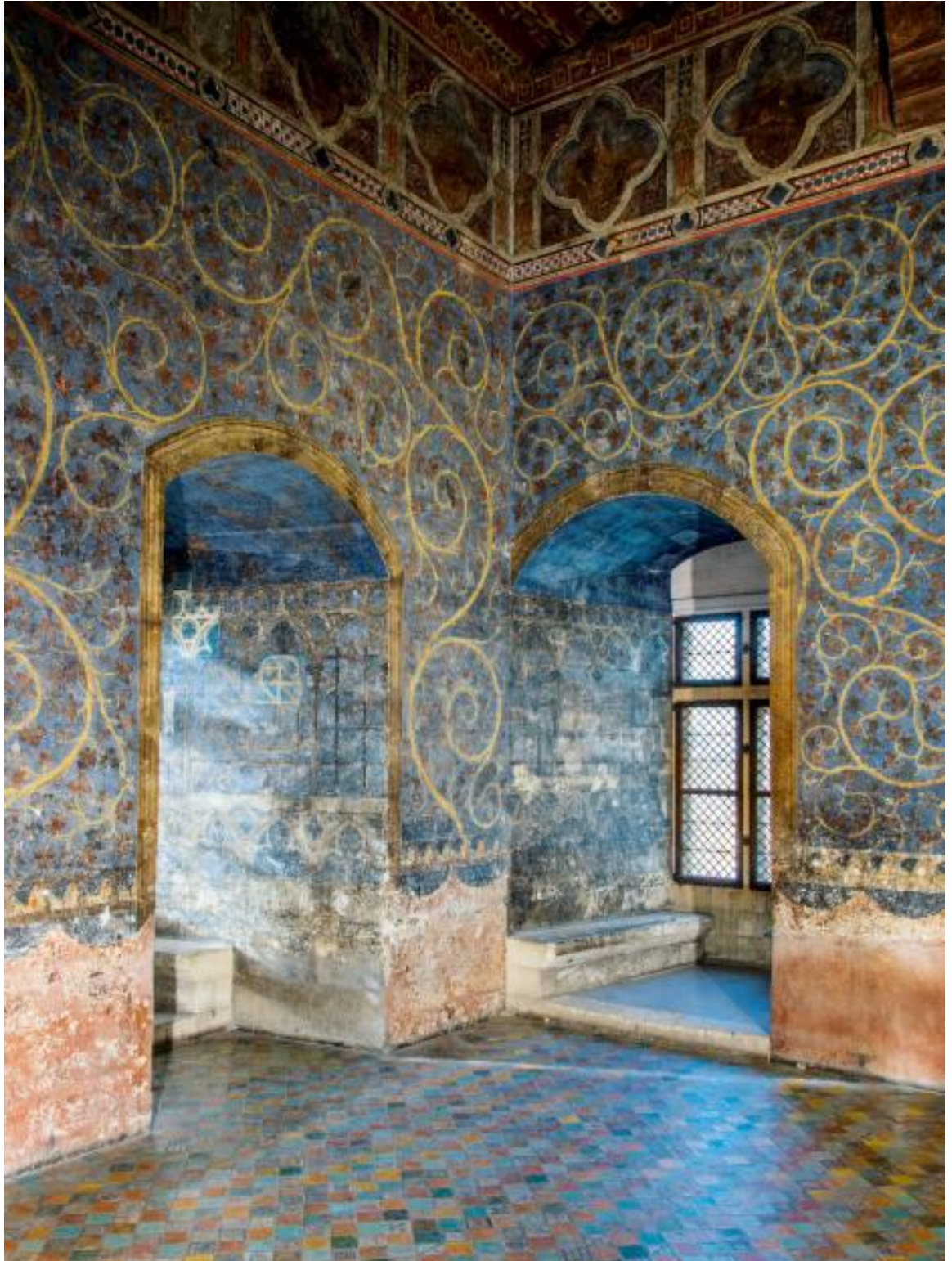


Fig. 3.1. Painted decoration and window embrasure or 'loggia', by Filippo and Duccio da Siena (logge), and 'Hugo', and Jean Dalbon (including workshops), *fresco* and *a secco* additions, Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.



Fig. 3.2. Painted north, east, and west walls, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.

The decorated rooms, which constitute the private papal apartments, and which are adjoined to each other by a narrow passageway, share with one another a similar preoccupation with all that is foliate and organic, but also inhabited, since both are animated by the presence of fauna as well as flora. Both bring the outside in via the delicate representation of plant and animal life. Though similar in a sense, and connected with each other within the architectural scheme of the palace, the rooms actually straddle two separate towers (the Wardrobe Tower and the Pope's Tower), were commissioned by two rather different, albeit consecutive southern French popes — Benedict XII (1334-1342) and Clement VI (1342-1352) respectively — and were decorated in decidedly different styles by different groups of artists at different times. Benedict's bedchamber, in a sense more formal and

conventional in its relative simplicity, was reportedly decorated between 1336 and 1337 by a Jean Dalbon who headed a team of French artists and finished in 1338; the adjacent study, known at the time as the *camera cervi volantis*, and presently known as the Chambre du Cerf, dates to 1343, a few years later, and it is a much more ambitious affair, one that involved a Franco-Italian team of painters, possibly under the leadership of a certain Robin de Romans and perhaps including also Matteo Giovannetti of Viterbo, who is known to have worked in the chapels and who was in Avignon at this date.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.3. The Gardens of Benedict XII and Clement VI at Avignon: Interior and Exterior in Dialogue

Before analysing the garden-like rooms made by Benedict and Clement inside the building, it is worth halting outside the palace for a moment, and exploring the *actual* gardens created by both popes, since these formed a major part of the immediate context in which those painted gardens existed, and must have asserted a much more forceful presence than is now immediately apparent. Although this thesis is not directly concerned with herb gardens, kitchen gardens, vegetable plots, or gardens for medicinal use, as are popularly associated with the medieval period in general, it can certainly be helpful to dwell upon the real-life *literary* gardens of the period, which, like those frequented and conjured up by poets, artists, or lovers, could also draw on textual and visual traditions of representation, evoking stories and sites familiar to the well read and sophisticated users of such spaces. At the same time, as should be obvious, real gardens could be juxtaposed with fictive ones, the

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<sup>77</sup> From Giovannetti's partially preserved accounts which record the painter's activities during this period, there is evidence to suggest that Robin de Romans was actually an assistant of the Viterbesi master, since he was recorded as having joined Giovannetti to help with work on the chapel of Saint Martial along with others on 12th October 1345, making this production a truly Franco-Italian collaboration. For more on this see Castelnovo 1991: 32; Lefranc 2012: 8.

experience of each colouring, directing, and fundamentally altering encounters with the other. This is exactly the situation at Avignon. Here, the greater part of the real gardens were – like the gardens represented in the interior spaces – established as places of an emphatically literary character, alluding in their arrangement and specific features to the wider inheritance derived from romance literature and manuscript culture more widely. Walls and fountains, just like those associated with the *Rose*, with Machaut's *Fonteinne Amoureuse*, and with other texts and visual prototypes, predominate. The gardens at Avignon – especially under Clement – represent an attempt to bring those literary *loci*, with which we are now familiar, to life, translating and transposing them from page or wall to reality.

The presence of these real gardens and their unavoidable relation to the painted ones inside must be kept in mind, because this aspect of the broad architectural scheme is no longer so evident to visitors as it must once have been. The pontifical gardens were an integral part of the palace and lay directly beneath the Pope's private apartments: east-facing windows from both the bedroom and the *Chambre du Cerf* look out onto the site that was occupied by the original gardens below, an evolving and almost palimpsestic spot where successive interventions occurred over the span of a few years. It is important to see those exterior (but still contained) spaces as very much connected with the literary culture that is apparent inside, not only in the books read and dissected in the papal studies, but also on the walls. In any case, the documented use of the exterior spaces sheds light on the better known designs found within, where fictive gardens play with the idea of permeability and expansiveness.

There was, in short, a more fluid exchange between the interior domain, and the exterior realm than the imposing façade and dark, shuttered windows might

suggest to the modern visitor. Despite their differences, Benedict XII and Clement VI shared a keen interest in bringing the outside world in, and in so doing, making a safe, secure, eternally green space capable of flourishing with reliable constancy inside the fortress-like palace, away from perilous weather, predators, pests, or any other threats: creating, in the case of the former, a bower-like garden of delights which would enclose and envelop a sleeping pope; and in the latter, a plentiful park in which danger existed only for the fauna being hunted. In somewhat equal measure, the two men were preoccupied also with the cultivation of ever more sophisticated real gardens of their own within the palace grounds, especially focusing their respective attentions on the land that lay a number of feet below the windows of their private rooms along the eastern side. Green fingered in intention, even if they kept their own hands out of the soil, these two popes put grand plans into action and made what had once been (and is currently) a relatively simple vegetable patch into a rather more elaborate type of garden that was at once evocative of the wider imaginative culture that centred on romance literature, and another aspect of the garden-like interiors of the palace. The developments in garden architecture and cultivation outside were, after all, closely related to artistic developments inside.

Much of the context to follow about the gardens has been published by Dominique Vingtain in her 1998 monograph on the evolution of the Palais des Papes at Avignon, which itself also summarises the invaluable contributions and archaeological discoveries of Sylvain Gagnière, Jacky Granier, and Dominique Carru. Other information is derived from the extensive papal archives covering the period with which we are concerned, which gives a firm documentary grounding to the conclusions drawn about the exterior and the interiors of the palace. Vingtain

was until recently the head curator at the Papal Palace, and has written widely on Avignon, tracing the development of the site from the arrival of the papal Curia in the region in 1309 until its departure in 1376, and beyond. This background information will be essential to us as we proceed later in the chapter with a focus more on the overtly secular artistic and literary character of the gardens inside and out, but the following pages will also draw on the material of the preceding chapters, demonstrating that the culture of the court at Avignon was both shaped by the fashionable culture of secular romance literature that centred on the *Roman de la Rose*, and that this splendid melting pot of French and Italian aristocracy, enterprise, and statesmanship inevitably exerted a shaping force of its own on artistic traditions near and far, touching both the wall and the manuscript page. The preoccupation with interpretative surfaces, with poetic woven structures, and with points of entrance and contact between one artistic sphere and another all remain highly relevant to this new argument about the renewed vitality of secular romance literature at the heart of the papal court.

#### 3.4. The Gardens of Benedict XII

Benedict XII organised the construction of substantial crenellated ramparts in 1337-8, on the top of which he had erected a covered walkway complete with windows on either side from which he might admire the views, both of his residence and of the landscape beyond. In later papal accounts, Benedict's garden — which extended along the eastern façade of the palace — appears as the 'ortus vetus', given that its construction occurred at the same time as the 'old' palace: the area, which was well laid out and followed, in the arrangement of its spaces, principles partly derived from Pietro de' Crescenzi, was fully equipped with a complex watering system, and

spanned over two thousand square metres, and the space was divided into two levels.<sup>78</sup> The lower of these terraces might be seen as more utilitarian, since it was near to the steam rooms, and sown only with a grassy lawn surrounding a central well; the upper tier, on the other hand, featured an orchard and gardens for pleasure, as well as for the cultivation of vegetables and herbs for the papal kitchen, which was positioned on the north-eastern side of the complex as it then stood. Perhaps surprisingly for a modern reader, the site of Benedict's garden was already home at this point to an ever-expanding menagerie of animals which had been established by his predecessor, John XXII, and which included a bear, a camel, a wild boar, some deer, and a wild cat. This was maintained, not only by Benedict, but also by Clement. In 1335, Robert d'Anjou, the king of Sicily, sent Benedict a lion to add to the mix (Schaefer 1914: 29).<sup>79</sup> In this context, Clement VI's decision a few years later to have hunting scenes featuring deer, birds, and other animals painted on the walls of his study, seems entirely in keeping with the worldly preoccupations that were expressed in the use of the external spaces.

### 3.5. The Gardens of Clement VI

Unsurprisingly, Clement VI's luxurious revamp of the papal palace, of which we shall have more to say in due course, did not exclude the garden, and in a similar fashion to the majority of his embellishments elsewhere in the papal complex, he undertook a complete renovation of Benedict's existing patch of green, extending the

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<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of elements relating to principles set out in Pietro de' Crescenzi's *Liber ruralium commodorum* (c. 1304-6), see Barret 2004: 291-300. A French translation would subsequently be completed in 1370s, but the Latin text is known to have circulated in Avignon rather earlier than this.

<sup>79</sup> Animals were commonly given as diplomatic gifts, and not just within Europe. Benedict established diplomatic relations with China, sending Giovanni de' Marignolli (later the author of the *Chronica Boemorum*) to carry gifts to the Yuan emperor Toghon Temür that included a number of horses; in return, both Rome and Avignon are said to have become centres for the collecting of Chinese art (see Johns 2016: 17-18).

gardens out to encompass a much larger area. Clement ordered the construction of a new boundary wall in 1344-5 and declared his newly defined and more generously proportioned area the *ortus novus*. To oversee renovations, and subsequently to run the gardens, Clement appointed a certain Barthélemy Alégret (who had been Keeper of the Deer under Benedict XII), and Michel Brun, who in 1349 held the titles of Keeper of the Wild Beasts, then Keeper of the Deer, before becoming the Master of the Palace Garden until 1365. As indicated above, Clement retained Benedict's expanding menagerie, and added to it substantially himself — in 1343, a lioness joined the ranks as well as a brown bear, and another wild boar (Vingtain 1998: 243-7). Deer were clearly important to Clement: brought into the space in vast number, they constituted one of his main additions to the garden, and he had special sheltered enclosures erected to house the many newcomers. Just as in his *Chambre du Cerf*, positioned up above the new deerpark, trees were planted and a fresh meadow was laid out exclusively for the enjoyment, diversion, and sustenance of the deer, if not for his own pleasure. It must be noted, however, that these deer were brought onsite only *after* the decoration of the *Chambre du Cerf* was near to completion: although the use of the space outside sheds new light on the choices made inside, there are instances where it is clear that the opposite must have been the case too, with decisions concerning the interior of the palace very possibly giving the necessary inspiration for decisions affecting the outside areas. As we shall argue below, the garden outside, or at least a large section of it, seems to have been arranged as a way of extending that interior space and the illusion of expansiveness achieved in fresco, rather than the other way around, with the real garden shaping the representation of a garden inside.

Birds were also favoured by both popes, in real life as in painting: peacocks, ostriches, and cranes were brought to the new gardens, and smaller birds were kept indoors too; according to the records, they were kept both in cages near the window embrasures and let loose (Vingtain 1998: 243). Papal accounts during this period pay witness to great sums spent on the various works carried out to improve the gardens: in 1346, Clement ordered soil to be brought on-site in an attempt to re-level the ground; then trellises and arbours to provide shelter and support; masses of different species of flora (including many exotic eastern specimens) were planted; violets were inserted to fill flowerbeds, and Clement also oversaw the planting of an expansive wood and meadow; vines were placed against walls and trellises, and finally, the garden was embellished with rose bushes, a finishing touch that indicates the special status of the flower.<sup>80</sup>

By the (new) kitchen tower – also on the eastern side of the palace – he enlarged an already significant vegetable garden, but all the remaining space south of that portion was dedicated to a ‘jardin d’agrément’ (Vingtain 1998: 244). This was a substantial sweep of land set aside solely for recreation, pleasure, and *divertissement*. According to the papal accounts and archaeological evidence, Clement took particular care in his development of the westernmost portion of the gardens: this, it will be essential to remember, is the part that lay directly beneath the two windows of his bedroom in the Pope’s Tower (Tour du Pape), inherited from his predecessor, Benedict, and from the Chambre du Cerf in his newly constructed Wardrobe Tower (Tour de la Garde-Robe). This ornamental or *pleasure* garden was to be, like the rooms up above, the pope’s private space, intended for his own personal use — a garden befitting the ruler of Christendom.

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<sup>80</sup> See Vingtain 1998: 243-7 for more details on the gardens, as well as Gagnière 1988: 104-8.

### 3.6. Clement VI's 'Griffon': The Fountain from Page to *Pré*

In the same spirit, and in the same place, Clement VI was also responsible for the installation, in 1344-5, of a monumental 'griffon' fountain. This elaborate tiered construction was placed in the westernmost part of the papal gardens, in the meadow apparently reserved for Clement's own private use. Papal accounts record many grand sums being spent on works connected with its erection (Vingtain 1998: 244), and it was evidently an extremely impressive structure — twenty-one metres in perimeter (Lefranc and Goisbault 2014: 9) – and seemingly just as incongruous in the surrounding garden as the stone-edged pool in the fresco in the *Chambre du Cerf*, to which we shall return shortly. This fountain was raised from the ground by three steps, commanding the respect of the viewer, and was composed of two basins, all cut and crafted in creamy Orgone stone. It was set with fourteen bronze water outlets that would have created a colourful and variegated effect from the jets and droplets catching the light.<sup>81</sup> This monumental fountain provides us with particularly good grounds to give especial attention to the pool on the wall in the *Chambre du Cerf* and its intensely man-made structure, which jars with the contrastingly natural elements surrounding it: we will come to that sunken receptacle and its painted setting later in the chapter. The monumental fountain in the real garden, in its design and position within that horticultural space, also points directly towards Clement's interest in illuminated manuscripts, where fountains of exactly the same type are, as we have seen in chapter two, repeatedly invested with magical and even dangerous capabilities.

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<sup>81</sup> For more on the fountain, see Gagnière 1966. Gagnière was involved in the discovery of surviving parts of the fountain structure.

Recent archaeological investigations in the garden carried out in conjunction with onsite renovation works have done much to emphasise that the garden evolved in size, shape, and aspect with each successive pope (Baro 2019: 303). Clement's fountain is, apart from a few fragments, lost, but it has been one of the principal elements that modern curators have been eager to re-establish in the garden during recent works, and since 2019 an approximate recreation has stood on the spot of the original. Anne Allimant-Verdillon, in a 2016 report on the site, had pointed to the prominent position that Clement's 'griffon' would have occupied, faintly evoking a medieval ekphrasis in the process, whilst pointing, a little too cautiously we might think, to the obvious source of inspiration. She describes the garden as follows: 'au centre, un pré, au milieu duquel, enchâssée dans une banquette de verdure, se trouve la fontaine dite « du griffon » ou « du babouin », en référence, probablement, au goût de Clément VI pour les manuscrits enluminés' (2016: 211-2).

The papal accounts for 1346 cite great sums spent on having extra top-soil brought into the garden to enable the planting of a 'nouveau pré' to encircle the basin of the fountain. In this meadow, small trees would have served partly to screen off the structure, setting the space apart from the rest of the garden and enhancing the splendour of the arrangement. In the mid-1960s, excavations undertaken by Sylvain Gagnière and Jacky Granier in the gardens of the papal palace found remnants of the 'griffon', which consisted of a stepped dodecagonal base that would have supported a basin of almost two metres in diameter, decorated with gables, pinnacles, tri-lobed blind arches, and fleurons. They also found parts of the fourteen spouts by which the water would have reached the basin, but a full reconstruction was not at that time possible (Gagnière 1988: 103-9; Vingtain 1998: 247).

This was no ordinary well or water fountain. As an emphatically manmade and architectural construction inspired by examples seen in manuscript illumination, this lone fountain would have stood out starkly against its deep green surroundings, its creamy and ornately carved stone rhyming, nonetheless, with the rest of the garden in its organic and even florid mouldings and flourishings. Despite the artificiality of the fountain, it was in form overtly natural, employing an ornamental vocabulary both floral and foliate that contrasted in many respects with the more austere type of Gothic used for most of the palace itself. Furthermore, in terms of scale, when compared with the palace as a whole, this was an altogether more intimate and finely worked creation. Vingtain has observed that we can only wonder at the effect originally produced by this monumental fountain, ‘à la silhouette découpée d’ornements gothiques, se détachent toute blanche sur la prairie qui occupait cette partie méridionale du jardin, plus intime et enserrée par les hautes murailles de l’enceinte’ (1998: 247). In this part of the garden, designed for pleasure and partially screened off from its wider setting, in a way doubly enclosed and surrounded, there was a play with both contrasting and complementary effects.

### 3.7. Art and Nature, Inside and Out: Avignon and its Models, Real and Literary

Vingtain has rightly pointed out that the layout of the garden was largely defined by the contours of the landscape on the site — its ‘nature rocheuse’ (1998: 176) — which also dictated to a great extent the shape of the palace as a whole. To a degree, therefore, the garden painted inside the palace, both that in Benedict’s bedroom and that in the *Chambre du Cerf* — despite their differing styles — can be seen, as in Vingtain’s view, as an attempt to defy the limits imposed upon the outside space by its natural boundaries, and as a way of allowing the viewer to explore and experience

another garden beyond the boundaries of the real one. These two different gardens, both real and unreal, are closely related, each an extension of the other, but by no means necessarily exact replicas or mirror images of each other. The scenes which make up the idyllic, poetised horticultural interiors in the bedroom and private study in Avignon would have provided a splendid frame through which to view these gardens and the Provençal countryside beyond via each of the windows, but the relationship between interior and exterior also created new interpretative possibilities. As Nicholas Temple writes regarding a similar arrangement between frescoed wall and exterior view made about a hundred and fifty years later in another papal residence, the Villa Belvedere, later joined to the Vatican Palace, ‘panoramic view and idealised landscape become intrinsically linked through the symbolic reciprocity between actual and illusory space’ (2011: 145). This later arrangement had been foreshadowed by that in Avignon, where an equally fluid exchange between painted nature and the real thing was presented for those inside. Placed in close contact, one enriches the other.

The arrangement at Avignon had itself been foreshadowed by an earlier papal palace constructed during the papacy of Jean XXII (predecessor of Benoit XII) at Pont-de-Sorgues, approximately nine kilometres north of Avignon on a bend in the river Ouvèze, a tributary of the Rhône: this summer residence, now lost, was built and lavishly decorated between 1317 and 1324<sup>82</sup> in a very different spirit to that which shaped the palace in Avignon as it stood in Jean’s time, and was intended for pleasure, much as Clement’s revamped Avignonnais abode would be about twenty years later. Here it is recorded that there was a garden surrounded by a cloister and galleries richly decorated with paintings, the spaces opening onto each other and

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<sup>82</sup> For an archaeological examination of the buildings at Sorgues and for evidence of frescoes in the area, see A. T. Luttrell and T. F. C. Blagg 1991.

certainly setting a precedent for the blending of interior and exterior space, between painted garden and managed nature, that we can still sense in Avignon, though the Palais de Sorgues cannot be studied in the same way. On the subject Paul Jamot struck a despairing note in 1938, exclaiming in writing ‘Quelle joie serait la notre, si nous avions conservé du Palais de Sorgues seulement autant que de celui d’Avignon!’ (Jamot 1938: 20).

The decoration at Avignon certainly seems to have been influenced by that at Pont-de-Sorgues, but otherwise the antecedents of the painted rooms of the papal palace were chiefly literary: in romance literature even characters who have been imprisoned are often placed in painted rooms inside towers with windows specifically overlooking gardens, as in the case of Nicolette (in *Aucassin et Nicolette*) or Blancheflor (in *Floire et Blancheflor*), but there are also cases, as in the tower of *gloriette* in the *Prise d’Orange*, where the room is itself a sort of garden, albeit one that is emphatically enchanted or artificial; in the *Prise d’Orange*, for instance, Orable’s chamber high up in the tower features a magical pine tree with leaves and multicoloured flowers — ‘Longue est la branche et la fueillè est grant; / La flor qu’en ist par est si avenant, / Blanche est et inde et si est vermeillant’ (ll. 653-5) — and it cannot have escaped notice altogether that this magical place was situated within the world of the relevant romance not far from Avignon, its text also alluding, just a few hundred lines before the description of the *gloriette*, to those sites of special interest, the ‘Rosne’, ‘Sorge’, and indeed ‘Avignon’ itself (ll. 400-404). ‘Il ne croist fleur desi qu’en paienie / Qui n’i soit peinte a or et par mestrie’, claims one character, speaking of nearby Orange, at lines 272-3. The popes of Avignon certainly aspired to co-opt some aspect of this renown, while leaving behind the dubious ‘paienie’ that had conjured up such a marvel in the text.

Vingtain's idea that the painted garden at Avignon served as an extension of the real, spatially restricted, one outside is complicated by the fact that Clement VI only set about developing the actual garden after work on the frescoes inside had been completed. More likely than not he would have been thinking ahead while the paintings were underway and even planning the next stage in his building works, and it seems unlikely that the real garden was only an afterthought. It is clear, however, that the painted garden preceded and was therefore no straightforward depiction of the one outside, nor even an extension of it in the most obvious sense. If anything, the real garden seems to have grown out of the one represented inside, making *that* the extension rather, though neither can be seen as fully independent of the other. Within the larger scheme of Clement's improvements to the palace the two spaces certainly did complement each other, expressing that 'symbolic reciprocity' between art and nature and softening the contrast between courtly interior and austere, defensive exterior that is so strongly apparent everywhere else.

The arrangement outside, and especially the fountain and its immediate surroundings, has struck previous commentators as overtly literary, drawing not just on romances but also on the illuminated manuscripts through which the pope and his courtiers encountered them. Indeed, the gardens outside are intensely literary in inspiration, format and composition — with their clear boundary walls, the lone 'griffon' fountain, meadow, deer park, borders of flowers, hedges and rose bushes — these are exactly the sort of gardens described in secular romances and depicted in manuscripts of the period, lifted from the page and planted *en plein air*. If Clement's vision for the actual garden was inspired by his taste for literature and illuminated manuscripts, this was, as we shall see, no less true of the frescoed garden inside, and a shared origin in the romances is an element that binds the two spaces together

tightly, as though in a single volume. There are, however, other ways in which a reciprocal relationship between the gardens manifested itself, and here it becomes really difficult to say with respect to art and nature which preceded the other.

One of the foremost artists involved in the decoration of the *Chambre du Cerf*, and one who is particularly renowned for his advances in botanical accuracy and the representation of depth within the treatment of landscape in fresco, was Matteo Giovannetti. It is recorded that Matteo's studio, known playfully as *Roma*, was constructed in the garden, albeit only after the completion of the *Chambre du Cerf*. Still, this would have afforded him with direct access to the raw vegetable materials to be studied for inclusion within his later designs for the palace, as well as ample sunlight. For the pope, too, the two spaces were thoroughly joined together. This particular section of the garden was, as discussed above, the area which lay directly beneath two large cross windows<sup>83</sup> which opened out from his bedroom and from the *Chambre du Cerf*. Whilst these windows would have provided a very literal connection and clear permeability between the two spaces: namely for the viewer, who was able to see both painted and real gardens in one glance (as well as experiencing the sounds and scents from the latter) but also for the birds, who might have passed between the two spaces, these windows were also fitted with green silk-covered window seats. The intention here was for the occupant of either room to sit on the threshold between the painted gardens and the real ones, and to be at once immersed in painted nature and watching the gardens outdoors, and to be able to admire the painted verdure whilst catching the scents and sounds emanating from the gardens below. Both were to be encountered and interpreted simultaneously, with study in and study *of* one space enriching and enhancing the experience of the other.

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<sup>83</sup> These were themselves a fourteenth-century innovation.

Sitting on green silk, at this permeable boundary between painted nature and verdant nature herself, it would have been quite possible to forget which realm one was inhabiting. It could even be argued that this was in reality a single space — a single garden which straddled both the imagination and reality, both nature in art and artifice in nature — in which, through the complementary forms of material expression employed in painting and planting the whole could evoke in its varied aspects the stories and images conjured up by the romances.

### 3.8. The Bedroom of Pope Benedict XII at Avignon: from Fabric and Folio to Fresco via the Rinceau Form

The ‘Chambre du Pape’, or the Pope’s bedroom, is more or less a lone survivor of the extensive fresco painting that was initially carried out in the ‘old palace’ at Avignon. Decoration in Benedict’s bedroom has long been neglected by scholarship in favour of Clement VI’s extravagant, more overtly naturalistic and animated Chambre du Cerf, and though recent work by Anheim (2015) and Vingtain (1998) has sought to readdress this lacuna, their focus has remained on a uniquely and narrowly religious symbolism for the space. While this is, of course, an obvious conclusion to draw simply from the identity of the room’s main occupant, it is essential to consider the ornamentation in a secular context too since this was just as deeply rooted in the princely, courtly culture at Avignon. Benedict may now be regarded by posterity as Clement VI’s more modest predecessor, but the architectural and resoundingly garden-themed ornamental furnishings which he commissioned for the palace were by no means any the less luxurious or transformative than those that were to follow.

We shall come on to the *Chambre du Cerf* in due course, which is comparatively well known and widely regarded as a landmark in the development of landscape painting. The bedroom produced for Benedict XII, on the other hand, was equally important, and represents the culmination, or even apotheosis in many respects, of the culture which treats the garden as an artistic site, a melding of the natural and the strange, a culture that was heavily shaped and influenced by the dream-like worlds represented in romance literature. This was an attempt to realise that almost intangible world which is present in the text and in the manuscript miniature on a grand scale, making the dreams of poets concrete. In realising this vision, it was necessary to call upon many different arts, and here more than anywhere else, the interactions between textiles, fresco or mural painting, architecture, and gardening can be seen. Many different arts were interlaced together in this one site of exceptional artistic interaction and collaboration: in such a highly-concentrated site of exchange, growth, and twisting, the liminal sites are essential. Over the following pages, as in previous chapters, we will pay particular attention to the thresholds between these various arts.

After his election to the papacy in December 1334, Benedict XII demolished vast swathes of John XXII's residence and incorporated the remnants into his newly-made palace, later to be called, in its turn, the '*Palais-Vieux*' or '*old palace*'. Almost immediately, painters were instructed to begin decorating and embellishing this new construction, but because the whole site underwent vast further transformations and renovations under Clement VI, Benedict's bedroom is in fact one of the only places within the palace where fresco painting from this slightly earlier period has survived. Located on the fourth floor of the Pope's Tower, itself an ambitious project which was completed after a two-year period of construction on the south-eastern side of

the palace in 1337 by Pierre Poisson and his workshop (Anheim 2015: 359),<sup>84</sup> this particular bedroom has a position within the edifice that gives it particular importance. It sits just below the 'Trésor haut', but above the bedchamber of the pope's closest aide and the lower treasury, which held the Church's most precious belongings. It is with good reason that Anheim sees this tower as 'une colonne vertébrale architecturale de l'institution pontificale' (2015: 360): the 'Trésor haut', on the floor above the bedroom, housed the most significant library in Europe. Even if we put the connection between manuscript iconography and the artistic scheme present in the bedroom to one side for a moment, it must be stressed that there was still a close link between the bedroom and the treasury of codices that were kept just above. In Clement VI's time, the Pope's bedroom was subsequently linked to his private library of secular codices, the Chambre du Cerf, in the neighbouring Wardrobe Tower by a passage joining one room to the other. Papal records show that Benedict's XII's bedchamber was decorated between February and May 1337 by a team of artists led by a certain 'Hugo' and one Jean Dalbon - the latter a figure who had been long associated with the papal workshops at Avignon, and who was engaged with various painting projects in the palace until at least 1341.<sup>85</sup> A team led by the French painter Robin de Romans, who had already been engaged as painters in the papal palace, and who were responsible also for the decoration of the *salle de la Garde Robe inférieure* (1343), located two floors below the Chambre du Cerf, as

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<sup>84</sup> For more details on the construction of the Pope's Tower, see Étienne Anheim 2015: 359-74; see also Vingtain 1998: 101-23.

<sup>85</sup> See Vingtain 1998: 56-7 for more details on Dalbon's work; cf. K. H. Schaefer, *Die Ausgaben Der apostolischen Kammer unter Benedikt XII*, 1914: 72, 105, 154 for more information on the involvement of Jean Dalbon and 'Hugo' in the 'picurae turris' and on their work carried out in the Pope's bedroom. Castelnovo dates the decoration in the bedchamber to circa 1338.

well as work in Benedict XII's Grande Chapelle (1335-6) and *studium* (1337), were later brought in around 1343 to carry out some further repainting.<sup>86</sup>



Fig. 3.3. Detail of south wall, by 'Hugo', Jean Dalbon and workshop with additions by Robin de Romans and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.

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<sup>86</sup> The exact nature of this work is unknown, but for more details on Robin de Romans' precise involvement in the decoration of the Palais des Papes, including his work under Matteo Giovannetti in the ornamentation of the Consistoire, and his habitual practice of also decorating the furniture in a room along with the walls, see Dominique Vingtain 1998: 97.



Fig. 3.4. Detail of south wall, by 'Hugo', Jean Dalbon and workshop with additions by Robin de Romans and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.

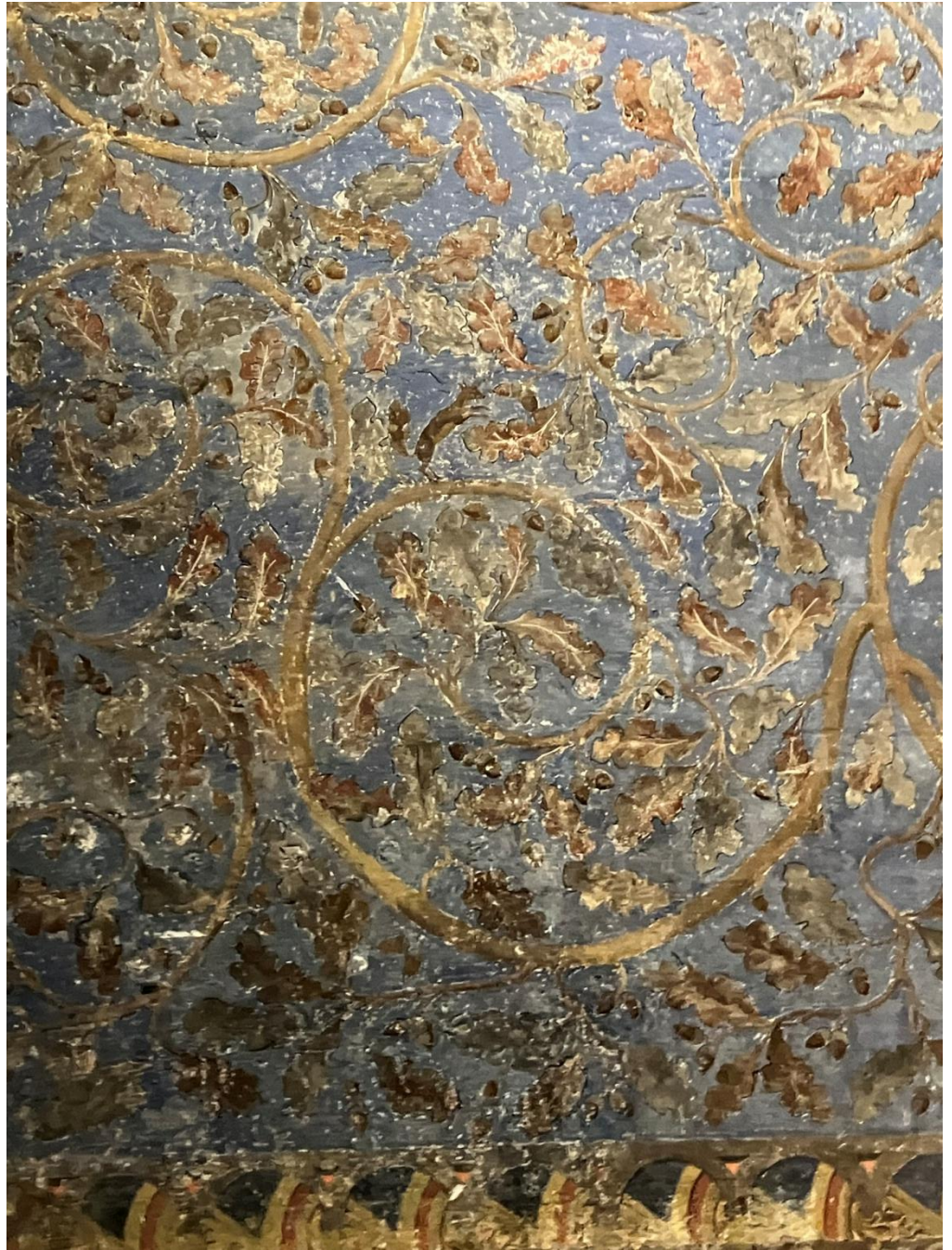


Fig. 3.5. Detail of west wall, by 'Hugo', Jean Dalbon and workshop with additions by Robin de Romans and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.



Fig. 3.6. Detail of north wall, by 'Hugo', Jean Dalbon and workshop with additions by Robin de Romans and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.



Fig. 3.7. Detail of south and west wall with fireplace and window embrasure, by 'Hugo', Jean Dalbon and workshop with additions by Robin de Romans and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.



Fig. 3.8. Detail of east wall window embrasure or 'loggia', by Filippo and Duccio da Siena and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.



Fig. 3.9. Detail of south wall window by 'Hugo', Jean Dalbon and workshop with additions by Robin des Romans, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.



Fig. 3.10. Detail of north-east corner of wall with the two logge window ebrasures. By a 'Hugo', Jean Dalbon and workshop with additions by Robin des Romans, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in Benedict's Bedroom, Pope's Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1337.

The walls in the Pope's bedroom are painted with a dense covering of rinceaux — a form of ornament derived from the acanthus leaf — or masses of foliate scrollwork, which features leaves of oak and vine, and an abundance of acorns and grapes which hang from the curling tendrils. Upon closer viewing, owls and squirrels can also be found perching on the branches, the latter seeking the nuts and the former gazing down intently at the viewer. Other birds and small mammals are present too. The scrolls begin thicker at the bottom and their tendrils taper as they curl up the wall — energetically coiling and unfurling to produce a dense web of organic matter.

In Benedict's bedroom, the swirling foliate rinceaux recall a type of ornament widely used in embroidered and woven late thirteenth-century or fourteenth-century textiles (such as the example in fig. 3.11 below).

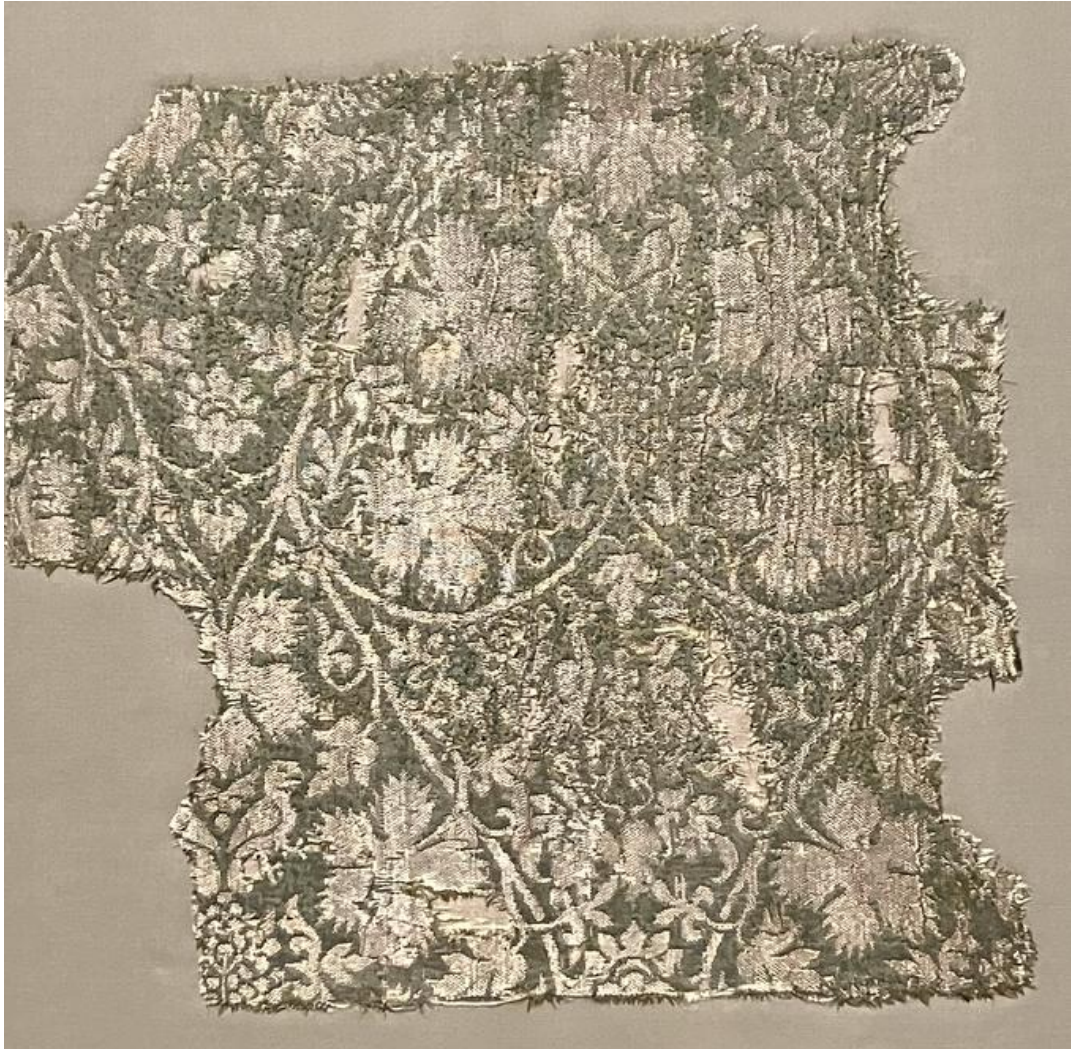


Fig. 3.11. Woven rinceaux and vines, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Florence and Charles Abel Oriental Rug Collection, Ohio, textile fragment, silk, tabby-tabby lampas weave, (Lucca, *c.* 1325-50).

The way in which the fully realised forms rhyme across the space, twisting and coiling sinuously, makes the leafy rinceaux appear to have been embroidered in gold or even added as appliqué onto the bedroom walls in soft gold thread, rather than necessarily suggesting an obviously woven textile. The stems are rendered in such a

way that they stand in relief on the deep but changeful blue ground which appears now to have a sort of abash (to borrow a term used to describe rugs with a mottled, variegated ground). Yet, having said that, as mentioned above, the trunks clearly begin lower down the wall — they spring either from behind or from the top of the illusionistic band of architectural ornament which separates the foliate rinceaux from the draped red curtain (fig. 3.4) — and they form threads which can be followed up and across the wall. Castelnovo, looking to emphasise the two-dimensionality of this portion of the decoration, in contrast with the progressive perspective seen in the window embrasures, struggled to realise that these graceful linear forms flowed continuously from root to tip, seeing them at first as disconnected spirals with no origin or end. He comments: that ‘le pareti sembrano adorne di una serie di grandi spirali foliate puramente decorative’ (Castelnovo 1991: 35). In tracing their growth, however, from the lower register up towards the ceiling there is really a sort of game to be played in finding the places where the spiralling forms touch, come close to touching, and importantly, where they actually cross over, loop in and out, and interweave (fig. 3.10). There is, for any viewer, contemporary or modern, a pleasure to be found in watching these shapes interweave to produce a cohesive whole. At the base the forms (or stems) shy away coyly from crossing over each other, as though afraid to link arms and make contact, yet towards the finer points — the delicate tips and tendrils — and towards the top of the room, they cross over more readily, linking branch and branch with confidence and beginning to supporting each other. It is in the upper register of the room that the forms truly begin to lace themselves together, creating the beginnings of a woven textile of living vegetation.

The leaves of oak, vine, and also common or field maple (strangely unmentioned in the existing scholarship), which spring vivaciously from these

branches and stems, have been painted at differing angles and often overlap the stems (e.g. fig. 3.9). This is a ‘textile’ made to mimic the natural weaving of stems and leaves in the garden outside. Although their precise colouring may have changed over time,<sup>87</sup> it is clear that care was taken to make the leaves appear variegated and varied in texture, tone, and shade — some more reddish, some golden, some dark, and some light. If throughout most of the room, the vine and field maple leaves sit as though they have been pressed onto the walls, this is not the case with the oak leaves, which have been managed rather differently. The oak has been handled, as it often is in gothic sculpture of the period, with greater attention to the three-dimensionality of the leaf. As can be seen in fig. 3.5, the most obvious thing is not so much its multi-lobed outline as its almost goffered or *gondolé* form. It is, in a very real sense, shown in relief. Its undulating and crumpled face makes the whole ornamentation seem even more vivacious and three-dimensional, as though the leaves are peeling and lifting away from any flat plane or open field.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the viewer is drawn to the rich, nutty brown acorns which ripen in abundance on the oak saplings. The grapes, meanwhile, are highlighted with gold to make them stand out from the surrounding vine leaves. Although this is clearly a domesticated setting, where nature has been tamed and even trained to twist and interlace young trees together in this way, the individual forms are so vivacious that the overriding impression is one of life and energy rather than strict adherence to convention. In Fig 3.9, where we can see a bird perched on a vine, gingerly pecking a leaf to extract anything which might be held within its folds, it is apparent that some care has been taken to enhance the animation of the varied rinceaux. Whilst the covering of walls

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<sup>87</sup> Restorations to the pope’s bedroom, and the possible changes in chromatic effect that have resulted from them, will be discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>88</sup> The interplay of apparent recession and projection is produced by the variegated tones, as well as colours, of the leaves against the ground.

with foliate scrollwork, or rinceaux, seems to have been, in a sense, the order of the day, these large swirling forms were clearly very carefully adapted and edited at Avignon to express the diversity of nature. There is great delicacy and variety in the design especially of the minute terminating stems and leaves, and care has been taken to differentiate one kind of plant from another, giving an added pliancy to one, for instance, and a firmness to another. A great effort has been made to render the space as a whole vivacious, animated, and properly organic. The rinceaux are not here just a type of easy ornament lifted from a pattern book or stenciled onto the wall as a formulaic scroll motif, but instead exhibit a lively energy and changefulness that brings the space closer to the feeling of a real garden. It gives the impression of being just as alive and capable of development as the actual garden that would have been experienced from the window, albeit just a little less *sauvage* than that space, populated as it was by a menagerie of real animals.

These fertile rinceaux with their twining branches and coiling tendrils have been said to point directly to the papacy's Roman roots, on the grounds, presumably, that the rinceau is an innately Roman form of decoration. Dominique Vingtain, in a more recent survey of the architectural evolution of the Palais des Papes, has suggested that the rinceau motif was employed at Avignon to make reference to Rome — both papal Rome and the Rome of the ancients and the imperial family (Vingtain 2015: 57). The rinceau form is indeed pervasive in ancient Roman art and has often been seen as characteristic of it, especially when employed in a decorative frieze or border. A fine and (to us) obvious example of the rinceau taking on an even more substantial ornamental role occurs in the Ara Pacis, which has specifically been mentioned by Étienne Anheim in relation to the decorative scheme at Avignon (Anheim 2015: 359-74). That ancient monument, consecrated in 9 BC, features a

series of carved bas-relief panels decked out with curling, foliate rinceaux that are, in a way, remarkably similar to those at Avignon. There seems to be a developing consensus here among scholars working on the Palais des Papes. Still, it cannot be stressed strongly enough that this particular ancient monument of the Augustan period was *not known* at the time of Clement or Benedict,<sup>89</sup> and there is no other specific ancient source that is obviously quoted in the Pope's bedroom. Anheim is careful enough to admit that there is no direct 'imitation' at Avignon that might express an affirmation of imperial power in such clear terms, but still claims, rather less cautiously, that the symbolic force of the form has been, as he puts it, 'sans doute [...] sous-estimée'; he proposes, moreover, that the 'ombre d'Auguste et de l'empire est manifeste' in the employment of the rinceau at Avignon. Do all rinceaux lead to Rome? It is possible to overestimate the importance of the form's historical association with imperial power. If the use of the rinceau at Avignon evokes Roman precedent, it does so only in an exceedingly vague manner, without making any deliberate allusion to any specific Roman source, and without seeking to impress any overt political message on the viewer. There is another aspect to consider. It is not altogether clear, even, that the rinceau form was considered especially 'antique' in Benedict's time, since it is common enough in medieval as well as ancient art, frequently appearing in places where such a straightforward symbolic reading – one that finds in it a claim for the authority of ancient imperial power – is simply inappropriate. It was not necessarily an antiquated form, deployed to make a clumsy statement about the legitimacy of Augustus' legacy, about apostolic succession, or the prestige of an ancient tradition more broadly, but rather one that was current as a decorative device that could be used in manuscripts, Limoges enamels, textiles, and

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<sup>89</sup> The Ara Pacis as we know it is largely a reconstruction of the Mussolini era, though certain fragments were known from an earlier date. There can be no question of direct influence or quotation at Avignon.

paintings alike. Manuscripts of the *Roman de la Rose* — including the Fauvel master's Cod. Gall. 17 and Meaux BM 52 (discussed in Chapter One) — often include, for instance, encircling rinceaux grafted with roses in frontispieces displaying the poet resting in bed. Neither rose nor rinceau there has anything to do with Augustus' shadow, long or short. At Avignon, too, the rinceau resists so simple an interpretation.

Furthermore, the rinceau also appears in other contemporary examples of mural painting, sometimes in conjunction with roses. Fragmentary passages of painted roses surrounded by leaves and encircled by rinceaux remain, for example, on the ruined walls of the ground-floor chambers at the Castelbarco castle at Sabbionara d'Avio near Verona. These almost appear to surpass those in the bedroom in springy, zesty, verdant exuberance, and though the effect is now patchy, it is unsurprising that the decoration here is so renowned for featuring some of the most organically represented roses in fourteenth-century wall painting. The painted roses and rinceaux are, unfortunately, of uncertain date, but must belong approximately to the mid-fourteenth century, since other painted decoration at the castle was carried out around this time, making it therefore roughly contemporary with Benedict's bedroom in the papal palace at Avignon. There may well be more significant ties here than date alone, however. The so-called Camera d'Amore or Stanza d'Amore, which has been dated to 1340-60, is one of the better preserved decorative schemes visible at the castle.<sup>90</sup> That room, which will be examined shortly, was commissioned by Guglielmo Azzone Castelbarco and his wife Tommasina Gonzaga, who were loyal to John of Bohemia and even hosted his son

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<sup>90</sup> See Anne Dunlop 2009: 123-37, and idem 2012: 154-65 for more on that room and on the figure of the god of love as represented there. The best known and most influential study of the iconography in the Camera d'Amore, again focusing on the god of love, is in Panofsky 1972, originally published in 1939.

Charles in the castle at Sabbionara d'Avio in the August of 1333.<sup>91</sup> The guest, who would later go on to become Holy Roman Emperor (as Charles IV, from 1355) would prove to be much closer to and more cooperative with the papacy than his predecessor, Louis IV, whose relationship with Clement VI had been rather strained by comparison. In all probability the roses in the one setting reflect the patron's knowledge of the use of roses in the other, and this is certainly the case in other extant Italian painted rooms of the period that likewise feature the rose. Dunlop comments that, during the Trecento, 'floral motifs were the most popular form of fresco painting in the houses in and around Florence, whose name after all meant the "flowering" city', and also that 'greenery was [...] a kind of default decoration in Tuscany and elsewhere' (Dunlop 2009: 22). So-called *camere delle rose* (as contemporary sources indicate) are known to have existed in the Este palace at Copparo, in the Palazzo Trinci at Foligno, and the Visconti castle at Pavia, where the flowers existed alongside *damiselle*. The rose tends especially to appear in places with strong Avignonnais connections.

At the same time, it may reflect some direct contact with one of the most esteemed works of French literature, indelibly associated with the flower: we know that Tommasina's own brother, Guido Gonzaga, asked for and received a copy of the *Roman de la Rose* from Petrarch at some point between 1340 and 1353.<sup>92</sup> This must have been during one of the periods when Petrarch was in Provence, and it seems he

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<sup>91</sup> See Varanini 1987a: 29-31; idem 1987b: 40-41; Landi 2023: 177-8.

<sup>92</sup> In response to Guido's request, Petrarch sent a manuscript and an accompanying *epistola metrica*. There has been some disagreement about the date of the exchange concerning the *Rose*. Victoria Kirkham suggests 1342-3 (2009: 20). The codex is unfortunately not present in the Gonzaga catalogue of 1407, possibly suggesting that it had ended up elsewhere or even with another branch of the family. Earl Jeffrey Richards, however, cautions that '[t]here is no guarantee that those catalogues which have survived are exhaustive' (Richards 1981: 17). Domenico Ciampoli attempted in 1897 (222) to identify the exact manuscript as Str. App. 8 at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, which, however, would be dated to the fifteenth century by Langlois (1910: 193). The library, following Sebastiano Bisson's judgement (see Bisson 2008: 117) currently regards this codex as a production of the beginning of the fifteenth century. Its recorded provenance goes back to 1722. The *Rose* appears there in French alongside texts in Provençal and a Northern Italian vernacular.

had no trouble locating a copy. In an ornamental capacity, roses were also thoroughly in vogue at Avignon, as we shall see below. The fact that a decorative scheme consisting of rinceaux and roses is used here at Sabbionara d'Avio to adorn an archway above a door means that there is, again, a playfulness in the way in which the form is used over, across, and around the surfaces on which it appears. Seen in such a context, the rose bushes which appear to be springing from the surfaces of the walls transform this small section of the castle into a bower and the whole space into a flourishing rose garden.



Fig. 3.12. Detail of covered archway, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the ground-floor chamber, Great Hall, Castelbarco castle, Sabbionara d'Avio, c. 1340.

At Avignon, the walls are equally painted away as a thicket of foliage, a bower, or even a garden, yet in the case of the bedroom, an illusionistic architectural ornament forming a kind of frieze runs around the upper register of the room: stone quatrefoils, set within squares surrounded by rinceaux, gothic pinnacles, and faux-inlay sections sit just under the ceiling with its painted wooden beams. The whole upper section forms a sort of canopy, and makes the room appear as a trellis-like or pergola structure, despite the lack of clear supporting struts for the rinceaux to twine through and around. With good reason, Enrico Castelnuovo described the room as having ‘un ambiente conchiuso, simulare un graticcio, un pergolato, un aereo padiglione arboreo’ (Castelnuovo 1991: 35). Indeed, being closed off in this way, the room becomes a tranquil place, safely separated off from the rest of the garden, yet within easy reach of it. It is not hard to imagine attempting to look out through the foliage in search of the garden or meadow beyond. In its permeability it is reminiscent of some of the bowers or arbours that feature so memorably in thirteenth-century literature and early fourteenth-century art, which must likewise have exerted an influence on the actual gardens outside, where we know Clement would later (during the 1340s) introduce real bowers and trellises. Particularly striking examples of the bower in different branches of the creative arts are furnished by: the richly carved west façade of the cathedral of Saint-Jean at Lyon (early fourteenth-century); the thirteenth-century *chante-fable*, *Aucassin et Nicolette*;<sup>93</sup> and one particularly famous manuscript of Guillaume de Machaut’s *Dit dou Vergier* (composed pre-1342).

Architectural sculpture represents too large a field to cover here in detail, but in this case there is an especially overt link between motifs derived from secular

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<sup>93</sup> The only manuscript that survives of this text is Français 2168. The text is fairly condensed and appears, tidily, along with musical notation on f. 70r to f. 80v. According to the Bibliothèque nationale de France, it dates to the late thirteenth century (c. 1251-1300).

literature, the design of contemporary manuscript illumination, and the carved stone. At Lyon, a series of now-empty canopied niches project from the west façade of the cathedral, supported on flat consoles decorated on the underside with scenes from popular romance literature. The human action of each vignette is set within a garden-like bower of leaves or flowers, which vary with each console but always frame and enclose the personages and heighten the impression of (illusory?) privacy that is created by the shaded and tucked away position of the scenes. As in the main hall at Saint-Floret, the viewer must look straight up at the reliefs from below in order to read the sculpture, and in one of the episodes there is actually a King Marc-esque figure peeping through a dense screen of oak leaves, watching but not participating in the capture of a sleeping unicorn. Another shows Phyllis riding Aristotle and energetically whipping him with a sort of cat o' ninetails, in a direct illustration of the *Lai d'Aristote*.<sup>94</sup> This episode, similarly popular in ivory workshops, also takes place in a garden and involves a peeping Tom in the form of Alexander the Great, who observes the scene here from the safety of one of the upper foils; these terminal roundels, which are also enclosed by foliate borders that spring from the principal foliate frame, relate to and provide interpretative glosses on the central scenes just as the margins of a manuscript folio relate to and comment on the text and its privileged miniatures: here they mimic a mirror-like *encadrement à médaillons*, and the lower ones are filled with diminutive beasts, such as the philosopher himself has become in his desire for and obedience to his rider. The most important console here represents two smiling lovers in a rose bower that forms a backdrop for them and frames them with a single, winding rotation of a rinceau, and this setting mirrors the action of the scene represented in the middle, where the lady crowns her smitten lover with a

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<sup>94</sup> Composed c. 1220 by either Henri d'Andeli or Henri de Valenciennes.

woven chaplet of flowers. At the corners this bower sends out subsidiary rinceaux that contain the secondary, terminal vignettes, where figures gather flowers in baskets or exchange gifts. The roses are shown both as buds and in full bloom, and all is contained in a *nexus* of nature's making.



Fig. 3.13. Rose bower scene console base, West façade, Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Lyon, Console base, Stone, (Lyon, early fourteenth century).



Fig. 3.14. Unicorn scene, West façade, Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Lyon, Console base, Stone, (Lyon, early fourteenth century).

As in the scene with Aristotle and Phyllis, the bower or garden setting here is meant to be private, and also owes a debt to literary precedent. As indicated above, the bower plays an important role in the narrative of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, where it is not just a private space, but also a place to have a nap, as indeed it is for the ill-fated unicorn. In this twelfth-century work, Nicolette fashions a bower or ‘loge’ for her lover, Aucassin, to sleep in. It is described as follows: ‘Nicolette eut faite le loge, si con vos avés oï et entendu, / molt belle et mout gente, si l’ot bien forree dehors et dedens de flors et de foilles’ (Chpt. XX. ll. 1-3). The use of the past participle, ‘forree’, draws on language used to describe rich textiles lined or literally ‘furred’ with warm and protective insulation, and here it makes clear that the bower, itself a natural woven structure at its core, is invitingly plush, with the foliage and flowers

giving it a comforting ‘pile’ as well as a colourful appearance. We must assume, of course, that she has avoided nettles, brambles, thorns and thistles, when weaving together the thick, textured fabric of this otherwise nestlike shelter.

A representation of a bower very like the one described in *Aucassin et Nicolette* appears in the frontispiece to the text of Guillaume de Machaut’s *Dit dou Vergier* in the famous manuscript BNF Français 1586,<sup>95</sup> discussed briefly in chapter two. As noted there, the distinctive style of the illuminations in this unusually elaborate codex has been connected with contemporary ivories (Randall 1989) and a fragmentary embroidered alms pouch in the Musée de Cluny (see Huchard 2001: 102; Descatoire 2019: 63 cat. 34), which represents a sleeping figure against a backdrop of curling, floral rinceaux treated three-dimensionally in chain-stitch.



Fig. 3.15. A three-dimensional bower in textile form, Cl. 13533, Musée de Cluny, Paris, Embroidered alms pouch, embroidery in silk, gold, and silver thread on linen backing (Paris, c.1340-50).

<sup>95</sup> This manuscript is sometimes called MS C in Machaut scholarship.

The stylised vegetation of that alms pouch (dated to 1340-50) does not obviously represent a bower, but both the form and function of the object itself, as a woven and embroidered pocket, relate in a witty way to the allegorical iconography on its surface: the dreaming ‘homme sauvage’, flowering rinceaux, and three courtly ladies (aspects of his dream vision?) are evidently in a sheltered, pouch-like place framed by living foliage.<sup>96</sup> The sheltered semi-natural setting is evidently associated with the dream vision, as it is in the Machaut manuscript. The structure represented here in the frontispiece to the *Dit dou Vergier* is probably very like the actual bowers installed by Clement during the 1340s in the gardens at Avignon, but it also relates to the imaginative scheme of scrolling bower-like ornament employed on the pouch and in Benedict’s bedroom. The *dit* dates to before 1342, and the manuscript to the mid to late 1340s; at any rate the manuscript must have been produced prior to the death, in 1349, of Bonne of Luxembourg (sister of the aforementioned Charles IV), for whom it was executed. The *dit* itself, which remains one of Machaut’s lesser known texts,<sup>97</sup> opens with the lovesick narrator entering a garden and ambling down a path into an orchard where he aims to divert himself *from* love with questionable success. He sits on the grass admiring his surroundings and swiftly succumbs to sleep, falling into a dream in which he encounters the god of love. No bower actually appears in the text, so its presence in the frontispiece may seem unjustified. Since

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<sup>96</sup> It is unclear whether these ladies are intended as real presences or not. On the one hand they are shown lulling the man to sleep: one crowns him; the second plays an instrument; the third binds him. On the other hand, they appear to represent his desires, in line with similar images of dreamers in contemporary manuscripts, with their illusive visions projected onto their surroundings. If one reading must be chosen, the latter is more probable. An allegorical reading advanced in Huchard 2001 and followed by Descatoire 2019 (63 cat. 34) is currently preferred to an earlier assumption that the scene is a straightforward illustration of Merlin and Viviane.

<sup>97</sup> For more on the *Dit dou Vergier*, mentioned also in the previous chapter, see Barton Palmer 1993; Lawrence Earp 1989 and idem 1995; William Calin 1994; Domenic Leo 2017.

Machaut's text does not mention such a bower, the artist's decision to include it is an interpretative one and not, strictly speaking, illustrative.<sup>98</sup>

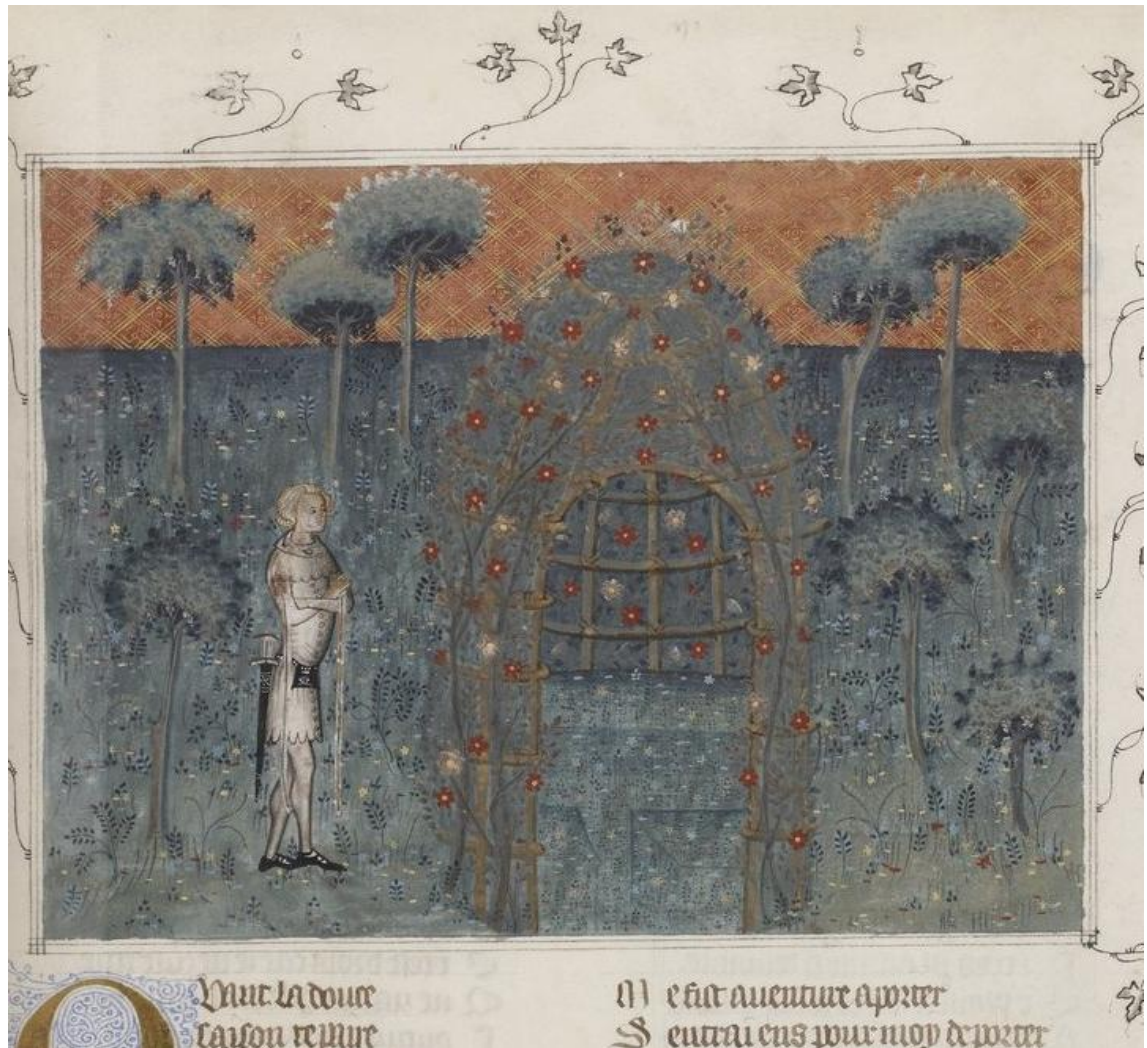


Fig. 3.16. The *Vergier's* bower, *Le Dit dou Vergier*, Paris, c.1340-50, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, BnF fr. 1586, f. 93r.

The bower hints at the importance of the dream within the narrative because elsewhere, this type of construct tends to be associated with sleep. Needless to say, it evokes literary bowers like that put together by Nicolette (in which Aucassin was meant to sleep), and also the bedrooms of numerous *Rose* manuscripts where the

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<sup>98</sup> A tent-like pavilion is, however, described in the *Dit dou Lyon*, which appears in the same manuscript.

curtains are pulled back to reveal decorative rose bushes that encroach upon and envelop the sleeping narrator, or Amant. Domenic Leo has pointed out, with the help of infra-red photography, that this bower was painted with much greater attention to detail than the rest of the miniature, and he has drawn particular attention to the artist's attempt at three-dimensional perspective in the addition of a seat within the structure (Leo 2017: unpag.). The artist's selective meticulousness suggests the symbolic significance of this piece of garden architecture, but it may also, in spite of the structure's absence from the text, indicate that some special instruction was given for what is really a sort of visual interpolation: the structure has been erected without proper textual foundation. That does not mean, however, that it lacks the stability of authorial consent. Importantly, it is believed that Machaut himself was involved in overseeing the production and decoration of this particular codex, not just because of the (early) date of it, but also because of the importance of the patron and his close relationship with her. More than this, we know that this very manuscript was singled out in a 1363 inventory of the collection of Bonne's son Charles V as an unusually luxurious and laboriously worked piece: a 'biau livre en françois à chançons et laiz notez,' with a binding that was 'richement ouvree'.<sup>99</sup> This must have been an expensive production, and one that was closely supervised.

It has been posited that another frontispiece in the same codex — introducing the text of the *Dit dou Lyon* — was inspired by the famous garden of Hesdin, which is also described by Machaut in the *Remede de la Fortune*.<sup>100</sup> This was a place filled, like some of the enchanted gardens of romance literature which inspired it, with mechanical marvels, automata, and strange fountains. We know that there was a *Sale*

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<sup>99</sup> See Earp 1995: 78.

<sup>100</sup> On Machaut's connections with Hesdin, see Wimsatt and Kibler 1988: 35-7; Truitt 2015: 128, 201 n. 51; Goehring 2021: 226-37.

*d'ynde* ('Indian or "blue" room') and *Cambre as roses* ('Chamber with Roses') as well as a *capiele de voirre* ('Glass chapel') and a 'Garden of Love' inspired by the *Roman de la Rose*.<sup>101</sup> Notably there was at Hesdin a château that featured on an upper storey a suite of rooms known as the *gloriette*, which from about 1344 contained an artificial golden tree-fountain set bird shaped spouts that was capable of sprinkling water on visitors:<sup>102</sup> both *gloriette* and magical tree, of course, were lifted directly from the text of the late twelfth to early thirteenth-century *Prise d'Orange*, mimicking the marvellous tower — also called *gloriette* — in which Orable is imprisoned. The literary origin of this type of building (similar *gloriettes* were constructed elsewhere too in the thirteenth century, the term passing into general parlance in France and Italy) was recognised by Jeremy Ashbee in 2004: of such *gloriettes* he concluded that 'their owners wished to invoke a particular set of associations [...] not directly from travellers' tales of eastern architecture, but from literature' (Ashbee 2004: 34).<sup>103</sup> It is recorded that there was at Hesdin a 'king' under the tree-fountain: this must, of course, have been a submerged representation of King Marc, making a cameo appearance in a playful and deliberate case of literary and visual 'contamination'.

Just as significant for us is the fact that Bonne's father John of Bohemia visited Avignon on multiple occasions during the period in which Machaut had been

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<sup>101</sup> See van Buren 1985: 185-92; idem 1986: 115-34; on the rooms see also Ashbee 2004: 32.

<sup>102</sup> See Dunlop 2009: 65; Farmer 2013b 120 n. 9; Goehring 2021, 231. As Farmer notes, the *gloriette* was constructed between 1288 and 1302, and already contained real and artificial birds as early as 1314. The relevant documents are published in Dehaisnes 1886.

<sup>103</sup> Thirteenth-century city ordinances from Milan make clear that the *glorietta* was an elevated place where residents could look down into a neighbours' property: see Ashbee 2004: 22. Ashbee's identification of the *gloriette* with the tower in the *Prise d'Orange* involves a significant departure from the earlier and well known opinion of John Harvey (1981: 105-6) that such structures were in reality brought northwards by Eleanor of Castile, reaching England in 1255. Ashbee has shown that the *gloriette* was the product of a more complicated process of cultural exchange, in which the aforementioned, widely disseminated *chanson de geste* was deeply implicated. Later structures of this type, including the one at Hesdin, were explicitly literary rather than straightforwardly exotic, although the *Prise* identifies the *gloriette* with Saracenic culture and artistry, so the word must still retain connotations of eastern splendour.

serving under him. It is almost certain that Machaut travelled with him on these occasions and was given ample opportunities to witness the gardens, both real and illusory, at Avignon too, meaning that the green and flowery settings described in many of his verses and those which are represented in visual form in *Français 1586* — especially that which opens the *Dit dou Vergier* with its bower and orchard — are very likely influenced by first-hand experience of the great papal contributions in the related fields of garden planning and mural painting. Machaut's own contributions would return those green settings, already shaped in so many ways by literary culture, back to the context of the codex, renewing and enriching the complex and multifaceted culture that centred on the garden by keeping the cycle in full motion, not unlike the wheel of fortune itself, another image that appealed strongly to the poet. From literature, through painting and reality and again to literature, the garden underwent a full spin.

### 3.9. Bowers within Bowers, or *Logge* within *Logge*: Concentric Layers of Enclosure in Benedict's Bedroom, and Gardens in Surviving Later Fourteenth-Century Tuscan Interiors

The bower or arbour-like appearance of Benedict's bedroom as a whole is deepened and enhanced within specific parts of the scheme, where the constructive framework is emphasised, even though it appears to be missing throughout most of the room, with the vegetal forms climbing unaided by the kind of artificial support that would be needed in real life or indeed that may be seen in representations of bowers like that discussed above. On either side of the north-eastern corner of the chamber, adjacent to each other, are two deeply recessed window embrasures that open out

onto the garden below, and here the character of the ornamentation changes significantly to make greater use of tidily ordered and static geometry, making for a pleasing contrast with the organic and even restless curves that lead and divert the eye in the rest of the room, but also complementing the painted rinceaux through a shared preoccupation with slender forms, now topped by trilobed gothic arches, and the whole is still pierced through to reveal the blue beyond (Fig. 3.1, Fig. 3.8, and Fig. 3.10). On the embrasure walls there is a *trompe-l'oeil* layering of gothic tracery, trellising and, suspended on slim threads emerging from the arches, a series of variously shaped and noticeably uninhabited birdcages. The scheme plays with fineness and finesse, constructing its illusionistic space with multiple layers of thin, thread-like forms and emphasising the imaginary openings within what is really a comparatively discrete and enclosed setting. Spatially, these two areas are set apart from the main chamber, offering liminal spaces between it and the outside world and giving the impression of suspension between the two zones, and they serve, in relation to the rest of the bedroom, as bowers within a bower. Much like the bower represented in the Machaut manuscript, the embrasures were fitted with window seats. Previous scholarship on the bedroom (especially Castelnovo 1991: 37; cf. Vingtain 1998: 119) has dubbed these window embrasures *logge*, using the plural of the Italian word (*loggia*) used for a gallery with at least one open side. As it happens this is very close to the French word *loge*, used to describe the bower constructed by Nicolette for Aucassin to sleep in deep in the forest. The decoration on the embrasure walls, which makes such clever and sophisticated use of the specific conditions of the given site and space, has been attributed to two Sieneese painters, Filippo and Duccio, working in the room between 1336 and 1337, and Castelnovo links their contribution to Giottesque models in Padua and Assisi in particular, citing

similarities especially between the empty birdcages in Avignon and the representations of spindly suspended lanterns seen in perspective that might possibly have inspired them (Castelnuovo 1991: 37). Other elements that point to Italian influence in the room as a whole are confined to the illusionistic architectural frame that gives a top and bottom to the bower-like ornamentation that takes centre stage; here again, Giottesque examples have been cited, with the painted quatrefoils and passages of Cosmatesque inlay having been connected with Taddeo Gaddi's work in the Baroncelli Chapel in Santa Croce, completed from 1328-30 (Castelnuovo 1991: 38). On the other hand, the rest of the decoration in the room, and particularly the *rincaux*, is more assertively French, with the closest parallels coming from manuscript illumination even as it draws on contemporary textiles. In slightly later examples of Italian domestic mural painting that we know to have been directly influenced by the painted rooms in Avignon, the architectural *trompe-l'oeil* elements tend to take up more space within the general scheme, with the open garden or *loggia* part of the design condensed into an elevated frieze or upper register, rather like a mezzanine that allows air and expansiveness as the eye climbs closer to the ceiling, whilst the rest of the walls are given a more closed illusionistic character mimicking actual walls or hangings, generally in combination with each other.

Such is the case in the extant paintings at Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati in Florence and Villa Tornabuoni-Lemmi in Careggi (fig 3.22), just outside the city. Painting in the latter Villa was completed in the mid-1370s for the old Guelph Da Galliano family, who, like the Medici, came from Mugello. Painting in the Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati was completed in celebration of a marriage which took place in 1350 between Paolo Davizzi and Lisa degli Alberti: the Davizzi family had strong connections with Avignon, having been personal bankers to the popes since 1309,

and their position of high influence in Avignonnais society was certainly not concealed from those who visited the house. The heraldic insignia of Clement VI (Pierre Roger, also recorded as Rogier and Rosiers) and Pope John XXII appear alongside those of the dauphin of France (the future Charles V), the Holy-Roman Emperor Charles IV (Wenceslaus of Luxembourg (King of Bohemia, sister to Bonne of Luxembourg and son of King John), and other powerful families. These crests are depicted as shields which either hang from trees or are mounted between the arches in the Camera dei Pavoni (fig. 3.17; see Carrara 2017: 21 and 30).<sup>104</sup> Rather suitably, in this garden context, we may note that Clement VI's coat of arms — those of the Roger, Rogier or Rosiers family — are set with six red roses (*gules*) and a blue band on a silver (*argent*) ground. This relegation of the garden to an elevated register in the four surviving frescoed chambers or *cubicula* may reflect to some extent the urban environments in which these houses were often situated, especially in the case of Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, and the tendency in fourteenth-century Italy to place actual gardens on a roof terrace, just above the kitchens which in some cases might use herbs or other ingredients growing within relatively easy reach of the cooking pot, though not all gardens would have been so utilitarian. One striking extant example of this arrangement can be found at Lucca, in the famous Guinigi Tower, which is still crowned by a grove of ancient holm oaks that rustle poetically in the breeze and inevitably recall literary examples like the *gloriette* in the *Prise d'Orange*, which also contains an enchanted tree that grows far from the ground.

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<sup>104</sup> The Davizzi family had installed themselves in Avignon as early as 1309, having moved there with Clement V, the first of the Avignon popes. For more background information on the Davizzi family see Francesca Carrara 2017: 13-20.



Fig. 3.17. Florentine, Wall and window embrasure (showing the insignia of Clement VI), *fresco*, Camera dei Pavoni, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, c. 1350.



Fig. 3.18. Florentine, *fresco*, Camera della Castellana, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, c. 1350.



Fig. 3.19. Florentine, *fresco*, Camera Delle Impannate, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, c. 1350.



Fig. 3.20. Florentine, *fresco*, fireplace and surround in the Camera della Castellana, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, c. 1350.



Fig. 3.21. Florentine, *fresco*, window and surrounding embrasure in the Camera della Castellana, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, c. 1350.

The painting at Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati is of an explicitly literary character, with the garden loggia that occupies the upper register in the master bedroom (the Camera della Castellana – fig. 3.18) hosting recognisable scenes from the late thirteenth-century romance, the *Châtelaine de Vergy*. Giovanna Lazzi has noted the rather suitable choice of this particular story to populate the garden loggia of the Camera della Castellana, pointing out that the Italian name for the tale – *La storia della donna del verziere* – uses in place of *Vergy* the more standard Italian noun *verziere*, which makes the ‘garden’ element clearer than it would be if the French proper noun were retained (2017: 49).<sup>105</sup> In a number of surviving examples

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. Paul Watson (1979: 46) on this point. Watson notes that the term in Tuscan dialect is *Verzù*.

where the garden is presented at the top of the room, the remainder of the wall is, as noted above, given to illusionistically treated architectural motifs and to patterned textiles suspended from a railing which may or may not be fastened to anything more secure, and this curtain pole tends to run in front of the depicted loggia, forming a kind of fence (fig. 3.23) as well as a structural support for the hangings below.



Fig. 3.22. Florentine, *fresco*, ground-floor room in Villa Tornabuoni Lemmi, Careggi, Florence, c.1370.



Fig. 3.23. Detail, Florentine, *fresco*, ground-floor room in Villa Tornabuoni Lemmi, Careggi, Florence, c.1370.

In two rooms at Palazzo Davanzati (the Camera Delle Impannate (fig. 3.19) and Sala dei Pappagalli) this arrangement continues to the floor, thoroughly enclosing the visitor, but in the aforementioned Camera della Castellana (Fig. 3.18) and Camera dei Pavoni (Fig. 3.17) the situation is slightly different: in these cases the hanging (in the latter room there is no wall as such) stops slightly short of the floor, revealing a narrow view of a rose thicket behind the fabric that implies continuity between registers and greater permeability between inside and out, as though the whole room is really a garden, its enclosed *cubiculum* separated from a surrounding copse only by soft curtains, and the 'loggia' above, with its formally planted trees of assorted types, by no means confined only to that upper space. The same rose thicket emerges at the edge of other openings, including windows (fig. 3.21) and fireplaces (fig.

3.20), where the hanging is pulled back or parted to allow traffic in and out of the room and to reveal slivers or sections of the hidden garden — or *verziere* — which extends beyond, always consisting of a dense covering of red roses. In these two bedrooms we also see the edges of the hanging turn back slightly on themselves as they part, showing the illusory textile to be ‘furred’ like Nicolette’s bower, albeit in this case literally, with a plush lining of warm and protective pelts on its reverse.

At Palazzo Datini in Prato, the lavishly built abode constructed for Francesco Datini, the rather shrewd self-made merchant who had long been based in Avignon<sup>106</sup> famously buying (mostly in the cheapest market) and selling (always in the dearest)<sup>107</sup> armour, luxury goods, and textiles, the green spaces on the walls occupy a more obviously large and continuous space, strongly recalling the painted rooms at the papal palace at Avignon in proportion if not in detail or execution, which differs greatly from the workmanship available to Benedict or Clement. Datini returned to Prato in 1383 and set in motion construction work on the *palazzo*. Painting was a little slow at first, with local craftsmen charged with the preparatory stages of the project, but in 1391, great progress came with the engagement of three Florentine artists, Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, Agnolo Gaddi (son of Taddeo Gaddi, a follower of Giotto, whose Baroncelli Chapel at Santa Croce we have already

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<sup>106</sup> See Dunlop 2009: 16-41 for more details on Datini’s building project, the craftsmen he employed to carry out the work, for details of the materials used by the painters, and for a comprehensive bibliography. For the most recent comprehensive study on the house, however, see the two-volume set published in 2012 and edited by Jérôme Hayez and Diana Toccafondi with Maria Raffaella de Gramatica, *Palazzo Datini a Prato. Una casa fatta per durare mille anni*, which contains excellent contributions by Claudio Cerretelli, Philippe Bernardi, Brenda Preyer, Maria Pia Mannini, Margherita Romagnoli, Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli, Marco Masseti, Philine Helas, Jérôme Hayez, Chiara Marcheschi, Claudio Paolini, Diana Toccafondi, Simona Brambilla, Giuliano Pinto, Veronica Vestri, Vanessa Castelnovi, Francesca Carrara, Lia Pescatori, Francesca Piqué, Svitlana Claudia Hluyko, Cecilia Frosinini, Letizia Montalbano, Michela Piccolo, Gabriele Ciolini, and Maria Raffaella de Gramatica.

<sup>107</sup> See Bruce Cole’s excellent article on the house for reference to a letter (one of many) detailing Datini’s rather less than honourable business practices (Cole 1967: 61).

mentioned above), and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini. This house, complete with one of the first ‘botanical’ gardens in Italy — now sadly but unsurprisingly lost — a garden loggia decorated with flowers<sup>108</sup> and peacocks roaming around outside, might be considered Datini’s own personal take on the papal palace, albeit scaled down in line with the constraints imposed by purse and social standing. It maintained the Avignonais and papal concern with gardens both in its wider setting and its interiors, expressing this also at those permeable points where inside and outside merge and meet, such as around windows, *logge* and doors.

Preserved in the extensive archives at Palazzo Datini is a small annotated drawing, apparently by Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, depicting a *palco* (a platform, stage, box, or loge) of impressively large dimensions.

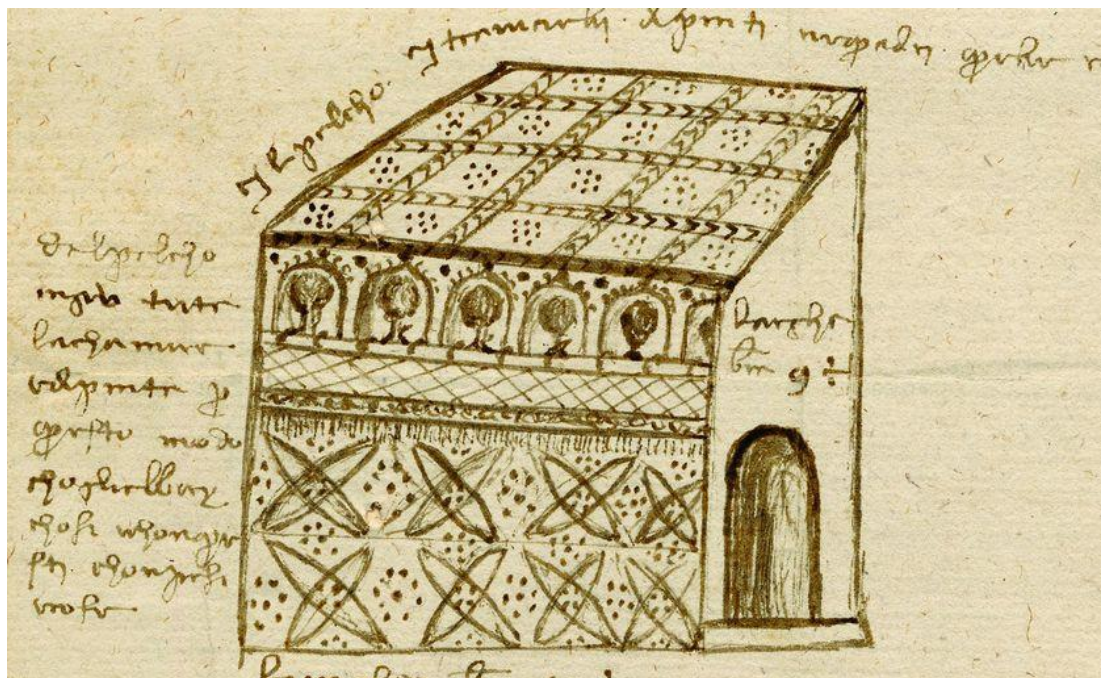


Fig. 3.24. Annotated drawing of a painted room, called *Il Palcho*, Bartolomeo di

<sup>108</sup> It is recorded that the loggia and its decoration suffered from damp problems and in 1510 in particular a painter called Michele di Francesco was paid a sum to restore the existing painted ornamentation. The account specifies that Michele and his team ‘abbiamo fatta dipigneree rifiorire di nuovo.’ See Dunlop 2009: 26, 228 n. 46.

Bertozzo, *carte sciolte*, Palazzo Datini, Prato, Prato State Archives, Datini, 239, inserto 7, undated.

A schematic cut-away rendering is given of the interior decoration of the *palco*, and Bartolomeo provides the following explanatory notes:

Il palcho i travicelli dipinti nei quadri quelle rose cosi. / Dal palcho in giu tuta la chamera e dipinta per questo modo cho gli alberi chosi e questi chonpasi e rose. largha br 9.5 lunghezza br 13.5

Dunlop refers to this drawing in her discussion of Palazzo Datini, where she uses it as evidence that such decoration was commonplace, even proposing that it might be ‘a record of the samples presented by Bartolomeo di Bertozzo to the patron’ (Dunlop 2009: 25). Importantly, she observes that the design does not actually correspond with anything surviving at Prato. She neglects to mention, however, that it *does* represent with remarkable precision the decorative schemes employed in certain rooms at Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati and also at Villa Tornabuoni-Lemmi in Careggi, where an upper loggia set with trees in each of its arches emerges from behind a railing from which a hanging is flatly and evenly suspended, the equal distribution of its weight achieved with a network of fine filaments that loop over the pole. This type of hanging is most clearly seen in Villa Tornabuoni-Lemmi, but also in the Camera dei Pavoni and Camera della Castellana at Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati. The fictive architecture of the upper register in the drawing indicates crocket-bearing arches, which can be seen in the Camera dei Pavoni, but not the other examples. In the other painted rooms at Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, the illusory hanging is suspended from painted loops projecting from a stone cornice, meaning that the fabric hangs with a natural drape and deformation of the tile-like pattern, rather than

neatly and continuously from a straight railing. It seems likely that Bartolomeo's drawing represents a room somewhere other than Prato, and it demonstrates very clearly that the painting at Palazzo Datini was carried out with a strong awareness of what other prominent individuals had been putting in their homes in and around Florence, their own decorative schemes also directly influenced by the papal trendsetters in Avignon. In Datini's case there must have been a competitive edge here, the self-made man wanting to keep up with (and surpass) the Joneses, even if he could not make sufficiently impressive family trees of his forested walls: his own crest appears alongside that of his comparatively high-born wife, but his relatives in high places could not be trumpeted as they were at Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati. Only at a very late stage, in 1409 could the arms of Louis II d'Anjou be added to the decoration in honour of the latter's visit in the November of that year. Following a second visit in the spring of 1410, Louis granted Datini the right to add the fleur-de-lys to his own arms; Datini must have been delighted, if a little poorer after entertaining his royal lodger, but any satisfaction would have been short-lived because he himself died in August that year (Cole 1967: 80; c.f. Origo 1957: 334).

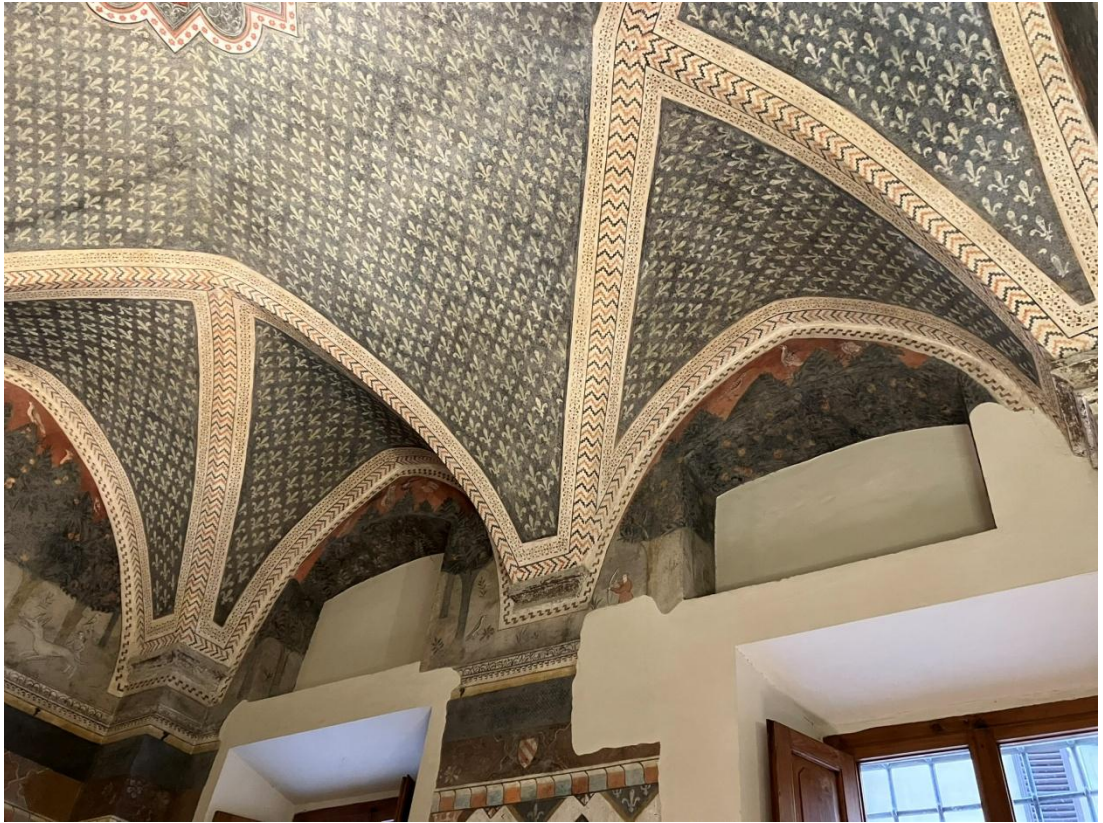


Fig. 3.25. Agnolo Gaddi and Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, wall with window embrasure and vaulting in the Sala, *fresco*, Palazzo Datini, Prato, c.1391.



Fig. 3.26. Agnolo Gaddi and Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, detail of a lunette in vaulting in the Sala, *fresco*, Palazzo Datini, Prato, c.1391.

In the drawing, the flat coffered roof is painted with roses, alluding to the bower-like structures created elsewhere and particularly in Benedict's bedroom in Avignon, the painted beams actually mimicking the trellis structure given to the bower in the Machaut manuscript. The painted rooms at Palazzo Datini are bower-like in a rather different way, since they are capaciously vaulted, in a particularly attractive show of one-upmanship. Roses are not, however, by any means absent, and the decorative scheme at Prato recalls Avignon particularly in one of the principal rooms, the so-called Camera terrena delle due letta. This was a bedroom used to accommodate important visitors to the house — including Louis d'Anjou —

and many records exist concerning its construction, decoration, and furnishing, covering details that are no longer present in the room itself.



Fig. 3.27. Agnolo Gaddi and Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, wall with window embrasure and vaulting in the Camera terrena delle due letta, *fresco*, Palazzo Datini, Prato, c.1391.



Fig. 3.28. Agnolo Gaddi and Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, wall with window embrasure and vaulting in the Camera terrena delle due letta, *fresco*, Palazzo Datini, Prato, c.1391.

In the room, a substantial lower register representing a rose hedge, much like that in the two bedrooms at the Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, although larger, was also painted near the floor. Reaching the window embrasures, which were, as in Benedict's bedroom, fitted with window seats, these rose hedges climbed high enough to arch around and enclose the windows themselves, suggesting a similar bower-like structure to those we have already encountered.<sup>109</sup> This is not well preserved in the room at present, but a record concerning the commission for the

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<sup>109</sup> A restrained version of this arrangement is also present at the Castello della Manta, near Saluzzo. In the Sala baronale, the painted foliage and beasts that form a backdrop to the 'fountain of youth' scene continue into the window embrasures, but the arcuated tops are uniquely treated with frieze-like bands of rinceaux and roses.

decoration from Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, Agnolo Gaddi and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini describes the scheme in some detail:

La volta della chamera a gigli gialli nel campo azuro, con li compassi dipinti armi in tutto cho rrìgoglio [...] le mura di detta chamera, intorno dipinta ad alberi e panchali [...] ghuancie di due finestre di deta chamera [...] el palcho di detta chamera, dipinto con compasi e rose.

The term *palco* here refers to the entire lower register, which occupies about the same amount of space as a dado in modern terms, and which seems to have served as a backdrop for continuous benches running around the room. Nor were the roses confined only to the window embrasures — window ‘cheeks’, as the records say — or to what might be thought of as a subordinate register, because almost all of the *alberi* depicted above are in fact also rose trees, garnished with abundant red buds and blossoms. These are interspersed on one wall only with a few pines, which reinforce the enchanted and overtly literary atmosphere, evocative as they are of some of the famous trees of romance literature, including, most prominently, that which grows by the Fountain of Narcissus in the *Roman de la Rose*, always strongly associated with love and diversion.<sup>110</sup>

We also know that the wooden beds themselves in these kinds of rooms were enclosed and painted, though we have no surviving examples. A local painter by the name of Arrigo who was employed by Datini for many years submitted an invoice to the estate just after Datini’s death that mentioned, among other jobs carried out, a ‘letto chon una lettiera murata e intonichata per me Arrigho e dipinta’ (Archivio Statale di Prato, Datini 1173). The furniture and associated textiles must have

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<sup>110</sup> Paul Watson (1979: 142 n. 26) commented that the ‘Datini frescoes [...] have no epithalamic connotations’, but had perhaps not noticed the presence of the pine, which could certainly be taken to suggest otherwise.

complemented the mural decoration greatly, juxtaposing with the relatively open forested — or rather rose-thicketed — areas depicted all around a comparatively enclosed and protected space, a condensed version of the bedroom as a whole, and a *cubiculum* within the *cubiculum*. These likely played in a similar way with the inversion of interior and exterior, bringing the garden right into the dreamer's inner sanctuary.

### 3.10. Curtains, Real and False, Green Carpets, and Roses: Soft Furnishings in the Indoor Garden

Textiles, both fictive and tactile, also played an important part in the decorative scheme in Benedict's bedroom in the papal palace at Avignon. Here again the lower register of the painting was treated as a soft, warm red valance-like hanging suspended at intervals from metal loops emerging from a band of illusionistically treated architectural ornament, its upper edge scalloped like the hangings in the Sala dei Pappagalli and Camera delle Impannate at the Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, though more affected by the resultant vertical folds, as would befit a finer, lighter cloth. There is no playful parting of this hanging either here or in the Chambre du Cerf, which features a similar lower register treated in a warm red, comparable to the revealing openings we have seen in certain rooms at Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, or like the wonderful red ermine-lined number that is exploited in the famous Camera d'Amore in the Castelbarco castle at Sabbionara d'Avio (painted just a few years after Benedict's bedroom, about 1340, by the Veronese Master of Santa Felicità or the circle of that painter).<sup>111</sup> There, the hanging is given centre-stage, and allows for

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<sup>111</sup> Dunlop has suggested that in her view 'the relation is extremely close', though other scholars have been cautious about any more confident attribution (Dunlop 2012:154 n. 3).

numerous dramatic entrances and exits as we move around the room, encountering the (rather frightening) god of love and lovers themselves, traditionally believed to be representations of Tristan and Iseult, though the iconography is not particularly recognisable and there is, crucially, no ‘orchard rendezvous’ to conclude the matter.<sup>112</sup> There the windows break in upon the largely supernatural action, heightening the drama by revealing spectacular views of Mount Vignola and the Vallagarina, the embrasures quietly, even cosily fur-lined here as though in deference to the inimitable colours and solemnity of the landscape.



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<sup>112</sup> It has been shown that Guglielmo and Tommasina came into contact with romance literature in the French language, and in particular with a manuscript containing the exploits of *Tristan and Iseult*. This was in the possession of the Bonacolsi of Mantua in 1325, but passed into Gonzaga hands following the insurrection of 1328, led by Tommasina’s father, Ludovico I Gonzaga (also known as Luigi). Guglielmo was himself involved in the uprising. For further details see Delcorno Branca 1998b: 385-93. As noted in this chapter, Tommasina’s brother Guido asked Petrarch to send him a copy of the *Roman de la Rose* and the poet obliged. The date of the exchange is uncertain but must have occurred at some point between 1340 and 1353: Kirkham (2009: 20) suggests 1342-3.

Fig. 3.29 Detail of north wall, attributed to Master of Santa Felicità (or circle of), *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Camera d'Amore, central tower, Castelbarco castle, Sabbionara d'Avio, c. 1340.



Fig. 3.30. Detail of west wall window embrasure, attributed to Master of Santa Felicità (or circle of), *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Camera d'Amore, central tower, Castelbarco castle, Sabbionara d'Avio, c. 1340.



Fig. 3.31. Detail of south wall, attributed to Master of Santa Felicità (or circle of), *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Camera d'Amore, central tower, Castelbarco castle, Sabbionara d'Avio, c. 1340.

The characters do not come and go through these real access points, but slip in and out rather through the fictive openings between furry curtain and furry curtain, as though the ermine hangings make up, together, a sort of tent whose interior and exterior are ambiguous and interchangeable depending on the requirements of the narrative.

Here at Avignon, in Benedict's bedroom, the lower register must still have made for a striking contrast not only with the rest of the mural painting present in the chamber, but also with the actual furnishings commissioned specially for the space. As in the case of Palazzo Datini, numerous records remain which give a remarkable

clear idea of what these furnishings were like in the very period with which we are concerned, both in the bedroom and the wider palace. The archives detail multiple purchases made from 1336 onwards of hangings, vestments, liturgical ornaments, tapestries, textiles worked with orphrey, tablecloths, leather-covered cushions, and even a bishop's throne, all acquired from Italian merchants who had settled in Avignon. Vingtain comments that the records indicate a striking 'homogénéité du décor textile du palais' (Vingtain 1998, 178), with the majority of the hangings both within the pope's private chambers and elsewhere — as though spilling out into the public areas of the palace — described in the archives as green and covered in red roses. This type of decoration, as ubiquitous as the stripe or the polka-dot in other times and places, appeared on the rugs, tapestries, bench coverings and curtains, and proliferated especially in the private quarters. The rugs, which hailed from Paris and Spain, and which were bought in bulk, with up to sixteen of them purchased in one innings, are described either as green with red roses, or, a little like Nicolette's bower, as 'poilus', the word indicating a thick, or even shaggy pile.<sup>113</sup> Cushions destined for the chapel and for the pope's bedroom were of silk, filled in the former with cotton, while those intended for Benedict's bed were stuffed with down. Even the Treasury was decorated with green cloths. At an early stage, in April 1336, three exceedingly large tapestries decorated with red roses were purchased, with the precise destination unspecified, but five further tapestries and two bench covers with the same ornamentation were ordered in May the same year specifically for the

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<sup>113</sup> Benedict is reputed to have kept a rug with parrots and white swans in front of his throne. Kurt Erdmann speculated in 1970 that this might be represented in a predella panel (*St. Catherine before the Pope at Avignon*) by the Sieneese painter Giovanni di Paolo, now in the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid. Erdmann dated the panel to 1440 but it is now thought to be from 1460-3, the event depicted having taken place in 1376 under Gregory XI; Erdmann suggested that Benedict's rug might have been retained by his successor (Erdmann 1970: 19-20). It seems unlikely to be an accurate representation of the original, though the rug represented may be identified as a real, but rare, Anatolian type where one animal is represented in each field. Even if inaccurate, it could plausibly reflect a wider cultural memory, more than a century after Benedict's papacy, of the actual object.

chapel and his bedroom. In November 1336, Benedict purchased green serge cloth for his own bed curtains, complementing them with cushions in red silk that would have tied in with the warm lower register in the room and, when seen in relation to the roses represented all around, must have appeared like enlarged blossoms themselves. The bedsheets (very numerous) were green. The whole room, then, already painted as a bower of switchy, spiralling oak, maple, and grapevine, and featuring further bower-like *logge* in the window embrasures, also contained a soft, thornless, slumber-inducing ‘rose bower’ in the bed itself, encompassed and enclosed within multiple concentric layers of fictive garden, as though the pope had finally reached the innermost and longest desired sphere within Deduit’s garden in the *Roman de la Rose*. Guillaume de Lorris might have placed Papelardie (Pope-Holiness) outside the garden, but here the allegorical imagery of the dream-interior of the poem was full realised and lived as a reality, its influence penetrating to the highest and itself most influential position of acceptance and promotion. We must not forget, however, that this too was a liminal space, and a point of access into another world, as is the case in frontispiece miniatures and historiated initials accompanying, or even encasing, the opening of the *Rose*. Perhaps the most telling thing is the fact that, while perfectly willing and eager to alter the rest of the palace almost beyond recognition, Benedict’s successor Clement kept this room just as it was, preserving it and using it as Benedict had done, though the experience of it would be changed by the addition of his own nearby *Chambre du Cerf*. Clement even organised the restoration where necessary of portions of the ornamentation in the room but, quite remarkably, refrained from altering the decorative scheme.

Roses were particularly associated with spaces intended for pleasure and diversion, but also served an important function within Catholic ceremony, which

already held the flower in high esteem and seems to have maintained an obscure tradition of crafting roses in pure gold to serve some ceremonial function. During the Avignon papacy in particular there was a revival and expansion of this practice, with the popes as far back as Clement V — the first Avignon pope — commissioning a rose each year to be given on the fourth Sunday of Lent as a reward to the most worthy individual in the court, the particular treatment of the flower and weight of gold employed dependent upon that worthiness. During the papacy of John XXII most of these roses were imported from Italy via a merchant by the name of Rico Corboli, who had set up shop in Avignon, but from 1328 the production was transferred to Avignon, and to the nimble hands of the Sienese goldsmith Domenico di Jacopo. An extant rose — an extraordinary survival — attributed to another Italian goldsmith, Minucchio da Siena, and given in 1330 to Rudolph III, Count of Nidau, is preserved in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. The practice continued under Benedict, Clement, and their successors, and we know that between 1365 and 1368 one of the most celebrated goldsmiths to work in Avignon, Giovanni di Bartolo Guidi, was tasked with the creation of four roses (Müntz 1888: 3-20; Lightbown 1978: 90). The greater emphasis placed upon this tradition during this papacy must, like the peppering of roses all around the palace, have had something to do with the contagious reverence given to the rose in specific works of secular literature and in courtly culture more broadly.

### 3.11. *Picturae Viridis*: A Question of Colour

The prevalence of green within the general scheme can also be connected with a wider symbolism within the Church that connected the colour with life, hope, and

renewal, all qualities that were related ultimately to its presence in nature and the garden setting, and green has often been thought synonymous with the Church itself as a result of its extensive employment by it, yet many of the positive attributes given to the colour were present already in ancient literature, as in Pliny the Elder, who credited verdigris and emeralds with improvements to eyesight (Pliny, *NH* 9.34). Hildegard von Bingen likewise suggested, for those with feeble eyes, a course of prolonged gazing upon a green meadow (see Compton 2019: 33-4). The colour had equally strong connotations during the medieval period with some of the most memorable ekphrastically rendered *loci* of romance literature, whether of the photosynthesising sort or otherwise: as we have already seen, towers of green marble, like that in *Floire et Blancheflor* or Marie de France's *Guigemar*, exercise a particular fascination, though the colour may also indicate jealousy and other less pleasing qualities in those instances. Benedict was not the first to make noticeable use of green at Avignon, though his contribution was evidently transformative.

The colours employed in the earlier painting of the chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Doms and terrace cloister (1318, under John XXII), much of which was entrusted to Pierre Dupouy (or 'du Puy', who also carried out, at about the same time, much of the painting at Pont-de-Sorgues), are quite extensively documented (see Vingtain 1998: 80-4), and included costly azurite, ochre, coal black, minium, vermilion, and carmine, employed with a range of binding agents and vehicles. In the cloister 'bleu d'Allemagne' – another term used for azurite, or copper carbonate – was employed on the vaulting and set with stars in gold leaf, roses in silver, an arrangement that was also used in parts of the cathedral, though tin was substituted for the precious metals in the new consistory built on the eastern wing of the palace. Among pigments ordered for the chapel of Saint-Etienne, which was part of the

episcopal palace itself and would later form the basis of Benedict's much larger Grande Chapelle (constructed 1335-6; see Vingtain 1998: 98-101), were azurite, carmine, 'verdet de Grosia', (verdigris, also derived from copper) and 'blanquet d'Ampulia' or 'Puglian white', an elusive pigment mentioned in numerous medieval technical treatises as 'album de Apulia' (Merrifield 1849: 1. 238; Anonymous, *De colorum diversitate tractatus* ms. Palatin 1339, Rome, Vatican Library, 1, c. 1300, quoted in Cannella 2006: 197 n. 1). This was distinct from both bone white and lead white, which is sometimes said to have been the 'only white available for artists until the seventeenth century' (Clemens and Graham 2007: 32), but which nevertheless could react with verdigris. From the records that have survived as much as from the murals themselves it appears that a very vast range of blues and greens would have been achievable and there can be no doubt that the painters at Avignon capitalised on this into the 1340s. Green textiles, such as those purchased by Benedict, were particularly costly to produce, on the other hand, since the admixture of blue and yellow dyes necessary to produce a cloth of reasonably even colour required skill and expertise, though some degree of variegation has often actually been a desirable quality in pile-woven textiles especially. Green signalled hope and health, attributes that were indelibly associated with love and beauty, but was also in many respects inherently liminal in its changeability and instability, at least from the craftsman's perspective.

That instability connected with the colour has been the source of problems for previous scholars assessing Benedict's bedroom, which did not escape major twentieth-century interventions that might now be considered to have been misjudged or, additionally, as off-putting factors for the art historian. During the mid 1930s the 'big name' interior designer Armand-Albert Rateau was brought in to

carry out a swift, yet drastic and ultimately catastrophic restoration.<sup>114</sup> Castelnuovo puts it very mildly indeed when he comments that the extent to which the chromatic range was heightened and intensified remains a topic of debate (1991: 35). Despite this, Castelnuovo himself gives the fullest picture of the situation. Papal records show that on 21st March 1337, Hugo, who is described as a painter following the Roman Curia, was paid for the restoration of ‘*picturae viridis camere pape palatii*’, and that on 1st March 1339, the veteran painter and favourite of Benedict, Jean Dalbon, was paid for painting four beams in the bedroom green. As we have seen, the painted decoration was complemented and enhanced by the verdant textiles, but the implication of such records would appear to be, as Castelnuovo rightly identifies, not only that the bedroom as a whole would have appeared, at a glance, thoroughly green, but that the *painting* would have struck the viewer as primarily green in effect, which is not the case now. Having highlighted this discrepancy, Castelnuovo muses that the term *viridis* could be used in a figurative but still accurate sense to describe the general tenor of the decoration, which still makes the room a viridescent place in the sense that it is rich with vegetation. It seems unlikely that the ground on which the golden, swirling, foliate rinceaux sit, which currently appears as a deep, intense, but patchy blue, could actually have been green, though the colour may well have been more prevalent in the leaves. Vingtain observes that there remain in places passages of ‘un bleu plus lumineux, plus proche probablement’, she suggests, ‘du fond initial’, and comparatively unaffected by restoration efforts, ‘lourdemment’

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<sup>114</sup> Rateau is still probably best known for his work as an *ensemblier*, furniture maker and high end interior designer during the vogue for the Art Deco style, which could not be further from the character of the decoration at Avignon. He is better remembered for having served the social elite of 1930s Paris than for having worked as a restorer of historical frescoes. His involvement at Avignon might be seen as unusual, yet he was also involved in a sixteenth-century spiral staircase restoration in the Fountains Court at Leeds Castle in Kent, and he spent his formative years studying murals, especially at Pompeii in 1914. See his entry in *The Grove Encyclopaedia of Decorative Arts* (Campbell 2006: 254).

executed (Vingtain 1998: 108). In 1991 Jean-Pierre Blanc, former curator of the Palais des Papes, observed in Benedict's *studium*, where the rinceau-based ornamental scheme of the bedroom was extended, 'un fond bleu clair, tirant parfois sur le vert turquoise'; on this lighter toned and slightly greenish ground, as he observed, were 'peints de petits rinceaux de feuillages aux tiges frêles, portant des fleurs rouges ou blanches' (Blanc 1991: 37).<sup>115</sup>

An alternative that has not been considered is that the effect was deliberately variegated, changing across the room and playing subtly with different intensities of tone or hue, though the use of a blue background obviously connects the ornamentation with the rich blue grounds favoured in manuscript illumination and in works decorated with opaque or translucent *basse-taille* enamel, described in the period as *azuré* or *d'azur*, both arts offsetting the depth of that ground with gold, rather as the yellow ochre rinceaux stand proud against the background in Benedict's bedroom. On the other hand, green grounds were used during the fourteenth century in *cloisonné* enamels and especially with the rarer *plique à jour* technique, where it seems to have been employed especially with foliate forms, the green ground in these cases, rather than the blue, associated with translucency (see Lightbown 1978: 64-5). If the overall effect in Benedict's bedroom *was*, as the available sources suggest, green, then it must also have emphasised the feeling of enclosure within a dense foliate setting, as we might expect from the height of summer rather than spring, though the play seems to have been precisely one between the impression of enclosure and openness, with the range of different arts employed contributing in different ways, materially, to express and explore this continuing opposition between privacy and concealment on the one hand, and the open air on the other. The

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. Vingtain 1998: 134, where the traces on the walls are described as showing a 'bleu-vert' ground. Vingtain observes that the flowers are accompanied in the *studium* by leaves that are particularly 'découpés', evoking ivy.

construction and decoration of the *Chambre du Cerf* a few years later would have changed the effect of the bedroom, intensifying the sense of safety and enclosure offered there by contrast with its own wide and continuous spaces. The rooms are of course interconnected, and can be seen as entering into a sort of dialogue with each other, the earlier room becoming part of a larger decorative scheme and more open garden landscape, which would eventually break out into the exterior of the building itself. We have contrasting visions of the garden here: the former protective, artificial, at once highly worked and independent of mere structural supports; and the latter spacious, in a sense less oneiric, for all its mysterious expansiveness, and contrastingly populated by elegant figures that were entirely absent in the serene bedchamber. The only occupants — beside the pope himself — who have a foot in both camps are the birds that have flown from their cages — so ‘*étrangement vides*’, as Vingtain comments (Vingtain 1998: 119) — in the window embrasures of the bedroom, instead spreading and proliferating across the swirling *rincaux* and finally escaping into the extended landscape introduced by Clement next door, where the various personages represented in the comparatively open scenery are actively looking to recapture them. Benedict is known to have kept actual birds in specially constructed cages in the room (Vingtain 1998: 244), and even loose, capable of mixing and mingling with their illusory, painted counterparts on the walls and of crossing the artificial boundaries that constrain human beings, much as they do on the manuscript page.

### 3.12. Clement VI’s *Chambre du Cerf*: An Alternative and Equally Immersive Vision of the Interior Garden



Fig. 3.32, North wall and recessed section, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.



Fig. 3.33, West wall (loss where the deer would have been) and north-west corner, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, fresco and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.



Fig. 3.34, South-west corner, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.

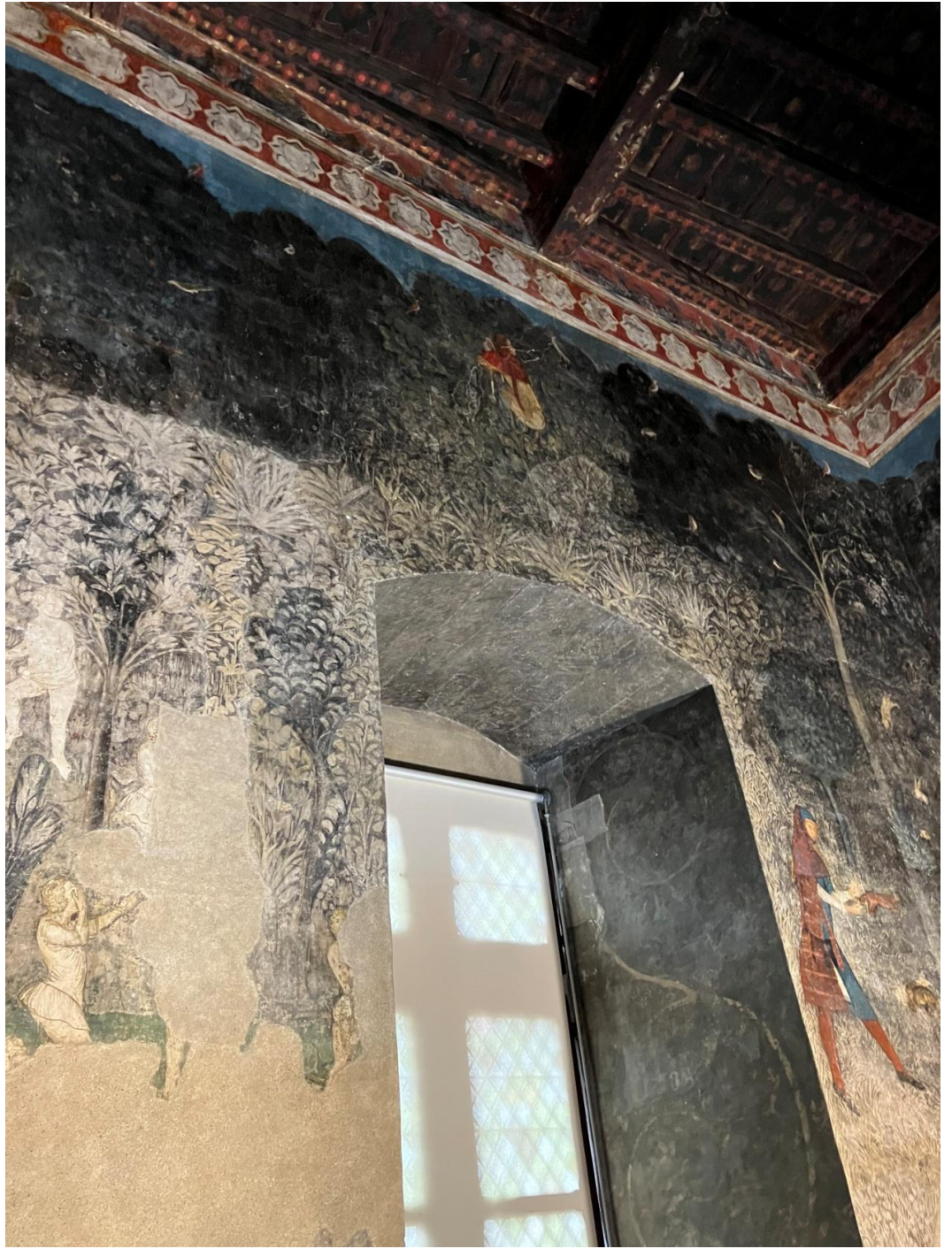


Fig. 3.35, South wall and south window embrasure, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, fresco and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.



Fig. 3.36, East wall and east window embrasure, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.



Fig. 3.37. North-east corner, entrance through to Benedict's bedroom, east wall and part of east window embrasure, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.



Fig. 3.38, Detail of east wall, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.



Fig. 3.39, Detail of north wall, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.



Fig. 3.40, Detail of north wall, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.

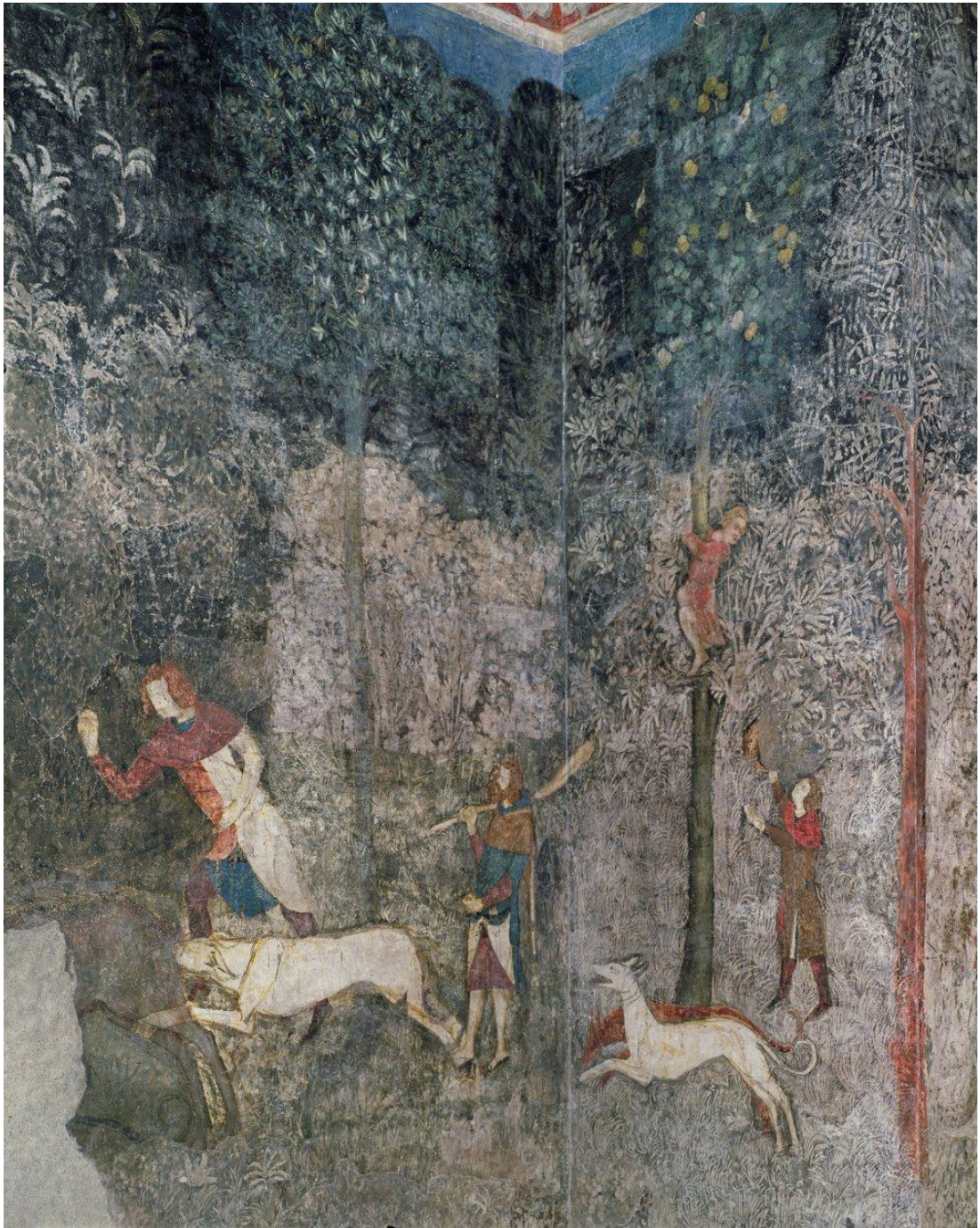


Fig. 3.41, Detail of north-west wall, by Matteo Giovannetti and workshop, *fresco* and *a secco* additions, in the Chambre du Cerf, Wardrobe Tower, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343.

The Chambre du Cerf shares with Benedict's bedroom a concern with limits and illusionistically rendered spaces, but in *this* park-like space it is rather the lack of limits or boundaries represented on the walls — which really constitute the actual boundaries of the room itself — which involves the most striking inversion, playing with the spectator's experience by opening the box, as it were. The paint here is a layer of expansiveness painted *on* the limits, turning away from the bedroom's oscillation between the open and the closed to embrace a vista beyond reach, and it is also noteworthy that so many of the figures who now populate this *vergier* are actively striving to catch or obtain some prey that remains, throughout, at large. The metaphorical action taking place in the room is deeply concerned with this expansiveness and depth, whether it involves a quest for knowledge or, as may be the case for the viewer, simply to find out what lies beyond this space in the park beyond, which recedes mysteriously into obscurity. Michael Camille, in his well known work on marginalia (Camille 1992), explored how the edges of a manuscript typically represent the excluded, the unwanted, and the outcast in the medieval world, but here, in the Chambre du Cerf, which is still a literary space, the very edges of the room have come to represent the inner space of the garden, rather than the outer faces of any sort of wall or boundary. The edge is not a representation of the limits, in this case, but of what lies beyond them, or even what is normally inside them, enclosed and presumably safe from external dangers.

The difference between the decoration in Benedict's bedroom and that in Clement's study is not merely one between enclosure and expansiveness, toyed with and teased in the illusory structures that either bind in or seem to release the occupant, nor a simplistic distinction between the two-dimensional and three-dimensional, as Enrico Castelnuovo continually stresses. The change in character of

the ornamentation also can be related to a change in pace and rhythm fitting the intended uses of the respective rooms, one of which was for sleeping in, the other for reading, and for work, although both can be seen as representing different aspects of a dream; if Benedict's bedroom relates to the opening of the *Rose*, and the frontispiece miniatures in manuscripts of the poem that it so resembles, then the *Chambre du Cerf* presents a much more active vision of the garden, where the depicted personages are engaged in hunting, fishing, and a range of other outdoor pursuits. The contrast is roughly equivalent to that between the active and contemplative life also symbolised in Dante's well known dream vision, recounted in *Purgatorio* (XXVII 97-108), in which Leah and Rachel, the two wives of Jacob, engage in different activities: the former gathering flowers to weave a chaplet ('una *ghirlanda*'); the latter, quietly gazing at her own reflection in a mirror 'tutto giorno' — not unlike Oiseuse in the *Roman de la Rose*. Here Dante's debt to Guillaume de Lorris is clear. Having noted this contrast between the active and passive lives, it must also be acknowledged that the imagery is in a sense exactly reversed here in the decorative schemes of the two rooms: in this case it is the room woven into a grand *ghirlanda* that stands for contemplation, while the prominently placed pool in the *Chambre du Cerf* becomes the site of a much more active kind of reflection, and indeed, a place where resources are watched, but also gathered and ensnared.

Clement VI is widely credited with having transformed the palace at Avignon from a monastic strongbox — which may, perhaps, be something of an exaggeration — into a real centre of elegance, learning, culture, and refinement more in line with the conditions to which he had been exposed and to which he had become accustomed at the court of Philip VI. Whilst Clement VI's reign brought innumerable developments to the palace, it also brought, most crucially, the

momentous act which would, more than any other, shape the papacy for decades to come, decisively transforming Avignon from a temporary camping ground into the normal, permanent and entirely proper papal abode: in 1348, Clement VI purchased the city from the twenty-year-old Joan, Queen of Sicily for a tidy sum of 80,000 florins (Castelnuovo 1991: 32). Clement intended to stay in France as a free ruler of his own city, and, quite simply, he intended for his residence to be everything a princely palace should be. The papal court which formed around Clement VI became a veritable melting pot of high cosmopolitan society: royalty and the ‘*fine fleur* della nobilit ’ (Castelnuovo 1991: 33) plus, perhaps, just a few *mauvaises herbes*, flocked to Avignon from all over the Western world to curry favour and fortune. Swiftly Clement set about embellishing the structure he had inherited from Benedict XII, redeveloping it from a comparatively sombre monastic edifice — symbolic of solemnity, severity, and austerity — to a grand and imposing building complete with all the trappings of a fashionable royal palace of the period, and one more appropriate for the extravagant events which would shortly be taking place on the premises. In Castelnuovo’s view, as in Clement’s, a sumptuous palace was not so much an extravagance as a simple necessity in order to demonstrate the new pope’s prestige, dignity, ‘grandeur’ and status as supreme ruler of Christendom, and to provide a suitable stage for ‘le feste, gli intrattenimenti, le cerimonie e i tornei’ which drew together the various members of this new cosmopolitan society (1991: 33): for the papal court to flourish, the papal palace had to be as magnificent as possible, at once tapping into contemporary tastes and setting the fashions that might be followed by the aristocracy, and simultaneously demonstrating with complete assurance the solidity and durability of the institution’s establishment on the banks of the Rh ne, as opposed to the Tiber. To assist in the realisation of these ambitions,

Clement turned to a certain Jean de Louvres, an architect from the Île de France who brought to Avignon an architectural vocabulary that was largely unfamiliar within the region. With some justice, Castelnovo categorises it as ‘le più grandi testimonianze del linguaggio gotico nel Mezzogiorno’ (1991: 33): the vastest expression of gothic architecture in the south of France.

The so-called Wardrobe tower was one of Clement VI’s main additions to the Papal abode upon his ascension in 1342, and as pope, a new and appropriately decorated private study was one of the first things he commissioned. This new study, the *Chambre du Cerf*, is located on the fourth floor of the Wardrobe tower (*tour de la Garde-Robe*), which lies immediately below the Saint-Michel Chapel, but is just above two floors dedicated to the upper wardrobe space, and the lower wardrobe space, which held Clement’s collection of vestments, tapestries, and other rich textiles. The importance of the room is clear from its prominent position within the new tower — it is second only in importance to the new chapel. Textiles were clearly important for Clement, as they accounted for 12% of the papal purse (up from a mere 2.54% under Benedict XII, who as we have already seen, was extremely fond of verdant, rose covered fabrics).<sup>116</sup> The situation of this new painted garden-like room, with its vast array of brightly and ornately dressed personages in a tower largely dedicated to textiles both draws our attention to the qualities of the ornamentation of the room as a whole which seem to relate to contemporary textiles and naturally focuses our gaze on the woven fabrics that are actually painted on the walls, where there are representations of a fishing net, plush velvets and silks, canvas, and gauzier materials too. All this would have been accompanied by and experienced in relation to the presence of genuine textiles in the tower as a whole

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<sup>116</sup> See Castelnovo 1991: 32 for more information on Clement VI’s lavish budget for textiles; cf. Vingtain 1997: 130-31; idem 1998: 252-3.

and in the room itself. It would appear that Clement maintained Benedict's preference for green fabrics covered with red roses, purchasing, in 1343, a number of tapestries fitting this description for the private apartments and chapels (Vingtain 1998: 252).

The decoration of the *Chambre du Cerf* was completed in November 1343,<sup>117</sup> yet these vivid frescoes are only a relatively recent, twentieth-century discovery for the Papal Palace complex at Avignon. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, the palace was used as a military barracks, and the frescoes in the *Chambre du Cerf* were only discovered under a layer of plaster as late as 1907, just a year after the remaining soldiers moved out in 1906 (Dunlop 2006: 35; Hallays 1921: 40-41). Despite the comparatively short period of time in which they have been available to modern eyes, they have been subject to a long and complicated history of restoration, reinterpretation, and transformation. This process of change, or even editing, began promptly, according to eye-witness evidence from 1909 – only two years after their discovery. One of those who witnessed the changes first-hand, André Hallays, was particularly direct in his criticism of the attempted recovery of the paintings in his editorial piece for the *Journal des Débats*, published on 26th February 1909, likening them to a patient killed not by the disease, but by the doctor. The 'doctor' was one Louis-Joseph Yperman ((1856-1935), a specialist in the restoration of medieval mural paintings.<sup>118</sup> As Hallays put it:

A quelles erreurs sont fatalement entraînés les artistes même les plus consciencieux, dès qu'ils portent la main sur les oeuvres d'autrefois? Nous venons de l'apprendre dans ce même palais des papes. ...J'avais examiné ces peintures à deux reprises avant la venue de M. Yperman. Je viens de les revoir.

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<sup>117</sup> See Dominique Vingtain 1998: 99.

<sup>118</sup> Yperman had studied under William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Léon Bonnat and Théodore Maillot at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris.

Elles sont méconnaissables. Ici des couleurs ont été ravivées, là des traits ont été complètement repeints et des inscriptions ont disparu. Décidément, il faut nous résigner à laisser les oeuvres du passé mourir de leur belle mort; le temps leur est moins funeste que le médecin.<sup>119</sup>

Hallays presented further criticisms of Yperman's restorations in his monograph on *Avignon et le Comtat-Venaissin*, initially published that same year (1909).<sup>120</sup> Here he alleged – and lamented – that the restorer of the murals in the *Chambre du Cerf* had thought it necessary to ‘accentuer les traits, [...] aviver les couleurs, et repeindre les fonds de verdure sur lesquels se détachent les personnages’ (1921: 39-40). Contemporary photographs taken post-intervention present us with many differences from the murals as they are today, especially in the representation of the landscape, where large passages of foliage, flowers and in some cases the animals that inhabit this space appear in a very different state. This is especially apparent behind and around the falconer, who Yperman seems to have set against a more legible foliate backdrop in which individual trees and plants are clearly differentiated from each other: the tree above clearly descends to the level of the falconer's feet; above the figures to the left, in the tree canopy, the leaves are entirely different; the falcon itself appears to be facing to the right in a position similar to that of his handler, which is no longer obviously the case.

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<sup>119</sup> Cited in François Enaud 1980: 44-48, and in Dunlop 2009: 231 n. 71.

<sup>120</sup> First published in 1909. Subsequent editions appeared in 1911 and 1921.

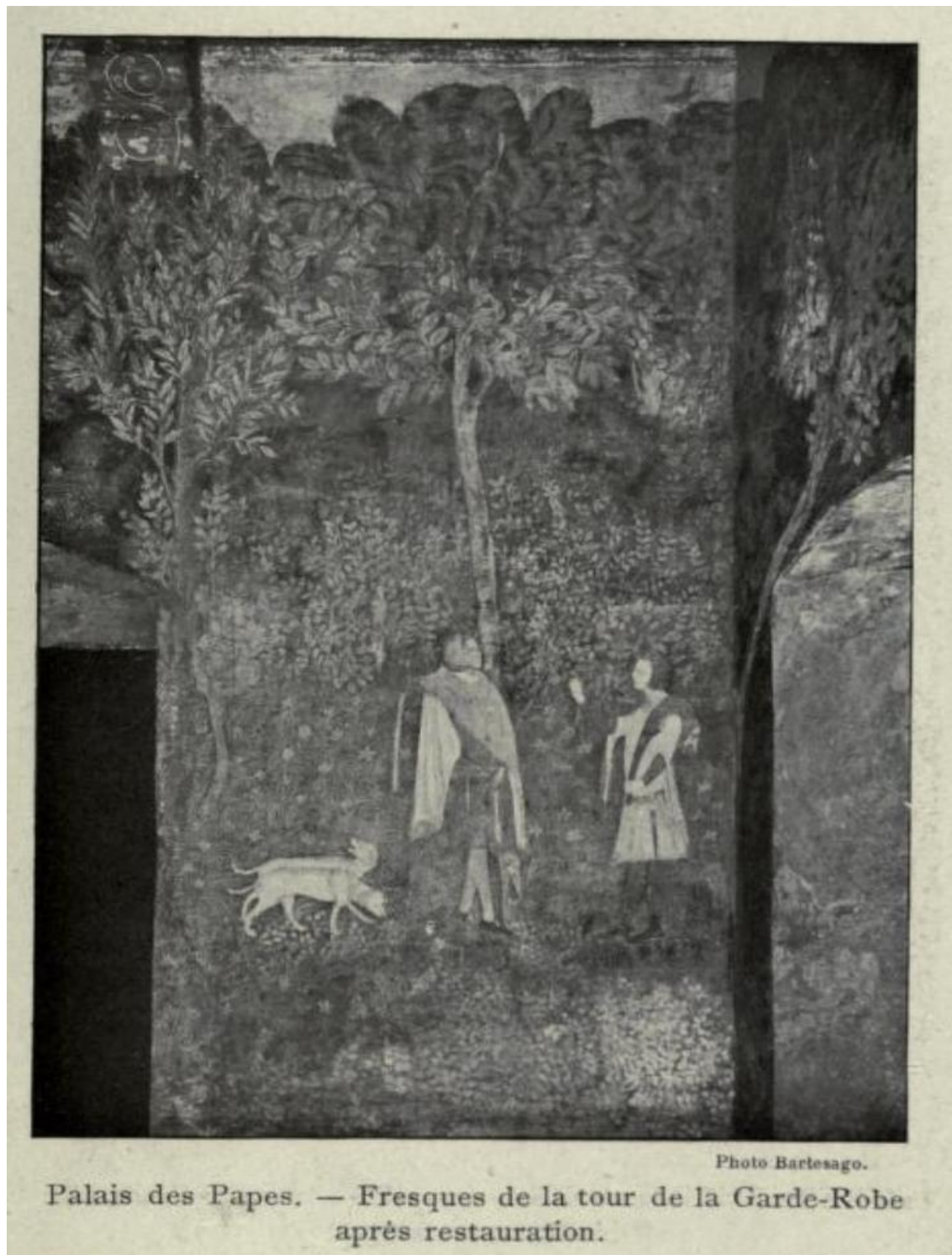


Fig. 3.42. Falcon hunt scene in the Chambre du Cerf - as seen by André Hallays post Yperman's restorations. Plate 15, *Avignon et le Comtat-Venaissin*, 1921, pg. 186.

Louis-Joseph Yperman's work resulted in something of a public outcry and scandal. In brightening colours, removing inscriptions (or graffiti?), altering flora

and fauna, and even completely repainting areas of the murals, Yperman's efforts to help the frescoes were not welcomed by everyone, even if they had been carried out with obvious care and the best of intentions. Dunlop points out that some plants were even 'made to flower' and other designs were 'freely invented' (2009: 34). Significant changes such as these would have altered the season depicted in the hunting scene — a larger proportion of buds would have given an impression of springtime, suggesting the promise of a summer to come as opposed to the mid-summer fruitfulness with its late, full blooms, and fruiting trees that we do seem to encounter in the depicted *vergier* now that many of Yperman's interventions have been stripped away. Depictions of springtime and the 'reverdie' were far more popular in the fourteenth century than any other time of year — it was, during the medieval period, almost the season *par excellence*: depictions of it appear, as we have seen in earlier chapters, in manuscript illumination and painting during the period, but especially within literature, where the month of May has an especially privileged status in connection with amatory pursuits. It is by no means clear, however, that the Chambre du Cerf is supposed to represent any single and specific month of the year, and the experience moving around the room is almost a synthetic one that unites aspects of a widened season of outdoor pursuits and *clement* weather — this adjective, while primarily indicating mercifulness was already used in Clement VI's time to describe mild weather — potentially making a tidy *rebus* of the whole room and alluding in its warm and pleasant atmosphere to the pope's chosen name.

Clement is also known to have indulged in such aristocratic activities as those depicted on the walls himself, and as we have shown above, he planted trees outside in the garden and introduced deer into a new meadow on the site. Indeed, it was not uncommon to have an idealised version of the owner's normal activities

painted on the walls of a room: as Dunlop notes in reference to the Este palace at Belfiore near Ferrara, belonging to Alberto d'Este (d.1393), 'the marquis was represented in a more exotic version of what he would actually have done there'. In the marquis' case, that involved heading out with the ladies and gentlemen of his entourage to hunt, picnic, dance, and, like Leah in Dante's dream, to make garlands from the leaves and flowers collected in the open air (Dunlop 2009: 28). Still, the idealised and poeticised mood is essential to the conception and realisation of the whole — the deer hunt is, of course, also the subject of its own prestigious literary tradition, with an example of great significance occurring at pivotal moments in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Marie de France's *Guigemar*. The decoration in the Chambre du Cerf is, of course, no straightforward transposition of mundane hobbyism or reality, as we might choose to think of it, onto the walls of the chamber, despite the intense and diverse naturalism of the ensemble.

In his rambling 1952 guide to Provence, meanderingly titled *Aspects of Provence*, which was completed after nine trips to the region, James Pope-Hennessy described the frescoes in the Chambre du Cerf as follows:

The scenes are laid in a countryside of poetical and formal beauty — feathery trees with slender trunks and blue-green leaves grow amidst hummocks of flowered grass, while in the background is an undergrowth of close, trim foliage, thickets of wild briar, ferns and white hawthorn. This landscape, carried round all four walls, must once have given the illusion of stepping into an enchanted wood. The persons and the animals who inhabit these scenes look tranquilly preoccupied, and seem to be living happily within the dimensions of their painted paradise. (Pope-Hennessy 1952: 96)

Pope-Hennessy draws attention here to the fact that the wooded scenes are in every sense fully realised: that they possess a certain depth and really do give the impression that the individuals living within these painted spaces are happily and stably situated, capable even of wandering off beyond the middle distance depicted into the mysterious depths into which we can have no hope of following them. As Castelnovo (1991) has stressed, this aim for three-dimensionality, fully-rounded solidity, and convincing perspective were new for artists of the fourteenth century, and the example here at Avignon is one of the first within a secular context, despite its presence in the papal abode. It is, however, this pre-occupation with the creation of a fully three-dimensional scene which gives the landscape in the mural cycle as a whole an air of animation: we really do feel as though we might pass beyond the boundary of illusion into the painted space, even if the furthest reaches of the *vergier* extend beyond our ken; the trees and other plants growing here seem to be living and growing organically.

Although in both painted chambers a warm red hanging, discussed in relation to Benedict's bedchamber, above, forms the lowermost register of the frescoes, the garden and bower sections of the decoration cover the major part of the walls on which they appear. In this sense, the viewer has a truly immersive experience in both rooms, and is able, especially in the *Chambre du Cerf*, to share the space with the other inhabitants of the garden. To an extent, there is, in the unusually large ratio of garden space to painted curtain present in both rooms, a similarity with two of the rooms at the Palazzo Datini in Prato, one of which we have already discussed above: these are the *Camera terrena a due letta*, which has been cited already, and the *Camera terrena a un letto*. Discussing the latter room at Prato, which shares its division of decorative spaces to a great extent with its neighbour within the building,

Bruce Cole noted that the scheme ‘does not impose a barrier between the spectator and landscape’ (Cole 1969: 70), but rather presents the visitor or inhabitant with a kind of invitation into that illusory space, colonnaded with green trees spotted with roses, and populated, in that case, with various more or less characteristically Tuscan beasts of varying tameness, including a boar, a fox, and a white peacock.

John Harvey (1981: 76) supported Castelnovo’s attribution of the ensemble to Matteo Giovannetti, and the spatial sophistication of the scheme can be seen as pointing in this direction. Indeed, the decoration has been designed so as to make the best possible use of the space available in the room, a merit for which Matteo Giovannetti was — and is — renowned, though it is not the aim here to give any individual sole credit for the authorship of the whole, which must have required a team of painters even though the coherence of the scheme might suggest a single mastermind.

These painters created a sense of expansive depth *on* the limits of the room partly by integrating into the design elements which would incorporate whilst simultaneously muddling various aspects of the actual architectural layout of the room. This is particularly apparent in the treatment of the corners that jut out into the viewer’s space, which are still used, however, to convey the depth of the parkland being depicted. The trees are placed correspondingly on the outmost and innermost vertices of the woodland, disguising the turnings from one plane to another and heightening the perspectival illusion. These trees are not planted in a tidy row on a single axis, but seem to encroach on the innermost space of the room, or to stand back a little way off, pulling the viewer into the middle distance, which shifts and changes depending on vantage point and the position of particular scenes, and convincing us that there is no real solid boundary between the confined space

available in the *Chambre du Cerf* and that depicted in the fresco. There are trees behind it, but a solitary tree also springs up in front of the pool, exaggerating the sense of recession that is already communicated to the viewer by the slanting edges of its perimeter and by its careful placement within an actual alcove that rhymes with but also — since its corners are camouflaged — contrasts with its rectangular form. The viewer is invited deep into the design, and given the feeling that a hand or an arm could be looped around those slender trunks; this is a trick that would actually be exploited by one of the personages represented in a later mural cycle preserved in the Torre Aquila of the Castello del Buonconsiglio at Trento (c. 1391-1407). That emphatically green-clad figure, a confident lady who turns back towards her more timid companion as though beckoning her to follow — the companion lifts her skirts as though fearful of muddying them in the attempt — expresses there the transition from April to May, and she looks directly at the viewer as she wraps her hand around the twisted but tree-like column that separates one part of the year from another. Here at Avignon the sophisticated play with perspective gives the impression of a curved sweep of woodland rather than any sharp distinction or division between outer and inner spaces, but the effect is best observed, experienced, and appreciated when the *viewer* moves around the room: in this, as well as in its cheerful representation of busy hubbub among the trees, the painted decoration here exhorts the inhabitant or visitor to the room to waste no time and to take part, like Leah, in the active life and its *divertissements*.



Fig. 3.43 Elegant lady in green moving between *Aprile* and *Maggio*, Master of the Months, fresco, in 'La sala dei Mesi', Torre Aquila, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, c. 1391-1407.



Fig. 3.44, The months of April, May, and June by the Master of the Months, South wall, fresco, in ‘La sala dei Mesi’, Torre Aquila, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, c. 1391-1407.

Once again, the windows — those two very natural liminal sites in the room — may illuminate our analysis here, and this time, their *illumination* is of a very literal kind. Rather than being sites of especial decorative interest themselves, the Chambre du Cerf is laid out so that the two windows let the most light onto the more detailed parts of the frescoed walls, naturally giving prominence to the pool scene on the north wall (via the south-facing window), and what was once the celebrated deer hunt on the west wall, for which the room is named (via the east-facing window), and to the lively parts of the design surrounding these two dominating elements. The well-stocked pool is a clear focal point of the room’s north-facing wall, placed as it is centrally within a rectangular alcove near the doorway that leads to the pope’s

bedchamber. The shape of the pool reflects to an extent the shape of the recessed space within which it is shown, which also commands the particular attention of the viewer because it allows this portion of the decoration to be read visually as a single unit to be taken in from a distance, as a piazza does the facade of a building of importance; the pool is shown in a kind of perspective too, at once retreating further beyond the already recessed picture plane and, moving downwards, creating a sense of depth beneath the surface of the water. Its central position in the room and the fact that it is so loudly man-made, artificial, and solidly rectangular means that it stands well apart from the other far more natural elements that make up the imaginative architecture of the space represented, most of these being trees, which soften the corners of the room itself. As a viewer, we are invited to join the fishers in contemplating the green waters and the aquatic life within. The four emotive figures around the pool (and, presumably, the long-beaked stork-like bird who stands just within its nearest edge) are all engaged in the search for fish. In fact, the pool and the personages around it encapsulate the central theme which unites all the more or less episodic goings-on that are taking place across the entire pleasure park: all of the human actors and not a few of the animal ones are actively engaged in the search for nourishing materials from the natural environment that surrounds them – whether this is through hunting, fishing, picking, gathering, foraging or simply rummaging in the undergrowth. It is a vision of nature busily being frisked for all its worth.

### 3.13. The Chambre du Cerf and the Hunt for Treasures: The Garden as Nature's Library, and the Library as Garden

Just as the personages in these scenes are shown hurriedly investigating nature's bounty, the spectator is invited to engage in a similar activity, and to probe the

painted decoration and the objects within the room with equal rigour. In fact, the iconography should be seen as fundamentally connected with the intended function of the room which was the pope's private *studium*, housing his personal collection of manuscripts which at least until the time of Pope Benedict XIII in 1394-1414, were not to be mixed with those of the 'grande bibliothèque' and whose subject matter served a rather different purpose. An inventory completed in 1379-80 for Clement VII of the distinct collection in the *camera cervi volantis* names works by authors from antiquity, including editions of Homer (in Latin), Aristotle, Virgil, Horace, Livy, Cicero, Terence, Curtius Rufus, Josephus, Pliny the Elder, Macrobius, and Apuleius, as well as important and fashionable works of the day, such as lapidaries, Latin productions by Petrarch and Boccaccio, Dante's *La Divina Commedia* in the vulgar tongue, Richard de Bury's *Philobiblon* (which itself uses the metaphor of the garden for the library, and the flower for the literary work), and works relating to various religious controversies.<sup>121</sup> Dante's *Divina Commedia* was present in the vernacular, and there were many other small books containing secular literature in the vulgar tongues of French, Provençal, and Italian dialects (Faucon 1887). Although only half of the inventory survives today, it gives us an excellent idea of the types of books that featured within this small but exquisitely set-up private *studium*, which, despite its humbler scale as compared with the magnificent library of Charles V – at least as far as texts in French are concerned – was nevertheless very much up to date in terms of its organisation, aided by a rotating wheel of books and partitions to divide up the space (Pommerol and Monfrin 1991: v.1, 28). For Maurice Faucon, reviewing the papal libraries in Avignon from the vantage point of 1887, this seemed, much more than the larger library, a site intended for

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<sup>121</sup> These are included in Faucon's edition of the catalogue, published in 1887.

‘délassement’ and ‘distraction’ (58): the less ecclesiastical works in the *studium* were for leisurely diversion rather than for any serious scholarly pursuit. This would seem, to a degree, to be borne out by the other furnishings in the room: Clement VI is known to have equipped the space with a day bed covered in green serge fabric and two large chests lined in green silk (Lefranc 2013: 8), which no doubt reflected in some measure the verdant pictorial surroundings and even enhanced the depth, vividness, and expansiveness of the imaginary park setting. Here, resting on green furnishings, the reader might see himself as thoroughly integrated with the all-encompassing and even encroaching parkland represented all around him (this would also certainly have been enhanced by the sound of birdsong coming from the adjoining bedchamber and from outside); the floor, meanwhile, was composed of faience tiles glazed in limited colours, making up a patchwork especially of natural greens and browns in diverse shades – the former achieved with copper oxide – mimicking in general effect the variegated appearance of a forest floor, though with added pictorial content; many of the books, too, were ‘coperta de viridi’ (Faucon 1887: v.2, 27), that is to say, bound in green leather, bringing by artificial means this mark of healthy and living nature to enclose the very texts available for reading. Even if this was a site, however, for a relaxing and pleasurable experience, it was still one that called for a hunt of sorts, instilling a journeying curiosity and restless inquisitiveness in the reader, and urging on a congenial search for information and intellectual nourishment comparable to the outdoor pursuits celebrated in the frescoes.

The frescoes themselves, however, present what Kenneth Clark described as ‘the first complete examples of the landscape of symbols, both in subject and style’ (1949: 13), and are meant not merely to accompany the literary study taking place

within the room, but also to be read carefully themselves. Maryanne Cline Horowitz has connected the pursuits depicted around the room with metaphors related to memory, study, and interpretation, explored in greater detail by Mary Carruthers whose own conception of memory in physical terms as storehouses, compartments, and houses is particularly helpful here (see Carruthers 1990: 62 in Horowitz 1998: 126-7). The leading example is the aforementioned fishing scene, which presents a contest almost between four men equipped with different types of tackle. Carruthers, Horowitz notes, has drawn attention to the conceptual link between ‘hooking’ disparate items together to form memories by a process of association, and the well-known pastime of angling. In fact, none of the personages involved in this scene is clearly shown using any kind of hook: the more peripheral figures may in fact be luring the fish by feeding them, while the two standing figures in the centre are of more unambiguous intention, since each holds a net. Fishermen with clear fishing rods (and hooks) are present, though, in both painted chapels within the Palais des Papes, the chapelle Saint-Martial and the chapelle Saint-Jean (both completed under the direction of Matteo Giovannetti), in both cases placed in window embrasures where the flowing water runs either from or towards the window itself (respectively on the north wall and the east), whilst a standing Saint John the Evangelist appears on the ceiling of the chapelle Saint-Jean casting and gesturing with his other hand towards his fishing net. It is this figure, the Saint John the Evangelist holding his empty net painted a few years later in the chapelle Saint-Jean, which shares a striking visual parallel with the unsuccessful fisherman in the *Chambre du Cerf*.

Uniquely within the decorative scheme in the *Chambre du Cerf* — the deer, for instance, obviously has little chance of escape — there is a contrast expressed here not only between chosen methods of retrieving the prize, but also between

success and failure. The figure on the right dressed in red and standing in the lush vegetation to the edge of the pool has a small fine net with which he has successfully scooped up some fish. He is himself caught in the act of retrieving his net from the green-hued waters, carefully examining its contents. On the left-hand side of the pool, however, the personage in the yellow coat is shown glancing over at his rival with a look of exasperation, and perhaps envy. He stands glumly on the stone edge of the pool, comparing his own empty net with that of his more fortunate rival, and is manifestly unhappy with his ill-suited tackle and paucity of bounty. This is a theatrical scene which not only involves much examination and interpretation but also highlights a lively visual interaction between the figures involved. Either side of the pool, figures exchange glances in the pomegranate picking episode and in the scene in which falcon hunting is being taught, but neither of these examples have quite the same element of competition. As in representations of Narcissus or Tristan and Iseult at the fountain, the fishpond or rather fishing pool scene gives special prominence to visual processes: the crouching and leaning personages either side of the pool are quite clearly looking at and through the surface of the green water, reading its surface and depths for signs of aquatic life below, as if searching a text for subtext. There is a special suggestion, though, that one can set about this intrinsically visual task in the right way (as with the figure on the left, nimbly admiring his catch) or wrongly, like the ‘fish-eyed’ figure on the right. At least in visual terms, the metaphors of fishing, hunting, and searching are apt: these are still processes and forms of behaviour that are familiar for any collector and voracious reader of books.

Furthermore, as indicated earlier on in the chapter, the fact that the man who commissioned these frescoes for the *Chambre du Cerf* – Pope Clement VI – was also

responsible a year or so later, in 1344-5, for the installation in the papal gardens of an elaborately tiered monumental fountain provides a reason to give especial attention to the pool in the fresco. This, an intensely manmade construction, is set back visually but stands out.

Within the context of the negative arboreal imagery that appears in Innocent III's treatise, *De miseria condicionis humanae*, and the more positive attitudes to nature that can be found in responses to it — particularly Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortunae libri II* — Maryanne Cline Horowitz has made a compelling case that the papal court was during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries absorbed by an all-encompassing preoccupation with plant imagery that involved, crucially, the conception of a symbolic link between vegetative and spiritual growth (1998: 124). A significant part of her discussion is devoted to the landmark frescoes in the Palais des Papes at Avignon, and the importance of their intensely vegetal presence within the pope's personal *studium*, that is to say, his private place of study and contemplation. If Horowitz is correct, these frescoes can be seen as constituting the boldest and most influential expression of this connection to be found anywhere during this period (taking into account both visual and verbal representations). Given the secular nature of many of the codices in the *studium*, however, such an explanation only goes some way towards clarifying the symbolic intention behind the decorative scheme: in the Chambre du Cerf, the symbolic link does not lie simply between the idea of vegetative and spiritual growth, but between bountiful and giving nature and the benefits of reading more broadly. There certainly was a symbolic connection between the folii in the room and the foliage on its walls, both submitting to thorough but pleasurable investigative processes.

### 3.14. The Chambre du Cerf and the Culture of Romance Literature: The Continuing Growth of the *Rose*

The expansive park represented in the Chambre du Cerf is, in many ways, different from the gardens of romance literature, including most particularly Guillaume's garden in the *Roman de la Rose*, yet we are still in both cases invited to view that green space as one where a sort of quest for knowledge necessarily takes place, encountering pitfalls and obstacles along the way and problems of misinterpretation even as we are spurred on by the vague promise of eventual satisfaction and reward. It is also worth restating that the garden represented is decidedly secular in nature, even though it has sprung up in the middle of the most important Christian residence of the period.

Early observers, when the paintings were discovered, were keen to see the influence here of the *Roman de la Rose*, and Louis Dimier in particular attempted to make this argument in 1924 by drawing attention to a passage in the text where the poet (Jean de Meun rather than Guillaume in this case) appears to be alluding to artistic representations, including mural paintings, that he has himself encountered. Castelnovo, however, who wanted above all else to claim the painting as part of an Italian tradition hardly touched by the currents of medieval French literature, lightly dismissed this idea, claiming that one of the pieces of colourful imagery quoted by Dimier from Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Rose* was simultaneously 'un topos splendido e antico' — that is, both unoriginal and of Italian origin (in other words having one's cake and eating it) — and 'che con l'accostante e tutto trecentesco naturalismo della camera del Cervo ha ben poco da spartire.' Such a statement is hardly justified, and Dimier's instincts were in fact sound in turning to the *Rose*, though Guillaume's original poem ultimately would have made for a more fruitful

analysis, considering its narrative structure and the Amant's striving for an unobtainable result. That image, derived from Jean de Meun, of 'belles dames bien parées / bien portraites, bien figurées / soit en métal, en fût, en cire soit en quelconque autre matire' (ll. 16059-62) might well be thought to be entirely in keeping with many of the aims of Trecento painting, even if it was written a great deal earlier than the painting of the Chambre du Cerf, as Paul Jamot also noted in 1938, reminding his readers also that 'c'est dans le Nord de la France que Jean de Meung avait pu les voir' (Jamot 1938: 164). It may be that Jean de Meun had indeed seen some thirteenth-century painting in Paris or its environs that foreshadowed the later scheme at Avignon. The genre of artistic representations to which he refers – and Jean specifically points in the next line to pictures painted both 'en tabliaus' ('on panels') and 'en paroiz' ('on walls') – may even bear the fresh impress of Guillaume's poem. What has survived of secular medieval domestic painting is undoubtedly a fraction of what was produced, but there are some clues that offer a surer indication of a more considerable tradition here. We know from surviving documents relating to the famous garden-park at Hesdin, for instance, that in 1315 Mahaut d'Artois commissioned a cycle of murals based on Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de Robin et Marion*: this featured inscriptions as well as other kinds of imagery based on the work, a dramatic *pastourelle* for multiple voices.<sup>122</sup> Adam de la Halle had composed *Robin et Marion* for Mahaut's father, Count Robert II, between 1282 and 1283, at about the time when Jean is believed to have been working on his continuation of the *Rose*.<sup>123</sup> These murals, which were also transposed into an illuminated manuscript, now lost, must have reflected the playful pastoral setting of

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<sup>122</sup> Archives départementales du Pas-de-Calais, A. 333, published in Dehaisnes 1886 I, 217. For discussion and some quotations, see Farmer 2013a: 671; Symes 2019: 48-50. Goehring (2021: 233 n. 76) notes that the site of the mural cycle was the Neuf Manoir just outside Hesdin, rather than a building on the marsh, as Farmer assumes.

<sup>123</sup> Adam and Robert were at the time in Sicily in the court of Robert's uncle Charles I d'Anjou.

the story as well as the immediate context of the grounds at Hesdin. The *Jeu de Robin et Marion* takes place in wood and meadow, and its narrative involves falconry, hunting and other outdoor activities related to those later depicted on the walls at Avignon.

Turning Jamot's observation about chronological distance on its head, it might be argued that by the 1330s and 1340s just enough time had passed between the initial dissemination of the *Rose* and the painting at Avignon for the poem to have become a classic in the interim, with an influence extending into visual and material avenues. Castelnuovo appears to have mistaken the ladies described in the passage from Jean de Meun for stiff, unrealistic effigies that *look* like metal, wood, wax, or some other substance, whereas they are exactly the opposite — representations in diverse materials that appear real and almost breathing. Looking for alternative comparanda among surviving wall paintings elsewhere, Castelnuovo alights upon the Château de Chillon; the decoration of the master bedroom or Camera Domini there was carried out in 1342, just before the Chambre du Cerf, but Castelnuovo is forced to admit that '[t]utte le acute osservazioni spaziali di cui — malgrado i guasti dovuti allo Yperman — è ricca la Guardaroba, mancano a Chillon ove le elegantissime figure si susseguono piatte, calligrafiche, ridotte a puro contorno suggestive immagini araldiche uscite dallo scudo di un blasone e campite sullo sfondo di una natura emblematica' (Castelnuovo 1991: 44-5). Vingtain likewise comments on the Château de Chillon that 'on ne puisse retrouver le meme goût du détail et des observations realists que celui manifesté dans la chambre du Cerf' (Vingtain 1998: 258).

If the imagery itself cited by Dimier seems in any way opposed to naturalism as Castelnuovo understands it, or too distant from the comparatively masculine

action of the *Chambre du Cerf*, we should remember that this garden existed in constant communication with an alternative vision of nature in the bower-like room next door, and also with a real garden just outside, where its imagery could be augmented by the wider activity of the court and its sophisticated visitors, well versed in romance literature and familiar with other playful gardens like the park at Hesdin. The well-versed reader of courtly literature knows that this artificiality is playful, especially where gardens are concerned, and in a sense the *Rose* had, after all, been precisely about a progression from superficial images towards the maturity of adulthood.

If the *Chambre du Cerf*, with its finding and seeking personages in an open landscape seems to partake of a grittier variety of naturalism — an interpretation we may well question — we could look again at other examples of secular mural painting featuring gardens that were certainly strongly influenced by the painted rooms at Avignon. At Sorgues, where John XXII had constructed an earlier papal palace, a number of fragments have survived in the so-called *Maison de la reine Jeanne*, now removed from the walls and displayed in the *Musée du Petit Palais* in Avignon. The dense green spaces represented here postdate the *Chambre du Cerf*, of course, and although they do not appear to be simple illustrations of a popular text, they show perhaps even more clearly than the papal apartments the continuing vitality of the culture of the *Rose*, which evidently continued to permeate the atmosphere of the court in text, image, ceremony, art, and even horticulture itself. In one fragment from Sorgues, a lady — reminiscent of Oiseuse — converses with a bird; another represents lovers embracing; one of the most memorable pieces represents a *carole* like that taking place in Dedit's garden; in another, a group of these elegant personages gather around a marble 'griffon' fountain very like the one

installed in Clement's own garden, below the *loggia*-like windows of the two fictive gardens in the towers up above.<sup>124</sup> The garden-based activities represented here are all recognisable elements or even episodes derived chiefly from Guillaume's dream vision, which has rightly been credited with having provided, in the 'dream, the idealized spring landscape, and the allegorical personages', the principal 'stock devices of love poetry until at least the sixteenth century' (Benson 1988: 685). That influence was persistent and conspicuous not only in poetry, but also in other channels of fourteenth-century artistic expression, including domestic painting and garden planning.



Fig. 3.45 A hunting scene with dogs in the garden, fresco (detached and mounted on canvas, (so-called) Maison de la reine Jeanne, Sorgues, c. 1350-1399, Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, on permanent loan from the Musée du Louvre, Paris, 2.35 m x 1.65 m.

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<sup>124</sup> The Louvre refers to this fresco as 'Quatre personnages autour d'une sorte de petite créence' or 'Dames à la fontaine', without indicating which title is more accurate. The first implies that the figures are meeting around a dresser, but the flowing water and spouts are still perfectly visible, the form of the structure clear, and the garden setting no less so.

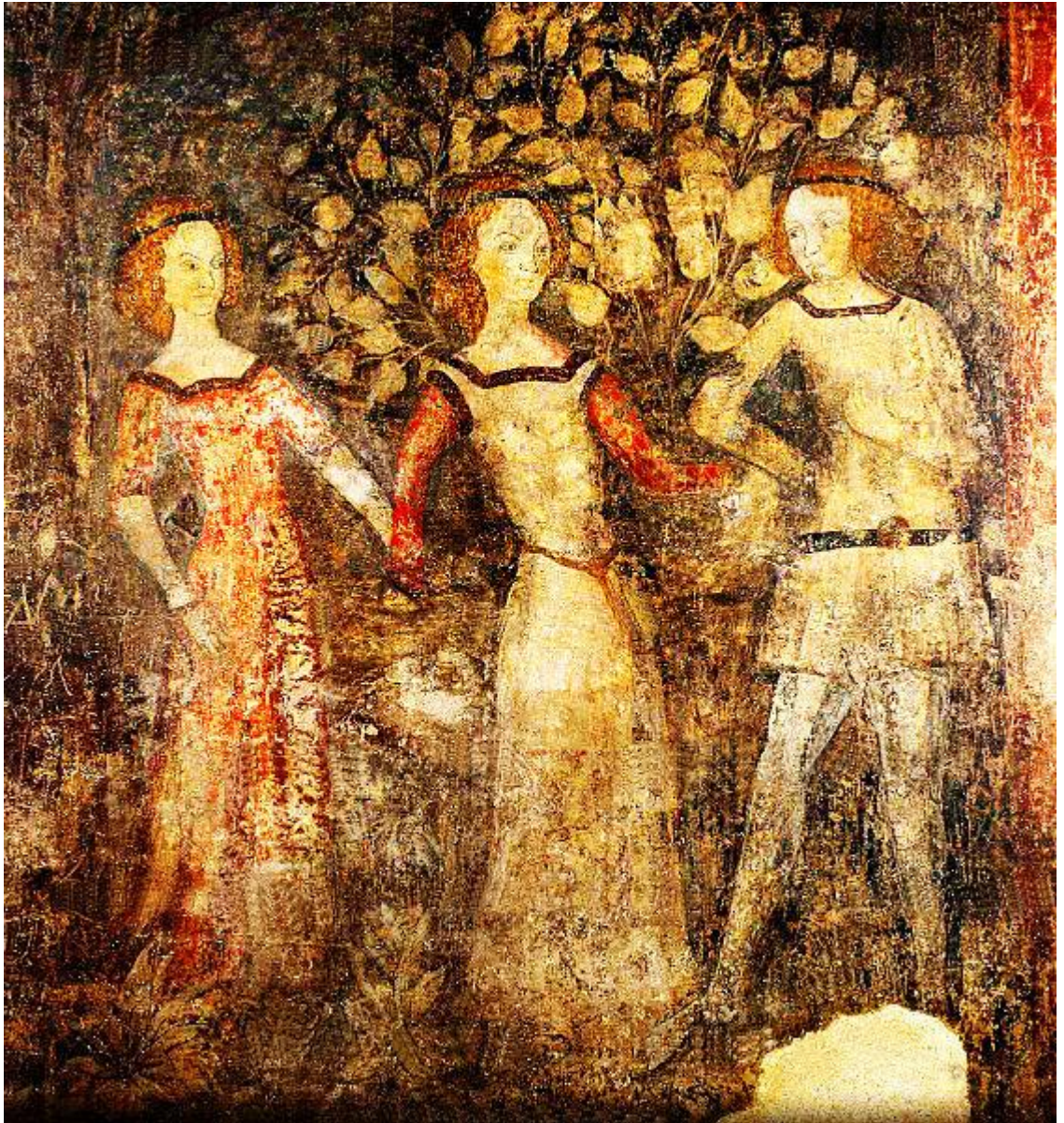






Fig. 3.46. Three details of the *carole*, or the Courtly Scene, ‘Scène dans la forêt ou Scène courtoise, la Carole’, fresco (detached and mounted on canvas, (so-called) Maison de la reine Jeanne, Sorgues, c. 1350-1399, Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, on permanent loan from the Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1.9 m x 1.65 m.



Fig. 3.47. Galant scene, 'The kiss' or 'Scène galante ou Scène courtoise: le baiser', fresco (detached and mounted on canvas, (so-called) Maison de la reine Jeanne, Sorgues, c. 1350-1399, Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, on permanent loan from the Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1.89 m x 1.47 m.



Fig. 3.48. The Lady with the bird, or 'La Dame à l'oiseau', fresco (detached and mounted on canvas, (so-called) Maison de la reine Jeanne, Sorgues, c. 1350-1399, Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, on permanent loan from the Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1.9 m x 0.75 m.

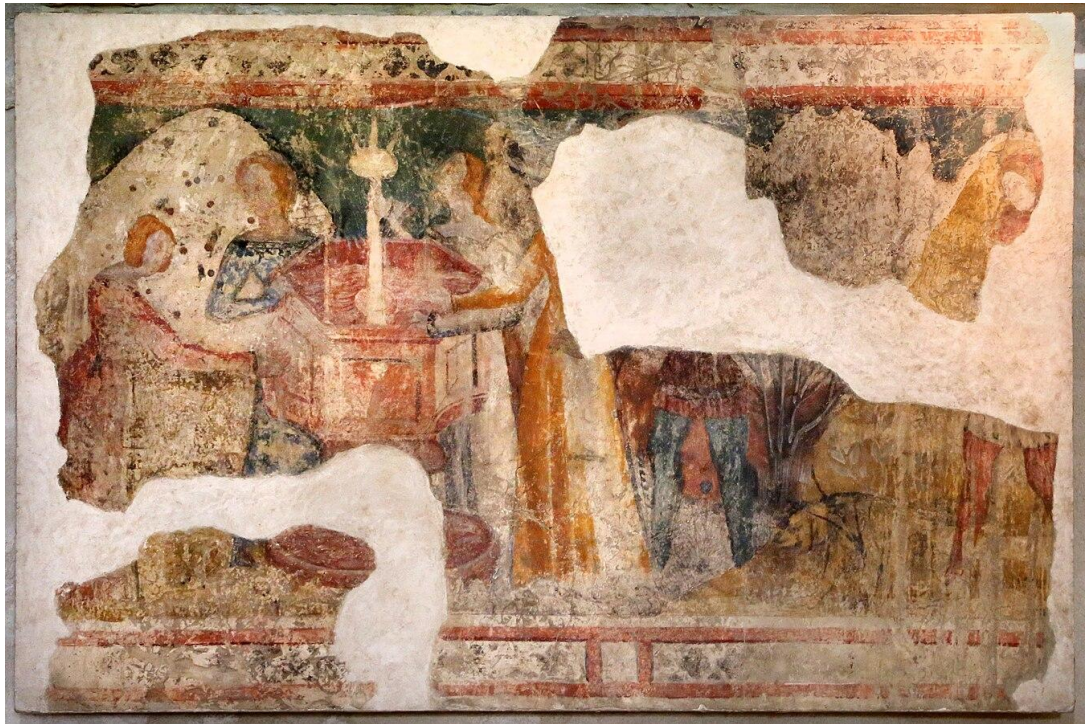


Fig. 3.49. Four figures around a fountain, or ‘Dames à la fontaine’, fresco (detached and mounted on canvas, (so-called) Maison de la reine Jeanne, Sorgues, c. 1350-1399, Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, on permanent loan from the Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1.35 m x 2.05 m.

### 3.15. Avignon and Manuscript Culture: Petrarch and Simone Martini’s ‘Virgilian Allegory’ in its Avignonnais Context

The inspiration for the gardens at Avignon, both painted and otherwise, seems to have come largely from manuscript culture, as has often been recognised, and as we have seen already in connection with the fountain. In turn these gardens had a visible effect on manuscript illumination in a few cases and, more striking still, there is at least one very notable example of illumination that comes from precisely the same

Avignonnais context, contemporaneous with the Chambre du Cerf and sharing with it a remarkably similar poeticised garden setting. Here the reciprocal influence between the manuscript and the frescoes (both the Chambre du Cerf and Benedict's bedroom) can be seen with dazzling clarity. This is the much celebrated and debated frontispiece miniature of Petrarch's prized Virgil manuscript, now in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, the so-called 'Virgilian Allegory' painted by the Sieneese painter Simone Martini. On the invitation of Pope Clement VI, Simone arrived in Avignon in the late 1330s and there became an intimate friend of the poet, who sang his praises in several sonnets and famously commissioned from the artist a portrait of his beloved Laura. A range of dates have been suggested for the frontispiece, sometimes as early as 1336, though this is not possible because Petrarch only recovered the codex, which been stolen from him more than a decade earlier, on 17th April 1338. According to Brink (1977a: 3-9), an inscription noting the year 1340 has been observed on the open page of the book held by Virgil within the miniature, and this date, roughly or precisely, has been widely accepted, though the text has not been easy for others to read and may not, in any case, refer to the painting of the frontispiece itself. It has been mooted, plausibly, that both this work and the portrait of Laura were executed at a later date, shortly before Petrarch left for Rome to be crowned with laurel in 1341 (Jones 1995: 109; c.f. Wulff 1902: 4; *contra* Pierini 2000: 197). This allows some time for the development of a close friendship between the two men and also for Simone to have completed some of his work for the pope, which must surely have been his priority, yet an even later date, after Petrarch's return, is just as, if not even more more, likely. A recent solution to the unsettled dating (De Wesselow 2022: 125) is 'c. 1342'. At any rate the manuscript was decorated no later than 1344, when Simone died at Avignon. There is no

information recorded about Simone's involvement or otherwise in the Chambre du Cerf, but we know with certainty that the decoration was finished in the November of 1343.

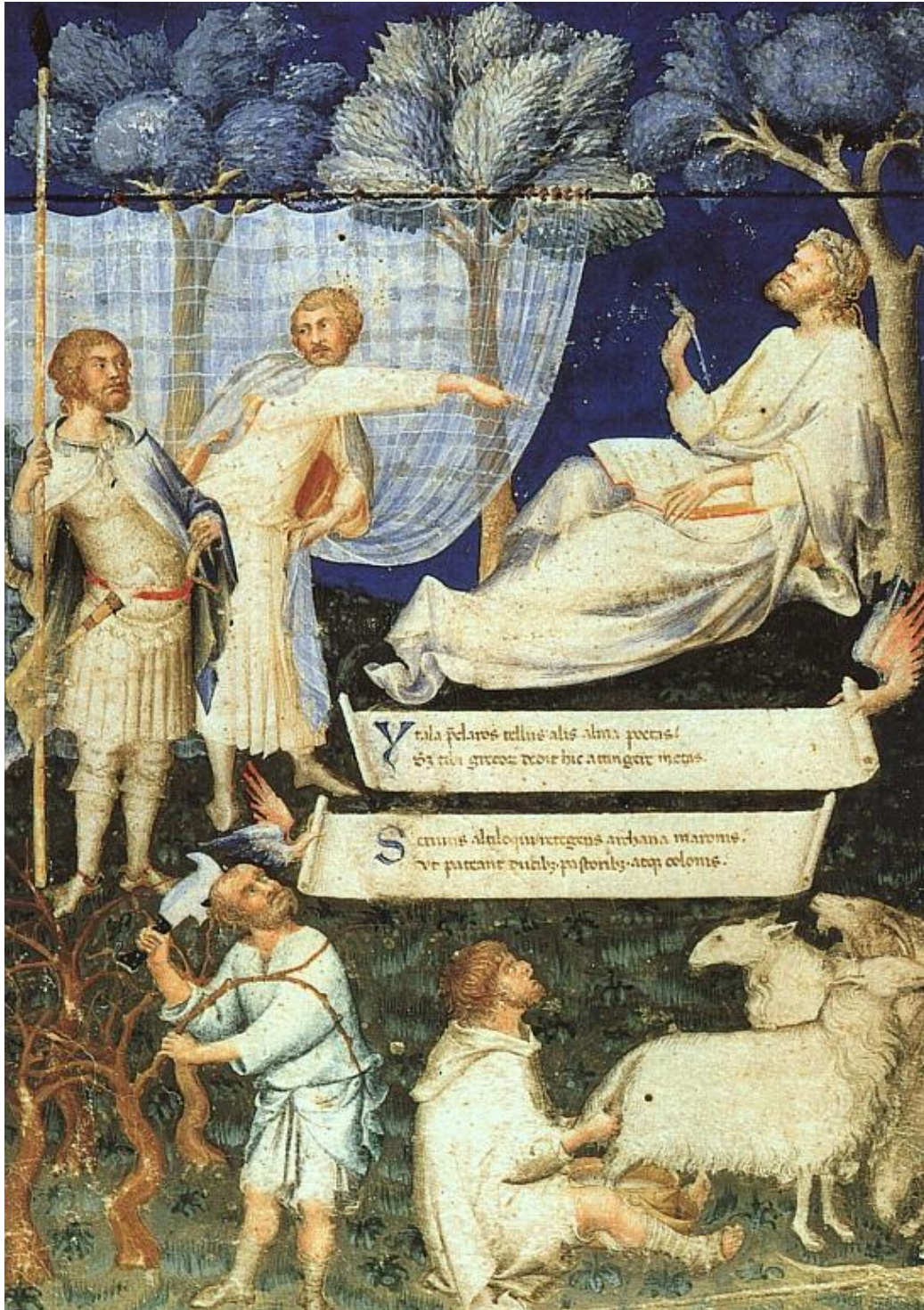


Fig. 3.50. Simone Martini, frontispiece of Petrarch's Virgil manuscript, 410 x 265 cm. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, ms. A 79 inf.

The frontispiece shows a shady grove in which there reclines a poet, Virgil, gazing upwards with pen poised above the codex on his lap. He occupies a discrete and serene space, screened off from the surrounding landscape by a long, thin rail on which hangs a gauzy muslin curtain decorated with an inwoven check, through which can dimly be perceived the trunks of the trees behind him. Virgil is revealed to us in his tranquility by a contrastingly dynamic, and even dominant, figure who sweeps aside the translucent veil and points energetically at the poet, looking back at the same time towards a spear-bearing figure clothed in a distinctively *all'antica* Roman cuirass, along with lion-shaped *genouillères*, splendid golden spurs, and an arrogant expression. Two further — more rugged — figures inhabit the lower register of the miniature, both looking towards the poet from a landscape spotted with weeds, wildflowers and patches of grass, where they are shown busily plying their trades. One stands, bent over and balding, pruning a crooked and leafless vine with a hooked blade; the other, with a thatch of shaggy hair, is seated with his crook beside him, milking a woolly ewe from his flock. Three couplets, apparently written by Petrarch himself, form part of the composition, and these give a clear indication of the identities of the various personages represented:

Ytala perclaros tellus alis alma poetas:  
Sed tibi grecorum dediti hic attingere metas.

Servius aliloqui retegens archana maronis  
Ut pateant ducibus pastoribus atque colonis.

Mantua Virgilium qui talia carmine finxit,  
Sena tulit Symonem digito qui talia pinxit.

(‘Italy, fruitful land, you nourish most glorious poets:

But this one was delivered you to touch the goals of the Greeks.

Servius uncovers the secrets of high speaking Maro  
To open them for generals, shepherds and farmers.

Mantua bore Virgil who fashioned such things in song,  
Siena bore Simone who with his own hand such things painted.’)

The pointing figure is identified as Servius, the author of an ancient commentary on Virgil’s works, which opens the manuscript in question, while the ‘audience’ of ‘leaders, shepherds and husbandmen’ are presented as Virgil’s readers, though no critical observers have failed to notice that these three figures also represent the three poetic works — the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* — on which his reputation has rested, and the shifting rhetorical styles in which these are composed. From the lower right corner, these personages are ranged in a hierarchical but also a chronological ascent upwards towards the poet himself, in an order that Petrarch’s line reverses. The shepherd’s flock strays beyond the bounds of the miniature itself, as though already advancing over the page to graze in the folii to come, where the first position is taken by the *Eclogues*. The figure of Virgil is also presented in a manner that unmistakably alludes to the character of Tityrus, who is addressed in the first line of *Eclogue* 1, and there found resting tranquilly beneath the shade of a spreading beech tree: Tityrus, we are told, is ‘patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi / silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena’ (‘reclining under cover of a spreading beech / reflecting on the sylvan Muse with slender reed’), and also ‘lentus in umbra’ (‘languid in the shade’ : 1.1-2; 4). Crucially, one of Servius’ observations on the opening of the *Eclogues* is that Tityrus represents Virgil himself. The miniature,

then, appears to dramatise this specific comment of Servius', drawing attention to the act of identification and attendant explanation.

It has generally been assumed that Petrarch was the active partner when it came to the conception of the frontispiece, and that he would have given clear instructions to Simone as to its content. The alternative seems to have been considered only by C. Jean Campbell (2012: 50) who wonders whether the 'primary agency in the poetic conception' might be ascribed instead to Simone but still settles ultimately for an idea of 'creative collaboration'. It is Petrarch's annotations, of course, forming a significant part of the frontispiece itself as they do, that have guided subsequent interpretations.

Petrarch was famously keen on gardening, and for him, as for Clement, whose real garden grew from literary and pictorial origins, there was not necessarily a clear distinction to be made between the actual garden space and the poeticised places described in ancient texts and explored in his own verses. Descriptions of his own garden make clear that it was, for Petrarch, a place associated with the Muses and other spirits, whilst the surrounding landscape more broadly could be connected with poetic composition. Already in 1330 he was writing of Lombez (in southern France) that 'qui non palazzi, non teatro o loggia, ma 'n lor vece un abete, un faggio, un pino, / tra l'erba verde e 'l bel monte vicino, / onde si scende poetando e poggia...' (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* X, 5-8); elsewhere he describes the whole of Vaucluse as a place of poetry brought 'ex alto' (*De vita sol.*, 1, 7). The beech, now indelibly associated with Virgil, and the pine — which Guillaume de Lorris had emphasised in his version of the Narcissus story — appear again in Sonnet 148 of the *Canzoniere* alongside others (the ivy, the fir, the juniper) that cannot quite alleviate the poet's lovesickness as the laurel can: 'non edra, abete, pin, faggio o

genebro, / poria 'l foco allentar che'l cor tristo ange' (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* CXLVIII, 5-6). There the poet differentiates himself from his predecessors by stressing that the source from which his own poetic inspiration springs is unique and personal to him, but it is clear that his experience of the world around him is coloured by his contact with earlier poets like Virgil. In the sonnet the short catalogue of grand trees comes at the climax of a longer catalogue of great rivers, contrasted with the quiet stream and 'l'arboscel che'in rime orno [...] celebro' (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* CXLVIII, 8). Petrarch establishes his own identity as a poet through his identification with a particular tree, but on the other hand, Virgil's *Georgics* served him also as a practical handbook when tending to his garden, its didacticism taken in what might have seemed to later critics a peculiarly straightforward way. Battaglia Ricci (1996: 29 n. 103; 31), who characterises Petrarch memorably as a 'poet-cum-gardener and grower of laurels' — laurels indeed seem to have been given preferential treatment at all times — also suggests that there was for the poet a 'non-opposition' between the actual garden and the literary *locus amoenus*, and she stresses, importantly, that this 'must have facilitated exchanges between the characteristic motifs of the two symbolic areas.' Such exchanges are readily apparent in Petrarch's writing, the motif of the laurel being only one of the most obvious and one that is also given a prominent position within Simone Martini's frontispiece miniature, shading the poet's brow as a symbol of poetic glory and bearing witness, in the background of the upper register, to his artful composing. It may be that the three trees that crown the frontispiece itself and the codex as a whole with a soft, foliate canopy do more than simply bear witness to Virgil's composition; as in Petrarch's case, the laurel in particular is implicated as an inspiring Muse-like presence, and the screen of trees as a whole presumably serves

as a route through nature and observation of the visible world towards the divine, which must here remain unseen. Three in number, these trees could also stand for the three literary monuments associated with Virgil, mirroring the other three personages (Servius the mediator and commentator excluded) in the composition, who have always been seen as having precisely this kind of double function within the allegory. The trees, as we have seen, are an essential part of the scene and the symbolic scheme of the allegory, playing an active role both in the dramatised identification of the poet and in his own process of composition. In particular the tree that the poet leans against is shown spreading out to provide shade for him, corresponding with Virgil's adjective *patulus*, used of the beech beneath which Tityrus is found resting. This kind of setting and the leisure associated with it are innately tied to the art of 'poetando', inducing the requisite state of mind and speech and setting in motion the act of versification within an elevated tongue; Petrarch noticeably characterises Virgil, after all, as *altiloquus*.

### 3.16. The Veil of Interpretation and the *Nexus Naturae*: Poetic Visions and Commentary in Miniature and Margin

This word, 'altiloquus', comes in the same line as 'archana', denoting the 'secrets' that Servius is revealing in pulling back the curtain. The curtain is a clever device. It disrupts the sense that we are outside, introducing not so much an element of artificiality as an explicitly interior quality to the landscape, dividing it and making rooms of the miniature's pastoral setting. In many respects it is the key to the whole allegory. Annabel Patterson notes rightly that '[t]he physical presence of the veil and the interpreter indicates that interpretation itself is the primary subject of the painting' (Patterson 1987: 27). More recently Anne Dunlop has connected the motif

as it appears in the frontispiece with the speech that Petrarch delivered upon his coronation as poet laureate in 1341, in which he referred to poets composing ‘sub velamine figmentorum’, or ‘under the veil of imagined things’ (2009: 156; 269 n. 101).

Like Guillaume de Lorris, Petrarch must surely have had in mind Macrobius, who had, as chapter one has shown, claimed in his commentary on Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis* that the dream vision ‘tegit figuris et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significationem rei quae demonstratur’ (‘covers with shapes and veils with ambiguities the meaning of the thing being demonstrated, which can only be understood through interpretation’: 1.3. 10). Petrarch, like Guillaume, and like the ancient commentator, connects the fictions – and the reliability – of poetry with the falsehoods and hidden truths of the dream vision.<sup>125</sup> As it happens, the margins of Petrarch’s Virgil manuscript brim with sometimes rather lengthy quotations from Macrobius, taken both from the *Saturnalia* and the *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, and the poet sometimes enters into dialogue

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<sup>125</sup> It is important to remember that Petrarch was himself a reader of the *Rose*, as the *epistola metrica* that he sent along with a copy of the poem to Guido Gonzaga confirms (*Epist.* 3.30). In that *epistola metrica*, Petrarch makes some critical remarks about the *Rose*, expressing his well known views about the inferiority of French literature to ancient and Italian poetry, but his own verses and thought are heavily imprinted with the allegorising structure and tendencies of Guillaume’s poem: Petrarch’s reading of Virgil in terms of allegory was fundamentally shaped by the approach of earlier French literature and Dante as much as (or even more than) the practices of Virgil’s time. On this (partly anachronistic) idea of an allegorising Virgil, see Pierre de Nolhac 1892: I, 128-36111-18, where Petrarch’s interpretation (in *Sen.* 4, 5.4) of Book One of the *Aeneid* in particular is discussed and persuasively situated within an explicitly medieval context: Petrarch places the poem’s protagonists, as de Nolhac notes, within a forest that ‘rappelle beaucoup plus celle de Dante que celle de Virgile’ (Nolhac 1907: 133). On Petrarch and Guillaume de Lorris, see idem 1907: II, 227-8. A translation of the versified letter that Petrarch sent to Guido along with the *Roman de la Rose* can be found in Wilkins 1958: 39-40. Regarding his apparently disparaging remarks about the *Rose*, Enrico Bianchi thought that the conventions of the poetic genre led to rhetorical exaggerations: Bianchi 1940: 258, cited in Richards 1981: 17 n. 35. Victoria Kirkham places the letter within the context of Petrarch’s other essays in invective poetry, and also sees it as an expression of ‘a long-standing cultural bias’ that especially involves a rejection of Paris as the ‘stronghold of the Scholastics’ in favour of Rome: Kirkham 2009: 19-20.

with the commentator as well, expanding on the quoted passages.<sup>126</sup> Unsurprisingly, a particularly noticeable excerpt from Macrobius is inserted at the end of Book Six of the *Aeneid* at precisely the point where Virgil introduces his famous gates of Sleep, made from horn and ivory (*Aen.* 6. 893-6). This occurs on folio 148v.

In the passage there quoted by Petrarch, which asks why the ancient poet associates horn with truth and ivory with falsehood, Macrobius himself turns to the third-century grammarian, Porphyrio, for help, and the quotation becomes a quotation of a quotation. Porphyrio recognises that the *topos* of the twin gates, and its distinction between materials, actually comes from Homer,<sup>127</sup> and, introducing the analogy of the *veil*, states that: ‘latet [...] omne verum. hoc tamen anima cum ab officiis corporis somno eius paululum libera est interdum aspicit, non numquam tendit aciem nec tamen pervenit, et cum aspicit tamen non libero et directo lumine videt sed interiecto velamine, quod nexus naturae caligantis obducit’ (‘All truth lies hidden. The soul, however, when slightly free from the duties of the body in sleep, sometimes gazes, and occasionally catches a glimpse, but without apprehending it, and when it gazes, moreover, it sees not with a clear and direct light but with an interposed veil, which the nexus of darkening nature places in the way’). Porphyrio makes the dream vision an ‘interposed veil’, through which the truth sometimes – in sleep – may be perceived dimly, but also presents that same truth as, itself, a kind of veil: the *nexus naturae* that is covered by the *velamen* is the very ‘interlacing’ or ‘knot’ of nature. The image, then, is not just of a single veil, but of one textile thrown over another. With the transferred epithet *caligantis*, which agrees with

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<sup>126</sup> See Lord 1996: 3-22, esp. 3-7 and 14-22, for a discussion of some of these quotations and an appendix with transcriptions. Lord has found twenty-five quotations from Macrobius alongside the text of the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics* and the first six books of the *Aeneid*, but comments that there may well be others beyond this point.

<sup>127</sup> It comes near the end of Book Nineteen of the *Odyssey* (19. 562 ff.).

*naturae*, Porphyrio furthermore implies poetically that the dimness actually belongs to the cloth *of nature*, and not just its encasing shroud. The veil would prove an appealing metaphor both for Guillaume de Lorris and for Petrarch, but this closely connected conceit of ‘nature’s interlacings’, which makes a fabric of all reality, would also recur in medieval literature. Porphyrio prefigures here the device of Nature’s dressing that appears in the opening of the *Rose*, when the narrator’s surroundings actively put on a ‘novele robe’ – implicitly at the poet’s behest – to signify and celebrate the inauguration of spring (l. 60).

Macrobius here picks up the threads, pointing to another passage from the *Aeneid* in which Virgil himself alludes to a *nubes*, or ‘cloud’, drawn over mortal vision (*Aen.* 2. 604-6),<sup>128</sup> and he gives his judgement on the symbolic and material properties of horn and ivory, both of which are conceptualised as veil-like substances: ‘hoc velamen cum in quiete ad verum usque aciem animae introsipientis admittit, de cornu creditur, cuius ista natura est ut tenuatum visui pervium sit; cum autem a vero hebetat ac repellit optutum, ebur putatur, cuius corpus, ita natura densetum est ut ad quamvis extremitatem tenuitatis erasum nullo visu ad ulteriora tendente penetretur’ (‘This veil, when, in repose, it admits the sight of the inward looking soul to the truth, is held to be made of horn, whose nature is such that when thinned the vision may pass through; but when it dulls and repels the sight from the truth, it is held to be ivory, whose substance is so compacted by nature that whatever extremity of fineness it is scraped into, it may be penetrated by no

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<sup>128</sup> Pierre de Nolhac (1907: 137) commented that the humanists of the fifteenth century ‘s’attardèrent à s’occuper de la philosophie symbolique de Virgile, à mettre d’accord avec la doctrine de Platon et à couvrir de plus en plus l’épopée des origines de Rome de tous les brouillards de l’allégorie morale.’ Petrarch, too, he suggested, had run the risk of reading Virgil ‘toute sa vie sans le comprendre.’ As Macrobius and Petrarch noticed, Virgil had used the idea of the disfiguring cloud himself, although not as a metaphor for allegory as such. De Nolhac had presumably not recognised any connection between these ‘brouillards’ and Virgil’s ‘nubes’, but he criticised Petrarch and the humanists for adding layers of disfiguring allegorical mist to the *Aeneid* that had not been intended by its author.

vision striving to pass beyond': Macrobius, *In Somn.* 1. 3. 17-20). Horn, we are told, can be whittled down into a state of translucency, like the fine muslin curtain in the Virgil frontispiece, but ivory, used throughout the fourteenth century to enclose mirrors, and even associated by Machaut with the Fonteinne Amoureuse, is too dense and occluding a substance. It hides effectively, and is therefore to be associated with deceitful fictions.

In Petrarch's Virgil manuscript, the Macrobian (and Porphyrian) commentary appears in Petrarch's hand alongside that of Servius, whose interpretative agency is celebrated in Simone Martini's frontispiece miniature, where *he* pulls back the gauzy veil to reveal the poet to his readers. Like Porphyrio, Servius traces the motif of the twin gates of sleep to Homer, but offers a range of reasons for the distinction between the two materials. He comments that the sense of the passage as whole is 'poetice apertus', or 'poetically open', meaning, however, that it is clear and unambiguous rather than 'open-ended' or 'open to interpretation', but he does not enlarge on the open or closed qualities of the two veil-like materials. Where Macrobius alludes directly to the transparency or opacity of the horn and the ivory, Servius notes more allusively that horn is associated with the eyes (this ancient idea is still preserved in our modern use of the word 'cornea') but ivory with teeth: 'physiologia vero hoc habet: per portam corneam oculi significantur, qui et cornei sunt coloris et duriores ceteris membris: [...] per eburneam vero portam os significatur a dentibus. et scimus quia quae loquimur falsa esse possunt, ea vero quae videmus sine dubio vera sunt' ('Indeed, physiology says this: through the gate of horn the eyes are meant, which are of horn colour and harder than other body parts: [...] through the ivory gate indeed the mouth is signified by the teeth. We know that what we say may be false, but what we see indeed is undoubtedly true'). The teeth,

in Servius' view, are innately connected with mouths that tell lies, but what we can see, on the other hand, we may believe to be true. The rationalising 'physiological' reading – as Servius says – actually turns out to be a rather symbolic one, diminishing the firm and demonstrable grounding in material fact that is present in Macrobius' interpretation in favour of a comparatively anecdotal observation about human nature. Medieval poets were by no means so persuaded of the veracity of the visual, which, as chapters one and two have shown, was for them often slippery and certainly not to be taken at face value. Still, there is in Servius' reading of the Virgilian image of the twin gates more than the seed of the almost equally famous twin doors of memory that open Richard de Fournival's *Bestiaire d'amour* (c. 1225-50). In both cases, one portal operates through the sense of sight, and is associated explicitly with the organ of sight. The second, linked with the written and spoken word, evolves simply from the mouth to the ear, signifying a change in focus from the locutor to the receiver, from author to reader. Despite the modified orientation of the conceit as it appears in the *Bestiaire d'amour*, and the substituted sensory organ, Fournival maintains the Servian principle that rhetoric is potentially – or inherently – untrustworthy.

Chapter two has shown that Machaut inverted the traditional relationship between ivory and falsehood by instead pairing that material (*ivoire*) through wordplay with the idea of truth (*voire*), whilst also skirting suggestively around the verb 'to see' (ll. 1395-6), so that ivory is made in the *Fonteinne Amoureuse* a substance that is associated with real perception. Porphyrio's metaphor, however, of the woven veil that covers the knottings or warp and weft of nature itself, remains the really significant and abiding artefact here, and it is this that finds visual

expression in the frontispiece of Petrarch's *Virgil*, coming to stand for interpretation itself, for allegory, and for the poetic vision, however fanciful or fictitious it may be.

As Petrarch recognized, the poet reveals truths 'sub velamine figmentorum', becoming in a sense the spinner or weaver of that pictorially complicated cloth whilst hinting at the fabric of reality behind it. Petrarch will have known that Servius was, like Porphyrio and Macrobius, well aware of the ancient connection established in antiquity between poetic composition and the production of woven cloth, and the attendant image of poet as weaver; for Servius, as for these other commentators, the process of weaving is always a self-reflexive one when it appears in verse. That Servius had connected the figure of Tityrus with the poet, Virgil, has already been shown above with reference to the opening of the *Eclogues*, but it is also worth glancing at the end of that work, where in the final *Eclogue* the poet seems to speak in *his own* voice, and to allude to his own artistic activity. Virgil says 'Haec sat erit, divae, vestrum cecinisse poetam, / dum sedet et gracili fiscellam textit hibisco' (10. 70-71): 'These things, goddesses, it will be enough for your poet to have sung, / while he sits and twines a little basket of slender mallow'. On the second line – and especially the words 'gracili fiscellam textit hibisco' – Servius says, simply, that Virgil is himself associating weaving with composition. 'Ac si diceret: nisi hac re occupatus, minime canerem. allegoricos autem significant se composuisse hunc libellum tenuissimo stilo.' It is, Servius tells us, '[a]s if he [Virgil] were saying: if I were not occupied with this matter [of weaving a basket], I would not be singing at all, but the allegorical expressions mean that this little book has been put together in the most delicate style.' The *stilus tenuissimus* is, literally, the thinnest, lightest, subtlest pen, which the poet likens to the pliant materials of the basket, neatly recalling also the slender reed on which Tityrus had played for the sylvan Muse back

in the opening of the work as a whole. In the frontispiece miniature of Petrarch's *Virgil* manuscript, Simone Martini shows the poet with just such a slender pen, and this delicacy and refinement is reflected in the fine revelatory veil drawn back by the figure of Servius.

### 3.17. The *Cubiculum* and the Curtain or Veil: The Bedchamber and the Dream Vision in Manuscripts of the *Rose*

As a visual motif, the curtain or 'veil' is drawn explicitly from the realm of the interior, and it also has a long and distinguished pedigree within the *Rose* manuscript tradition, where it is used – much as Porphyrio uses it – to express the slumber of the narrator. In the *Virgil* frontispiece, the representation of the reclining poet, paired with the presence nearby of the delicately checked curtain, evokes not just the comfort and privacy of an interior space, but more particularly the *cubiculum*, or bedroom, with its bed enclosed by hangings. The curtain divides the frontispiece, and the space represented within it into discrete sections not just by enclosing the characters within separate registers, ranged vertically, but rather by cutting across the space as it recedes into the background, which is both open and closed, suggestive of the interior and the exterior at the same time. Whilst the laurel and beech canopy at the top crowns the page, the *cubiculum* from which the trees spring forms the central band, and the agricultural audience, and 'commentary' scene occupies the foreground and the rest of the composition.

Since at least the early modern period, the link between poetry, poets, and bedrooms has been expressed in the double meaning of the word *stanza* — signifying at once the subdivision of a building into rooms (especially bedrooms),

and the arrangement of verse into a series of discrete units of recurrent form; there is an architectural, even domestic, metaphor in the employment of the word, where the bedroom becomes a sort of container that can simultaneously hold the physical words of a poem and the slumber or (even more abstractly) the dreams of a poet that later find solid verbal expression. In the manuscript tradition, as indicated above, there is a long history of poets or narrators falling asleep just as they are on the cusp of entering the narrative proper, and the place where this transformation takes place is of course usually a comfortable setting, if not a bed then a shady grove or the side of a trickling fountain. It may combine elements of all of these. We see the motif in *Floire et Blancheflor*, in Marie de France, in Chrétien, and in Guillaume de Machaut, but chief among these sleeping or waking dreamer poet-narrators is the narrator-cum-Amant of Guillaume de Lorris' original *Roman de la Rose*. As we have seen in chapter one, the narrative of this seminal work begins with the narrator 'waking' from his slumber on a bright May morning, and manuscript illuminators and illustrators often depict the protagonist either sleeping surrounded by roses and curtains, or in the midst of waking. Frontispiece miniatures frequently depict a hanging being drawn to reveal the narrator or Amant getting out of bed and beginning to lace his sleeves. This example, now in the BnF, is representative of many early to mid-fourteenth-century *Rose* frontispieces: the striped curtain stands proud against the background of dazzling tiles.

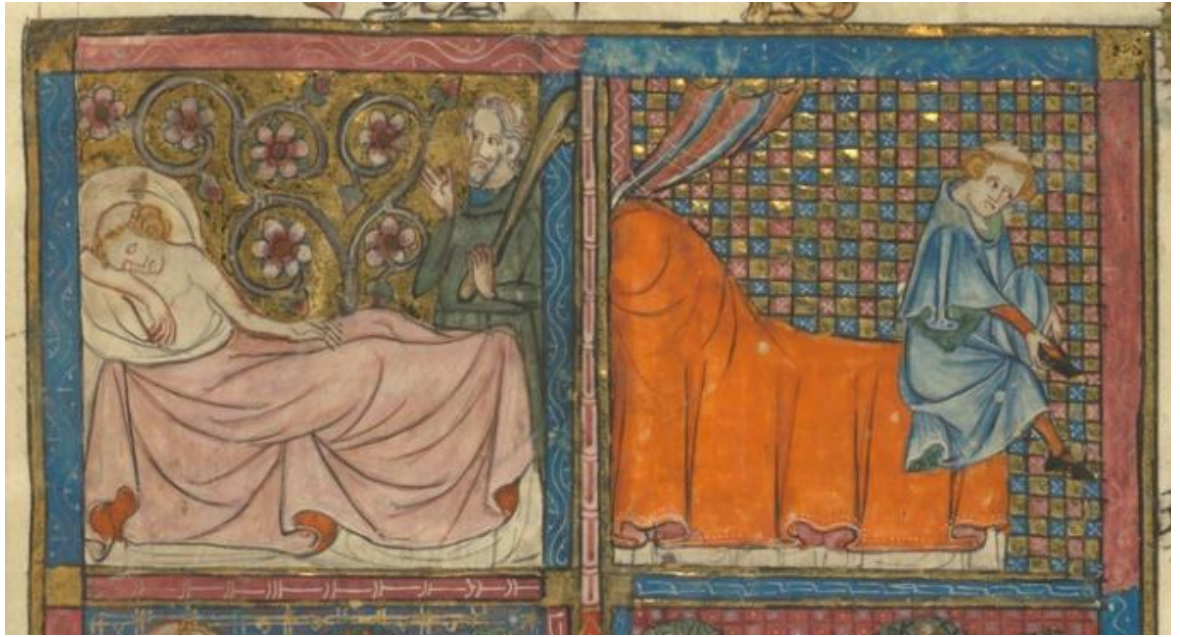


Fig 3.51. Detail — On the left the narrator sleeps in bed before the figure of Danger, on the right we see the future Amant ‘awake’ within the dream, this time the curtain is drawn back to reveal him sitting on his bed fitting his shoes. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1320, Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Français 1560, folio NP.

Elsewhere, in other manuscripts, plainer hangings are typically shown drawn aside or parted like stage curtains to hint at the permeability of the enclosed *cubiculum* and the possibility of an entrance into the interior or deeper space of the narrative proper. Petrarch’s conception of poetry as an art form that speaks ‘sub velamine figmentorum’ – and by extension Simone Martini’s – draws on a tradition that was already thoroughly established in manuscript culture.



Fig. 3.52. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1340, Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Français 1567 (known as 'MS Lk' in scholarship), f. 1.r.



Fig. 3.53. Here, the rather colourful striped curtains are dynamic and full of movement, and heighten the Amant's sudden change of state between one of slumber and one of wakefulness. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, 1352, Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Français 1565, f. 1r.



Fig. 3.54. Detail from *Li arriere bans damor* [i.e. *Li bestiaire d'amour*], Metz, 1309 — c. 1325, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Douce 308, f. 87.r.

The curtain is in fact widely used by illuminators as a framing device, but is especially employed to dramatise moments of revelation and to introduce the ‘cast’ of the relevant text with a theatrical flourish, such as in this early fourteenth-century manuscript of Fournival’s *Bestiaire d’amour*, shown above. In such instances it acts in a particularly astute way as a means of amplifying the themes of opening and entrance that are emphasised by the author. Both Guillaume and Fournival place great stress on the act of entering the poetic space of their respective texts, placing obstructive but permeable facades at the front of each work. Here, in a miniature

accompanying the prologue of the *Bestiaire d'amour*, Richard's actual subjects – the animals from which his various potted lessons and morals will be derived – are revealed to the audience like the ensemble cast of a particularly impressive seaside puppet show. In this two-part miniature, the curtains are shown patterned and complete with fringes and elaborated borders, but they have been left uncoloured, and because of this they are tied visually to the strong castellated structure on the right-hand side of the frame, with its dressed stone walls and toothy crenels that replicate the scalloped upper edge of the cloth hanging. In this way, an implied equivalence is set up between the austere stone boundary, and the rather theatrical one of woven fabric. Both can be considered as portals and entrances of a sort, and in fact there is a military undercurrent in the use of the curtain here, since it also suggests the tents in which soldiers might have slept when on campaign; Alain de Lille had deployed precisely that metaphor of the protective tent for his closed eyelids in the *De planctu naturae*, alluding to the weak rays of his eyes as his gutless troops. In this example, there is a certain humour in the theatrical revelation of the animals on the left — despite the pomp and ceremony in their introduction to the reader, they appear in complete disarray, almost like actors who just have forgotten their lines, or who have stage fright: in Richard's text, there is an equivalence too between the words and *exempla* he is employing with the help of the animals, and the military intervention represented on the right, since he characterises the work as a whole as his last blustery *arrière-ban*; that is to say, a final summoning of the very last dregs of the reserves of his invading force. The arguments to follow, drawn from the animal kingdom, represent in his eyes a last-ditch attempt to win his lady's affections, but he acknowledges via the alternative military conceit that he is scraping the barrel. The reader of this particular manuscript can see that the attempt

is destined to be unsuccessful; so much is inscribed in the hesitant and uncertain attitude of the animals on the left as well as in the misguided enthusiasm of the thoroughly untrained and untested soldiers on the right.<sup>129</sup>

Returning to the *Roman de la Rose*, which can be read with the opening of the *Bestiaire d'amour* in mind, and where the narrator has, perhaps, just as much luck in the end, we find that the veil or curtain is a consistent presence. It is the highly influential *Rose* manuscripts associated with the Fauvel master, discussed in detail in chapter one, which make the most dramatic and innovative use of curtains. In the frontispiece miniature below (produced in Paris and contemporary with Petrarch's *Virgil*, but now held in Berlin), the parted curtains rhyme in form and execution with the garden wall on the right — they announce the poet to the spectator (and the poet to his dream) as dramatically as the garden wall announces the subject of the poem just to the right. Both draw the eye deep into the inner space of the miniature, whilst remaining detached, as though in shade, from the bright golden ground that lies beyond.

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<sup>129</sup> A brief discussion of this image also appears in Huot 1987, 170-2, fig. 14. Huot reads the left portion of the miniature specifically as 'a representation of peinture' (170), but does not comment on the analogous relationship between left and right.



Fig. 3.55. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1334 – 6, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Gall. 17, f. 1r.

On the left, the veils are parted to reveal the poet's dream and to demystify its contents to the reader; simultaneously, on the right, we are given a view through numerous successive layers of the garden wall and other concentric boundary structures too, and we can see over the wall, past Oiseuse and her mirror, and through to the Rose beyond. The poem's layered structure is given in a single synthetic image: veils, curtains, fabric, walls, mirrors, and other boundary surfaces all intensify the feeling that Guillaume's poem is a journey whose various steps and stages will take time and *engin* to navigate and to penetrate, as its narrator states clearly when still outside the garden. Locked out in that ambiguous space he questions 'Par quel art ne par quel engin / Je pöisse entrer ou jardin' (ll. 499-500). Not just *engin* may be needed, a quality which Guillaume pointedly rhymes with *jardin*, but also some sort of *art*. Both *engin* and *art* are implicated in the creation

and conception of the garden as a poetic construct as much as anything else, but they are also required of the reader and narrator approaching the succession of interpretative structures through which that fictive space is shaped. These structures, like illuminated manuscripts themselves, keep presenting the reader with new surfaces adorned with text and images that simultaneously confound and offer the possibility of moving deeper into the world of the poem. The Fauvel master picks up on and re-transmits Guillaume's playing with entrances and boundaries through his own playful use of the curtains and walls within the manuscript.

The curtain or veil of allegory or interpretation was not, of course, solely an invention of manuscript illuminators, but already a *topos* of textual criticism in antiquity. It was also already enshrined in the opening lines and wider structure of the *Rose*, where text and textile are likened to each other at key moments within the narrative. Within the *Rose*'s compositional structure, interpretative surfaces are always encountered from the outside, and from the perspective of the outsider, and whilst they serve as a series of boundaries within the narrative, the emphasis is much more strongly placed on the exteriors than the interiors, even if the whole journey is really an inner one for the narrator. As I have shown in chapter one, the disagreeable figures that decorate the outer surface of Deduit's garden wall in the *Rose*, are at once anticipatory and apotropaic: they simultaneously prefigure the allegorical characters that might appear with greater solidity and realism inside the garden and warn the *Rose*'s narrator of the difficulties to come; they are locked out, like the lover, and they remain so, but they also come back to haunt him later on in the guise especially of Danger and Jalousie, figures or even qualities that ought, perhaps, to have no place so deep within the garden of Deduit. Guillaume's three-dimensional, architectural structure plays a similar role to Robert d'Orbigny's rather two-

dimensional woven and embroidered garden surfaces in *Floire et Blancheflor*. These gardenlike textiles, characterised by flowering surfaces, recur throughout the earlier work, but it is in Robert d'Orbigny's prologue that the silken floral bedspread most overtly serves as an artefact with transportative capabilities, providing an iconographically suitable interpretative site or threshold through which the narrator can enter into the orally transmitted tale. The garden space represented artistically on this surface, with its coloured bands and floral motifs, will subsequently gain greater relief as Robert's narrative reaches its climax in the Emir's Babylonian garden.

In Guillaume de Lorris' garden wall, this idea of prefiguration and subsequent fulfilment is explored in greater depth. The narrator is already asleep when he stumbles upon the garden wall, which will likewise offer him access into the space beyond; in the *Rose* this interior is, crucially, not just narrative space, but a dream landscape where the action and the personages are allegorical. Although the garden belongs within the poet's allegorical scheme to Dedit, it also reflects the opening lines of Guillaume's prologue, where the relationship between the images presented in dreams, and truth is explored. As Guillaume stresses, many men have premonitions in dreams, seeing things that afterwards come true in real life, albeit in another guise:

[m]aintes genz cuident qu'en songe

n'ait se fable non et mençonge.

Mais on puet tel songe songier

qui ne sont mie mençongier,

ainz sont après bien aparant

[...]

Quiconques cuit ne qui que die  
 Qu'il est folece et musardie  
 de croire que songes aveigne,  
 qui ce voudra, por fol m'en teigne,  
 car androit moi ai ge creance  
 que songe sont senefiance  
 des biens au genz et des anuiz,  
 que li plusor songent de nuiz  
 maintes choses covertement  
 que l'en voit puis apertement (*Le Roman de la Rose*, ll. 1-5 ; 11-20).

At the start of this passage, Guillaume establishes a connection between dreams and falsehood, even as he attempts to argue for the potential veracity of dreams, by alternating emphatically between ‘songe’, ‘mençonge’, ‘songier’, and ‘mençongier’ – all of which are given final positions, rhyming with one another and thereby becoming thoroughly connected with each other. At the very outset, Guillaume symbolically interlaces lies into his dream, complicating his claims regarding the actual truth of the dream. Guillaume’s choice of words and their patterning in the passage is overtly ironic.<sup>130</sup> Whilst acknowledging the fiction of the dream, Guillaume explicitly expresses a belief that dreams are worthy of interpretation, and in doing so instructs his readers to search for the hidden meanings within the ‘dream’ that follows. Armand Strubel notes that the conventional rhyming of ‘covertement’

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<sup>130</sup> It might be compared with Ovid’s famously dubious claim at the start of the *Ars amatoria* that ‘in[...] meo nullum carmine crimen erit’ – another instance where the sense of the line is subverted by the wordplay, in this case between ‘carmine’ and ‘crimen’ (*Ars amatoria* 1. 34).

and ‘apertement’ (ll. 19-20) represents a traditional opposition between the ‘sens caché et l’interprétation dans les textes allégoriques’ (Strubel 1992: 43 n. 2). David Hult has also noticed the ‘oscillation between what is visible and what is hidden’ in the poem (1986: 116). Chapter one has explored the ways in which Guillaume extends this theme of concealment and revelation, and the connected ideas of openness and enclosure into the very cloth worn by his characters, and deep into the allegorical space of the dream. Before this opposition has been established, though, in the opening of the poem, the poet has already stressed that the reader, like the narrator of the poem, must interpret signs and surfaces. The sibilance of the expression ‘songe sont senefiance’ (l. 16) draws attention to this point. The first of these significant surfaces comes in the form of the garden wall, decorated with carefully wrought symbols, both text and image. Only after prolonged study of the symbols on the surface, can finally *interpret* and *enter* the space beyond, and this first encounter forms the pattern for later encounters with the other interpretative surfaces through which the poem is structured. That wall, like the bedspread in *Floire et Blancheflor*, is related not only to the garden it surrounds but also to the idea of dream vision itself, since it presents the narrator with allegorical personifications like those that he will meet inside, albeit more nightmarish than those to follow. Since the *Roman de la Rose* as a whole is presented as a dream vision, Guillaume also suggests, via the garden wall, which evokes the manuscript page and the transmission of the poem itself, that the text contains fundamental truths as well as superficial fictions. As Sylvia Huot has noted, the poem’s opening lines ‘force us to consider ways that the dreams of lovers, like the lies of poets with which they are so intimately connected, may have an epistemological value as vehicles for knowledge despite their inherent fictionality’ (2010: 20 – 21). One

might even take the lines quoted above, and substitute ‘poetry’ for each mention of ‘dreams’ and the sense of the passage would not be drastically altered.

The historiated initial which opens the *Rose* as it appears in manuscript Meaux BM 52, pictured below, which was illuminated by the Fauvel master at some point between 1330 and 1340, offers us a particularly perceptive commentary on the opening lines of the *Rose*. It is, moreover, contemporary with the frontispiece of Petrarch’s *Virgil*, and might be seen as the closest in sympathy with Simone Martini’s contribution to that manuscript.



Fig. 3.56. Historiated initial. *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, c. 1320 – 1330, Meaux, Médiathèque Luxembourg de Meaux, Meaux BM 52, f. 1r.

The poet-dreamer reclines, almost entirely cocooned by the draped curtains and soft bedclothes that surround him, but the principal subject and emblem of his poem (and

his dream) grows and blossoms next to him in the corresponding discrete cell-like area of his imagination. The ‘M’ of ‘maintes genz cudent qu’en songe’ (*Roman de la Rose* l. 1), envelops, encases, and encloses the dreamer in the folds of sleep and also within the very material of the poem itself, just as the text and its images are themselves enclosed within the folii of the codex: the historiated initial becomes the very *cubiculum* in which he is sleeping. The folds of the bedclothes rhyme with the vaulting of the ‘M’ and almost seal the bottom of the letter: the sheets and bedding become the surface or ground on which the whole dream and narrative take place — in a sense, they take on a similar role to the quasi-magic bedspread in *Floire et Blancheflor*, since the ornamental scrolling rose that is energetically unfurling its tendrils and airing its enticing petals to the right is springing up from the fabric as though it is actually planted in its elegant furrows.<sup>131</sup>

The choice of the quantifier ‘Maintes’ for such treatment as a historiated initial — ignoring for a moment the fact that it is the first word of the poem, which in most cases is enough to justify special treatment — might seem a little odd, the word hardly deserving such highly-charged and richly symbolic elaboration. On closer inspection, however, many other significant words beginning with ‘m’ also appear in the opening lines of the *Rose*: ‘mençonge’ (l.2) ’mençongier’ (l. 4), ‘musardie’ (l. 7) all follow and gain in force by their proximity to that opening word. At line 19 it is repeated emphatically with the crucial observation that in dreams people see ‘Maintes choses covertement / Que l’en voit puis apertement.’

The reader is being warned: all is not as it might first appear. Safe and sound all might seem to the dreamer, securely cocooned in his private chamber, but

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<sup>131</sup> In a very real sense it is, and the connection between plant and soil established here is just as deliberate as in the well known iconography of the tree of Jesse.

falsehood, illusions, and deceptive surfaces must all be surmounted and surpassed before any ‘truth’ might be found. Throughout the poem, openings always have to be examined carefully in order for the narrator to obtain the correct interpretative keys and tools with which to access the interior beyond the boundary, where the rest of the narrative and the journey lie. In the historiated initial the ‘M’ itself forms the *chambre* or *cubiculum*, wittily subdivided into concealing curtain on the one side and rosy blossoming dream vision and revelation to the right, enclosure and exposure: in a single condensed image, it is at once garden and bedroom; both are painted here on the manuscript page sharing the same space, and both are playfully and compactly framed by the text of the *Rose* itself, which in the act of enclosing also offers us two complementary views into the interior space of the poem. Whilst the rest of this frontispiece invites the reader to interpret exterior boundaries such as the garden wall in order to obtain an idea of events to come and to be admitted into the rest of the dream narrative proper, here we have, placed within the text itself, an invitation to assess the poem from deep within the dreamer’s bedroom.

The germ is very much there already, but if we were to expand and develop this historiated initial on a grand scale, the result would be something very like Benedict’s bedroom in Avignon, which was decorated at about the same time as the manuscript, and which expresses a similar interest not only in bringing the outside world firmly into the domestic setting, but also in playing with those same themes of concealing and revealing, and of nature and artifice intertwined, that had already occupied the poets and artists of the period. Both manuscript and bedroom are likely indications of a much wider trend centring on the garden, and of deeper connections between manuscript culture, poetry, textiles, and interior decoration in the early to mid-fourteenth century. The garden was the meeting place here between art and

literature, the dream and reality. It was itself was the *nexus* that laced together the wider culture of the court into a complex but coherent cloth of creative expression.

## Conclusion

Before we attempt to leave the garden, and the wicket closes behind us, we must look back again at some of the ground covered. The thesis has argued that the garden served in medieval art and literature as the site *par excellence* of reflection about individual art forms and their relationship with a wider ecosystem of other interconnected arts, which although bound together by close ties in this fertile place of creation, continual renewal, and growth, could also leave synaptic openings between media where the most dramatic refashioning and re-interpretation could occur. A continual fascination plays around these liminal spaces, where arts borrow tools of representation from each other, but also exploit their own special capabilities to explore the melding of art and nature that is uniquely and inherently characteristic of the garden in a witty and innovative way, producing an ongoing intertextual dialogue within the narrow fields of a single genre, but also reaching beyond it to bridge those gaps and to hook tendrils around their neighbours.

A prime example of this can be found in the painted surfaces of Benedict XII's bedroom, where the representation of nature — a vivacious *reverdie* expressed in the profusion of slender and youthfully pliant forms across the space — is at once completely immersive, emphatically organic, and overtly artificial, mimicking woven and embroidered surfaces with its idyllic, *textilic* rinceaux. Another telling case of the heightened interconnectedness of the arts in the representation of the garden comes in the extraordinary — and theatrical — use of the central window of the south wall in the main hall in the Château de Saint-Floret in Auvergne, where both text and image, arranged with astonishing playfulness on the multifaceted walls, yield suddenly to the blue sky which, transparently glazed over, is made part of the narrative, acting in the role of the fountain's depths. Again it is present in the close

link between the illuminated manuscript and the carved ivory. That close but often ‘tense’ relationship between the visual arts and literature is central throughout, and forms an undercurrent that is present in both of these examples since both draw deep draughts from the well of romance literature and the wider imaginative culture that itself grew in profusion around it, nowhere was this growth more healthy than in the veritable thicket that came up around the *Roman de la Rose*.

If there is a single defining image which best encapsulates this relationship between the arts, and between art and nature, that was so key to representations of the garden and so significant a part of its appeal during the medieval period, and particularly during the fourteenth century, then this must be the single historiated initial that the Fauvel master placed at the opening of the *Rose* in the Meaux manuscript (fig. 3.56.), which we have encountered more than once within the landscape of the thesis. With this one image which, as noted, comes at the beginning of the *Rose*, we shall bring the thesis to a close, since it is emblematic of the many layered and organically artificial fusions, crossings, and transformations that are permitted by the employment of the garden as a symbolic backdrop. It is at once, a cosy *cubiculum*, screened and sheltered, and an open window through which a garden is seen and enters; it is both open and closed, a condensed image of reality, and a dream vision, where the decorated and painted surface — in which soft textiles play such a significant part, doubly enclosing the dreamer — transport the reader into the world of the *Rose*. The figure of Dangier is often present in frontispieces of the *Rose*, ready and willing to convert the dream to nightmare, but he is absent here, the enticing, coiling, and itself screenlike image of the rose itself ambiguous enough to express the powerful instability of the image. Perhaps most importantly of all, the image of the dreamer and his dual setting appears ‘toutes encloses’ in the text itself,

actually forming a part of the poem's text, but encased, moreover, like a vision in the crystal, in its first, partitioned initial. Text and image are thoroughly united and inseparable here, each aiding and amplifying the expression of — and opening up new possibilities in — the interpretation of the other.

The thesis has argued that the garden was a site where romance literature, with its particular fascination with the visual, exerted a particularly strong hold over the collective imagination, and that this naturally found expression in remarkably creative and playful ways. There is no single word, let alone letter, that best summarises the themes explored here, but the word 'maintes' — or 'many' — which is formed in part by that historiated initial, may actually have an added significance for us. The thesis has argued for the profusion, popularity, and even ubiquity of the *Rose* and the wider *vergier* within the culture of the period, and also for the garden as a site of *multimedia* exchange and transformation.

In the gently rounded boundaries of that one image, to which we have referred, and returned, throughout the thesis, the concerns of the project are well encompassed. The creative reimagining of the garden did not, of course, stop with Avignon, and future work may be done to connect the culture of the *Rose*, and indeed the courtly context of Avignon with an even wider range of imaginative products, literary and artefactual, falling within the period studied here and beyond those boundaries too, in the earlier medieval period and in the years that followed, including especially the rest of Europe, which was by no means disconnected from this culture. In the *Rose*, we do not see that wicket again, and the lover never leaves the confines of the garden space: for him the quest is one that must necessarily end in frustration, but for us and for future scholarship, there is certainly more to explore in the *vergier*.



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