“CE N’ESTOIT NYANT”: SUBVERSION AND ALLEGORY IN RENÉ D’ANJOU’S

LE LIVRE DU Cuer D’AMOURS ESPRIS

by

MONTY RAY LAYCOX

(Under the Direction of Catherine M. Jones)

ABSTRACT

The Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris is a fifteenth-century allegory of a knight on a quest to rescue his beloved Doulce Mercy, and is intended by its author to elicit consoling advice from its reader. The text explicitly states it is modeled after well-known Arthurian tales such as the Queste del saint graal, and mentions another famous allegory, the Roman de la Rose. This study will examine intertextual borrowings from these and other medieval works—namely, the personifications of Esperance and Bel Acueil; the appellation of “faulx” and “loyaulx”; the topos of an alliance between Love and Fortune; dreams and their significance; and a park reminiscent of the Rose’s parc dou champ joli—and will demonstrate how their modifications subvert the apparent allegorical drift of the story. With the aid of reader-response theory, these subversions are seen as preparation for the problematic conclusion of Cuer’s quest: the abandonment of his quest after a single rejection from his lady.

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For David, without whose support over the years I could never have finished.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

René d’Anjou (1409-1480) was born into a family whose members included several kings of France: Jean II le Bon, Charles V, Charles VI, and Charles VII. He was count of Guise, duke of Bar, Lorraine, and Anjou, and count of Provence. Although titular king of Naples and Sicily, he was never able to rule there, definitively losing these Italian realms in a campaign lasting from 1438-1440. In 1466, he aided his nephew King Louis XI, leading the king’s army in Normandy to defeat a rebellious Brittany, and for his efforts was awarded the title of King of Jerusalem, although Louis XI never provided the material support necessary to make René anything other than a king-in-name. But despite René’s assistance and Louis’ reward, relations between uncle and nephew were never warm. Intent on consolidating royal power throughout the kingdom, Louis falsely charged René with treason in 1476. Convicted, René arranged to keep title of Anjou, Provence, Bar and Lorraine, but ceded administrative control of Anjou to the crown.

While he did not enjoy perhaps the most stellar of political careers, René was, like many nobles of his time, a noted patron of the arts with refined and expensive tastes. Although less known than his close relative Charles d’Orléans, he was
nonetheless also a noted writer, leaving a corpus consisting of three major works plus a few pieces of verse that he exchanged with Charles. In the order in which they were written, the three long pieces are:

1. Le Traité de la forme et devis d’un tournoi (1444), of which six manuscripts survive. Lamenting what he sees as a decline from a golden age of nobility and chivalry, the author of the treatise provides a description of the ideal tournament, hoping in his nostalgia for a rebirth of what he calls in his dedication to Charles d’Anjou, “. . . les anciennes façons de France que j’ai trouvées dans les écrits”.

2. Le Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance (1445), a religious allegory of a soul attempting to find salvation. The soul presents the heart to Fear and Contrition, who crucify it in order that it may be purged of sin and purified.¹

3. And finally, Le Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris, which gives the date of its writing as 1477 within the text itself. Scholars believe that this is the date the work was finished, it having been started sometime around 1457. Six manuscripts survive, the oldest being Codex Vindobonensis 2597 housed in the Österreichische NationalBibliothek in Vienna. This manuscript contains the exquisite illuminations of an anonymous artist, but scholars believe they were executed under the personal supervision of René himself.

The remaining manuscripts, housed in France and the Vatican, are copies or

¹ Although I do not use it for the Livre du Cuer, all three of René’s works may be found in the Œuvres complètes du roi René, compiled in the nineteenth century by le comte de Quatrebarbes. As Noël Coulet and his collaborators observe concerning this edition, it is the “seule édition complète” (237). They go on to note that “deux pièces y sont incluses, L’abusé en cour et Regnault et Jehanneton, dont l’une n’est certainement pas et l’autre probablement pas de René” (237).
abridgements of the Austrian manuscript. Two modern editions of the Livre du Cuer exist, although one of them, edited by Susan Wharton in an inexpensive paperback and based on the Bibliothèque Nationale fr. 24399 manuscript, is now out of print. The second, and the one used for this study, was published in 2001 by Stephanie Viereck Gibbs and Kathryn Karczewska in a more expensive hardcover volume; it is based on the older Vienna manuscript and contains full-color reproductions of the famous illuminations. A short summary of the Livre du Cuer’s plot is given below:

1. The story opens with René d’Anjou’s letter to his kinsman Jean, in which he complains of suffering on account of love, and says that the following “paraboles” will help Jean to understand the problem. As scholars have demonstrated, it is not possible to know, despite the inclusion of the names of René d’Anjou and Jean de Bourbon in this letter, if we are dealing with anything resembling autobiography. In all that follows, “René” and “Jean” are treated as fictional characters. In most cases this will be made explicit by referring to the “author persona” in the case of René, but to avoid cumbersome nomenclature, unmarked references to people—historically real though they be—will refer to their fictional portrayal in the Livre du Cuer. A closer look at the author-persona is to follow.

2. The scene shifts to an unnamed man, speaking in the first-person, lying in bed, who proceeds to have a dream wherein Amours, the God of Love, removes the
dreamer’s heart and gives it to Desir. Desir tells the heart that he must accompany him if the heart is to win Sweet Mercy.

3. Here, the story of Cuer begins—of his encounters with Tristesse and Melencholie, of his battles with Soulcy and Courroux, of his sea voyage to the God of Love’s island, of his visit to the Hospital of Love, to Love’s Castle of Pleasure and finally to the Manor of Refusal, where Cuer ultimately finds then loses Sweet Mercy.

4. The dreaming man awakens, and records his dream in writing.

5. René returns to conclude his letter to Jean, asking that Jean give him advice now that he has read the story and can understand René’s problem.

The Livre du Cuer is an “allegory”, a term needing some clarification. This word has been used for thousands of years and has been the subject of endless discussions concerning its meaning and textual manifestations. Some of these various ideas will be discussed shortly. A recent Library of Congress catalog search for the term “allegory” turned up nearly four hundred entries published since 1900 alone, testifying to the continuing interest, the complexity, as well as the utility of the word. At the same time, even people who are not literary scholars seem to have some sense as to what “allegory” means; it is not a technical word like “syllepsis” or “brachycatalectic”, which might drive even scholars to their dictionaries. In what follows, I will explain what is meant by calling the Livre du Cuer an allegory and how this meaning is in agreement with what prominent scholars understand to be the meaning(s) of the term.
The *Livre du Cuer* begins with a letter in which René explains to Jean that he is suffering from some unspecified problem related to love. Rather than clearly stating what the difficulty might be, he chooses to send a story which, though not having René as the protagonist, will nonetheless enable Jean to understand his uncle’s plight. The ensuing narrative is about the knight errant Cuer, wandering the countryside in the company of Desir, searching for the lady Doulce Mercy. On the literal level, the story of Cuer’s adventures means exactly what it says: a character named Cuer is armed as a knight by a character named Desir; they ride on horses to a fountain that can cause violent storms, and so forth. But besides the literal meaning, this story has another meaning, because the author-persona explicitly says it does. In the end, Jean will presumably have insight into René’s difficulties and provide appropriate counsel. This other meaning is not glossed within the text, but its existence is guaranteed by Cuer’s author, and while the details are left for Jean to figure out, we are not free to hypothesize any meaning we please: this second meaning must concern the love problem of one particular man. Therefore, by calling the *Livre du Cuer* an allegory, I mean nothing more than what the text claims for itself, namely that there is the literal meaning (or level), which is the sequence of events occurring to Cuer and to the characters surrounding him, as well as a secondary meaning to which these events

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2 René very briefly sketches what his problem is to Jean in four sentences—hardly a detailed gloss—found in his opening letter (§1, 17-26), and these will be dealt with in chapter 3.

3 See p. 36 for a discussion of the general vs. particular problem.
point. By calling this additional meaning the allegorical one (and, by extension, the story itself an allegory) I am using the term in a way which falls within a broadly accepted usage, which I now intend to justify.

In what follows, I do not, for several reasons, rigorously trace the development of the entity known as “allegory”; literary histories on this topic already exist in profusion. More importantly, I am aiming for the much more modest goal of demonstrating that my use of the term “allegory”, as it is understood by most modern scholars, can be applied to the work at hand, namely the Livre du Cuer—a work wherein the word never appears.

The average person likely understands allegory in roughly the same manner as it was defined by the Roman writer Quintilian (A.D. 37-100) who, in The Orator’s Education, said that allegory “… presents one thing by its words and either (1) a different or (2) sometimes even a contradictory thing by its sense” (Book 8, chapter 6, paragraph 44). But it is usually forgotten that Quintilian was defining a localized verbal phenomena, a fact revealed by his inclusion of “allegory” in his chapter concerning Tropes, which he says are “… a shift of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another, in a way that has positive value” (Book 8, chapter 6, paragraph 1). This is not to say that the act of finding meaning within a text other than what the text actually said was unknown in Classical times; commentators had long since found Homeric poetry,

4 Besides the general historical surveys and specialized investigations by McQueen, Quilligan and Tuve cited in this study, Tzvetan Todorov’s historical treatise Théories du symbole is also interesting.
for example, to be a source of hidden meanings. It was not until Christian exegetes began looking for systematic ways of studying Scripture that the word “allegory” expanded its meaning beyond the classification of an isolated rhetorical trope to include the study of an entire text.

For the early church fathers, allegory was a hermeneutic tool to be used to discover what God had revealed in His holy word. It was a method of interpretation applied to the Bible, which was literally true in all that it said in addition to having hidden meanings requiring careful study to be understood. The Bible itself testifies to the existence of its multiple meanings, as when Paul explains that the suffering experienced by the Israelites during their forty years of wandering in the desert, while historically true, also had another meaning:

Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (I Corinthians 10: 6-11)\

The Bible even uses the term “allegorical” itself to describe how certain Old Testament events are to be understood, as when Paul interprets the significance of Abraham’s two

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\[5\] All Biblical citations in this study are taken from the New American Standard Bible.
children: Isaac, born to Abraham’s wife Sarai, and Ishmael, born to Sarai’s servant Hagar.

For it is written that Abraham had two sons [Genesis 16-18, 21], one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. This is allegorically speaking: for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. . . . And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. (Galatians 4: 22-26, 28)

Early Christian theologians were well aware that the Bible contained allegory, understanding the word at first as did Quintilian. Augustine, for example, in Teaching Christianity writes, “Not only. . . are there examples in the divine books [i.e. the Bible] of all these tropes, but even the names of some of them can be read there, like allegory, enigma, parable” (Book 3, paragraph 40). But as time went on, the term expanded its meaning to include the sense of interpretation, as part of the well-known four-fold interpretation of the Bible. Although he did not invent this methodology, St. Thomas Aquinas gave a clear definition of it in his Summa Theologicae:

That God is the author of holy Scripture should be acknowledged, and he has the power, not only of adapting words to convey meanings (which men also can do), but also of adapting things themselves. In every branch of knowledge words have meaning, but what is special here is that the things meant by the words also themselves mean something. That first meaning whereby the words signify things belongs to the sense first-mentioned, namely the historical or literal. That meaning, however, whereby the things signified by the words [i.e. the historical events] in their turn also signify other things is called the spiritual sense; it is based on and presupposes the literal sense.
Now this spiritual sense is divided into three. . . . The allegorical sense is brought into play when the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law; the moral sense when the things done in Christ and in those who prefigured him are signs of what we should carry out; and the anagogical sense when the things that lie ahead in eternal glory are signified. (37, 39)

It is important to note that the veracity of the spiritual sense is dependant entirely on the truthfulness of the literal, which is vouchsafed in the case of the Bible due to its status as the Word of God; God Himself thus guarantees the existence and truthfulness of the multiple meanings to be found in scripture. Allegory has expanded its meaning from a type of localized rhetorical trope to a method of textual interpretation, but seemingly for only one special text. The inclusion of non-sacred texts, however, into the domain of those amenable to allegorical interpretation—that is, for their interpretation to be called “allegorical”—actually took some time to occur. It was the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) who was “the first to relate a theory of allegory, closely resembling that advanced by Aquinas, directly to the study of at least some kinds of vernacular literature” (MacQueen 54).

In his Il Convivio, Dante writes

. . . writings can be understood and ought to be expounded principally in four senses. The first is called the literal, and this is the sense that does not go beyond the surface of the letter, as in the fables of the poets. The next is called the allegorical, and this is the one that is hidden beneath the cloak of these fables, and is a hidden truth beneath a beautiful fiction. Thus Ovid says that with his lyre Orpheus tamed wild beasts and made trees and rocks move toward him, which is to say that the wise man with the instrument of his voice makes cruel hearts grow tender and humble and moves to his will those who do not devote their lives to knowledge and
art; and those who have no rational life whatsoever are almost like stones.

(Book 2, ch. 1)

Aware that he is using the term “allegory” differently than in its generally accepted religious usage, he states just a few sentences later: “Indeed the theologians take this sense otherwise than do the poets; but since it is my intention here to follow the method of the poets, I shall take the allegorical sense according to the usage of the poets” (Book 2, chapter 1). Dante did not intend that allegorical interpretation be limited to classical authors; it could include contemporary ones as well. In fact, it could to be used on his own writings, as his letter to Can Grande testifies, wherein Dante expounds on his Divine Comedy:

For the clarity of what will be said, it is to be understood that the meaning of this work [i.e. The Divine Comedy] is not simple, but rather it is polysemous, that is, having many meanings. For the first meaning is that which one derives from the letter, another is that which one derives from the things signified by the letter. The first is called “literal” and the second “allegorical” or “mystical”. . . . Having seen this, it is evident that the subject around which these alternate meanings revolve must be double. And therefore the subject of this work must be considered first according to the letter, then considered allegorically. And therefore the subject of the whole work, understood only literally, is simply the state of souls after death. For the course of the whole work turns from and around this. If however the work is considered allegorically, the subject is man as according to his merits or demerits in the exercise of free will he is subject to reward or punishment by Justice. (37-38)

While never abandoning its sense of a localized trope, allegory has grown to include an interpretive method, applied initially to a document considered historically true, and then to texts that were acknowledged to be fictional. Still, allegory was, in a sense,
something done “to” a text by a reader, a way of interpreting a meaning other than what was literally before the reader’s eyes. Modern readers, nonetheless, have found it necessary to include yet another usage for the term, whereby a text itself is to be known as “an” allegory.

As this entire discussion of the meanings behind the word “allegory” is intended to clarify its application to the single work Le Livre du Cuer, the only type of narrative to be considered as an allegory here will be that which contains personifications, defined by James J. Paxson as “…the translation of any non-human quantity into a sentient human capable of thought and language, possessing voice and face” [sic] (42). Prudentius’s Psychomachia is recognized as the first major Western work of fiction where personifications are the primary actors of the narrative (Paxson 63), wherein the cardinal virtues do battle with and overcome vices. Perhaps because most authors choose to personify emotions or personality traits that every reader possesses to some degree—Faith, Sorrow, Hope, to name but a few—, readers might identify what goes on in the narrative with something in their own lives, or with the human condition in general, above and beyond what happens in the text itself. But be that as it may, in his study of personification Paxon states that “[t]he readily spotted figure—through which a human identity or ‘face’ is given to something not human—was for years automatically equated with ‘allegory’” (1). Consequently, though criteria other than personification might conceivably be chosen as the marker of an allegorical text, most
early twenty-first-century readers, correctly or not, would label a text populated with personifications as “an” allegory.⁶

While the preceding discussion of allegory has examined the three meanings separately, they rarely, if ever, occur in isolation. Certainly within the Livre du Cuer the last two are simultaneously present. To the extent that personifications are nearly omnipresent in the dream sequence, it is hardly possible to speak of personification as an isolated trope within the text, but their very ubiquity lends itself to the perception that this is an allegory. And no less an authority than the author-persona assures us that there is a second meaning in addition to the literal meaning of the narrative, for when René concludes the opening letter to Jean, he writes “Et ainsi languissant demeure, sans garir ne sans pouoir mourir, en faczon telle et estat proprement comme par parables en ce livret ycy vous pourrez au vray veoir, s’il vous plaist a le lire” (§1, 30-32, emphasis added) [Thus languishing I remain, neither healing nor capable of dying, in such a way and state you will be able to see truly and properly through parables in this book, if it pleases you to read it.]⁷ However one interprets the word “parabole” (and a discussion of this word is to follow), it would at least seem clear from this statement

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⁶ See Maureen Quilligan’s Language of Allegory, p. 33, for another approach to defining “allegory”.
⁷ All French and, unless otherwise noted, English translation quotations of the Livre du Cuer are taken from Stephanie Viereck Gibbs and Kathryn Karczewsa’s The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart. References are given to paragraph (“§”) and line numbers of the original French; their English translation is found on the facing page.
that Jean is to comprehend two different things as he reads: the particular adventures occupying Cuer et al. and René’s current predicament—literal and allegorical meaning.8

The expression “paraboles” deserves special consideration, as this is how the author of Cuer’s adventures describes his story. Daniel Poirion reasonably suggests the word be defined in relation to King René’s other imaginative work, Le Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance, wherein characters recount “similitudes” to illustrate their moral teachings (“L’Allégorie” 52). Algirdas Julien Greimas’s Dictionnaire de l’ancien français defines “similitude” as “Ressemblance. Chose, phénomène semblable”. Likewise, Frédéric Godefroy’s dictionary defines it as “Ressemblance, rapport exact entre deux choses. Comparaison; par extension, parabole,” which seems to describe the type of story the author intends to convey: one in which some quality of the narrative—events,

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8 The modern critic Rosemond Tuve combines what we might think of as the hermeneutic and ontological meanings of “allegory” (allegory as technique of interpretation; allegory as a name for what a certain type of text “is”) by classifying texts as either intended (by their authors) or imposed (by their readers) allegories. Since, as she says, “[t]he reason for reading any piece allegorically is to come at the meanings which are truly in the work,” it is incumbent on readers to read only those significances “which are truly part of the subject and not arbitrarily and forcibly imposed upon it” (217). But, she continues, this advice cannot be accepted in absolute terms, as “we must realize that some of the greatest allegories in the world’s literature were not the consciously intended meanings of the original authors” (217). Thus, while the argument “This is not what the original author intended” cannot in and of itself invalidate an allegorical interpretation (“It would take a very complicated argument to convince one that the penitential psalms, the 22nd for example, ought to be pared down to what David had in mind when he wrote ‘All they that see me laugh me to scorn’” (221)), it is equally true that a reader cannot overlook “the evidence which could declare what an author may have meant” (220), even though there can be no guarantee that we are correct in assuming to know “what an author may have meant”. Two observations can be made regarding Tuve’s distinction and the Livre du Cuer: 1. The Cuer is not an imposed allegory, nor is Poirion’s interpretation an imposed allegorical reading; the text of the Cuer itself admits that the dream segment has a meaning other than the literal. 2. Though I make no claim to know what the author meant, I do know what the author-persona claims the story signifies—and the divergence between what he states and what is actually said and done in the story forms the basis of this study.
emotional state, moral predicament, etc.—is similar to that experienced by the author-figure. This quality is what I understand as the allegorical meaning of the story.

Let me spell out what Cuer’s adventure seems to say about the love plight of the author-persona, that is, what the “similitude” of those adventures might be. Poirion again has summed up the apparent allegorical meaning which I cite in its entirety:

On peut, comme dans le Roman de la Rose, déchiffrer la métaphore des lieux, des personnages, de l’aventure, de manière à reconstituer une intrigue amoureuse : amoureux d’une dame, poussé par le désir, le narrateur entreprend de la séduire ; il traverse des alternatives d’espoir et de désespoir, la jalousie l’égare, il a des moments de mélancolie ; impatient il doit lutter contre le souci, le courroux, la tristesse ; grâce à sa bonne réputation il fait des progrès, et surtout l’argent qu’il donne lui permet de se rapprocher de la dame ; retrouvant confiance et résolution, aidé par ses amis, il est bien accueilli et peut enfin parler d’amour, faire des serments ; présentant humblement sa requête, il inspire quelque pitié à la dame qui lui accorde un baiser ; mais quelque médisation dont il est l’objet réveille la méfiance et la pudeur de la dame, qui de nouveau s’enferme dans le refus. Telle serait l’histoire que l’auteur aurait choisi de nous raconter en la parant des reflets de l’allégorie. (“L’Allégorie” 60)

Then Poirion expresses incredulity when confronted by such a simplistic one-to-one correspondence between the literal and allegorical meanings of Cuer’s tale: “Il faut avouer qu’on ne voit pas très bien pourquoi René d’Anjou aurait voulu immortaliser une telle aventure” (60). Despite Rosemond Tuve’s warning of reading against the allegorical ‘drift’, this is precisely what I propose to do—not because readers might

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9 “Drift” is Tuve’s metaphorical name for the global sense or meaning of an allegory. The sum total of characters, actions, places and incidents in an allegory contribute to its meaning, its “drift”—but this overall meaning in turn is to be used to understand individual characters, actions, places and so on of the allegory: “the principal drift governs the meanings attributable to the incidents borne upon the stream; the latter cannot take their own moral direction as they choose. If we ignore the stream’s main direction of
otherwise find Le Livre du Cuer to be banal or simple, but because the text is incessantly throwing up obstacles to such a reading, even as it simultaneously tells its banal, simple tale. For an example of this, let us again return to René’s own taxonomic label for his story, *paraboles*.

While *similitudes* is clearly an appropriate meaning, Frédéric Godefroy defines “parabole” as “Fable, sujet de récits malins. Mensonge, feinte. Parole.” The story of Cuer is thus a parable, told not for its own sake, but that the reader might understand René’s plight. But the story might be a lie—not because it is fictional, but because it may not mean what it says it is supposed to mean: it is a signifier (the literal meaning) at one and the same time pointing to a signified (René’s love life, the allegorical meaning) and not pointing to it. The goal of this study, however, is not to propose a definitive interpretation of the “true” allegorical meaning of Le Livre du Cuer, but rather to examine how the text works to subvert its own stated allegorical meaning. As Wolfgang Iser has warned in the first chapter of *The Act of Reading*, questions such as “What does the story mean?” are usually misplaced (8). The text, after all, says what the story of Cuer is “about”, or rather what its function is: a means for Jean de Bourbon to understand René’s emotional distress.

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flow, and embark on incidents which travel counter to or unrelated to it, arriving at special separable meanings for such incidents, we shall presently drown farcically, amid the laughter of the characters, who sit on the bank well protected in the natures the author gave them, only waiting their chance to push us in” (235).
A crucial (though not exclusive) method to be used in excavating the obstacles in the way of allegorical drift is intertextual comparison with other medieval fictions, principally Arthurian romances such as *La Queste del Saint Graal*, and *Le Roman de la Rose*. Besides being well-known stories of, on the one hand, knightly adventure and, on the other, quests for love, these two bodies of work are explicitly mentioned in the *Livre du Cuer*. At the beginning of the dream sequence that comprises the largest section of the *Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris*, the narrator announces that the story he is about to relate is similar to the adventures of Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Tristan, Palomides, and other knights of King Arthur’s Round Table in their quest for the Holy Grail:

Comme jadis des haulx faiz et prouesses, des grans conquestes et vaillances en guerre, et des merveilleux cas et tresaventureux perilz qui furent a fin menez, faiz et acomplis par les chevaliers preux et hardiz Lancelot, Gauvain, Galhat, Tristan et aussi Palamides et aultres chevaliers, pers de la table ronde, ou temps du roy Artur et pour le sang greal conquérir—ainsi que les antiques histoires le racontent au long—aient esté faiz et dittez plusieurs romans pour perpetuel memoire, aussi et pareillement, pour vous mieulx donner a entendre ceste mienne ouvre, qui est de la maniere de la queste de Tresdoulce Mercy au Cuer d’amours espris, ensuyvray les termes du parler du livre de la conqueste du sang greal. . . (§3, 1-10)

[As once many romances had been made and recounted for everlasting memory of noble deeds and prowess, of great conquests and wartime courage, of astonishing events and most adventuresome dangers which were concluded, carried out, and accomplished to win the Holy Grail by the courageous and bold knights Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Tristan, Palomides, and other knights as well, peers of the Round Table in King Arthur’s time, as ancient histories tell of from beginning to end, so similarly, to better grant you the means to understand my present work, which tells of the quest for most Sweet Mercy by the love-smitten Heart, I will follow the plan of the book of the quest for the Holy Grail. . .]
The narrator claims that it is his intention to use the story of the quest of the Holy Grail as a model for his own work to increase the likelihood readers will better understand “ceste mienne euvre”. This is the second time readers are explicitly given tools for comprehension: as we have seen in his letter to Jean, René states that the “parables” to follow will better help Jean understand René’s romantic difficulties. The process of narrative interpretation thus assumes two opposite but related functions. In the first instance, attentive reading of the story of Cuer will permit a reader to “vray veoir” (§1, 32) René’s lamentable state. In the second, textual understanding is a given; in fact, readers are assumed to be already so well conversant with the Queste del Saint Graal and tales of Arthurian knights that their knowledge of those works seemingly guarantees proper understanding of what they are about to read: the story of Cuer. Although the author-persona who writes to Jean is not identical to the man who narrates the story of Cuer, the narrator is presented as a fictional construct created by René. If therefore René tells Jean the following story will help him understand his difficulties, and the narrator then states that stories of the Arthurian romance will aid in comprehending the adventures of Cuer, it follows that those romances are useful in illuminating the reason René seeks counsel from his nephew.

Daniel Poirion, one of the first modern critics to give serious scholarly attention to the literary achievements of King René, notes the various ways in which the Queste serves as a model for the Livre du Cuer (“L’Allégorie” 54-55). He observes the similar
use of the stylistic technique of interlace, the weaving together of different sub-plots, as this example from the Cuer demonstrates: “Mais a tant se taist ores ly contes d’eulx et retourne a parler du Cueur. . .” (§85, 6-7) [But the story now falls silent about them, and turns again to speak of the Heart. . .] More importantly (for the purposes of this study), Poirion points out the thematic similarities, the “chevauchées, forêts, fontaine magique, passages périlleux, sauvetages, châteaux-pièges, prisons, ermitages, navigation. . .” — the very motifs that contribute to the “merveilleux cas et tresaventureux perilz” claimed by the Cuer narrator to be the essential aspects of romance that will assist his readers in understanding his own work. Furthermore, Poirion astutely reminds us of the purpose of these motifs in the context of René’s amorous difficulties:

Cependant ces éléments narratifs, combinés pour constituer une aventure, une quête, restent subordonnés aux éléments psychologiques dont ils sont les supports et les rapports. Autrement dit le drame lui-même, le destin du héros et de ses protagonistes, l’aventure, ne sont que la mise en ordre, une relation logique des notions figurées par les personnages et les lieux. (55)

Poirion is insisting on the allegorical nature of the “termes du parler du livre de la conquête du sang greal” — the interlace, the presence of certain motifs — within the story of Cuer, and on the fact that what is figured by the characters, actions, and places in the narrative needs to be taken into account. This, after all, is the entire reason for the narrative’s existence: René wants Jean to understand his own problems by deciphering what is figured by the story he sends. As it is the chivalric adventures, the “haulx faiz et prouesses, des grans conquestes et vaillances en guerre, et des merveilleux cas et
tresaventureux perilz” of the fabled Round Table knights (one of whom, Palomides, is not even in the  
Queste) that are singled out by the narrator as reasons for following the “termes du parler” of Arthurian stories, I take the liberty of expanding the domain of romances amenable to intertextual exploitation to include others beyond the  
Queste, the most useful of which is the Prose Lancelot.

The Cuer narrator claims specifically that Arthurian romance is useful in understanding the story of the knight Cuer; it makes no such assertion about the Roman de la Rose. Nonetheless, the Rose is just as important as an intertext, if for different reasons—ones that would and do place the Rose forcefully and unequivocally within the horizon of expectations of all audiences:

1. the nearly three hundred surviving copies of the Roman de la Rose testify to the fact that it was one of the most popular literary works produced in the Middle Ages;

2. both the Rose and Cuer are allegorical dream quests of a male lover for his imprisoned lady;

3. the Rose and Cuer share many of the same personifications who act to thwart the reunion of the lovers: Honte, Crainte, Mal Bouche, Reffuz, and Jalousie; or who work to unite them: Pitié, Courtoisie, and Bel Acueil;

4. Jean de Meun, the author (along with Guillaume de Lorris) of the Roman de la Rose, occupies one of the five tombs described in detail in the Cuer’s cemetery of the Hospital of Love; and
5. the Roman de la Rose is explicitly referred to by name in the narrative: as Loyauté accepts Cuer’s homage to the God of Love, he enjoins Cuer to obey Love’s commandments, “Lesquel, si les voulez savoir, / Prenez paine a lire et a veoir / Le tresbel romant de la rose, / La ou l’art d’amours est enclose” (§263, 12-15). [Which, if you care to learn them, / Take pains to read and look upon / The most lovely Roman de la Rose, / There where the art of love is enclosed.]

These medieval works, the Queste del Saint Graal (plus other Arthurian romances) and the Roman de la Rose, are thus powerful resources to be used in understanding the Livre du Cuer. But in borrowing from these sources, King René also adapted them to his own needs, changing them in sometimes subtle ways, and it is these changes which are of interest here, as they are the loci of subversive forces going counter to the allegorical drift of the narrative. Two brief examples (to be examined in greater detail in subsequent chapters) will illustrate what is meant:

1. In the Queste, dreams are invariably portents of mystical significance that all dreamers, without exception, recognize as needing interpretation from some qualified authority—a hermit, priest, astrologer, etc. Furthermore, no dreamer is at ease until he has sought out and obtained an explanation of his dream from this authority. The story of Cuer is presented as a dream, but the man who dreams that his heart is removed from his body and provides the protagonist of the ensuing adventures never seeks an explanation of what he has experienced. Furthermore,
Cuer himself has two dreams, both accurately foretelling his future, yet he is almost completely unaware of his visions, both before and after their predictions are fulfilled.

2. In the *Roman de la Rose*, the lady’s personality is represented through various personifications: Dangier, Pitié, Jalousie, etc. But primarily, the lover’s most positive encounters with her are mediated through the character of Bel Acueil; it is he, as his name implies, who warmly welcomes the lover when he comes to the rose bush, and suffers cruel imprisonment when the lover kisses his cherished rose. In the *Livre du Cuer*, however, Bel Acueil is a member of the God of Love’s household, and while Cuer’s lady Doulce Mercy is held captive in the Manor of Rebellion, Bel Acueil is out roaming the lands actively searching for new lovers. He is also in Cuer’s armed fighting band when Cuer mounts his assault on the Manor.

These brief examples reveal that René d’Anjou modified his sources in interesting and intriguing ways; demonstrating how these modifications subvert the text’s stated objective of portraying René’s amorous difficulties will be the goal of this study.

In borrowing and adapting existing sources, King René was applying standard medieval compositional theory to his work. Though Julia Kristeva may have coined the term “intertextuality” in 1966, medievalists, as Norris J. Lacy points out, were studying the phenomenon long before that (157). Indeed, in his study *Internal Difference and Meanings in the Roman de la Rose*, Douglas Kelly observes that medieval instruction in
the art of composition included methods to incorporate what had already been written, and in his summary of Gervase of Melkley’s medieval writing treatise says

... the author may rewrite the source in the same way while polishing the source (*idemptitas*), in a similar way while deflecting the source through analogy (*similitudo*), or in the opposite way by distorting the source material into something different from or contrary to its original sense (*contrarietas*). All these procedures are commonplace modes of medieval rewriting. In using them, the writer will reproduce the first author’s conception of the work in a new version that goes beyond the original, in a way that conjures up dwarves who see farther because they observe from the shoulders of giants. (22)

In a sense, I am proposing to read the *Cuer* in a way that a medieval reader might conceivably have read it, although while I observe cases of *idemptitas*, I am primarily concerned with *contrarietas*, and in so doing, I find those distortions to be the obstacles in the way of allegorical drift. If, for example, in previous allegories Esperance serves to engender hope in a lover, to urge him not to give up on his amorous endeavors, then the personification of Esperance in the *Cuer* is subverting Cuer’s quest when she foretells his future in terms that almost exclusively describe suffering and hardship.

As was implied above, the presence of a character named René and of a man who dreams of Cuer and then of the one who recounts Cuer’s exploits makes it difficult and cumbersome to use terms such as “author” and “narrator”. Susanne Rinne has analyzed this complex tripartite entity:

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10 The characters, for example, who staff the Hospital d’Amours, as well as the institution’s function, are by and large similar to what are found in Achille Cautier’s allegory of the same name.
Three author figures are represented by and within the text: “je René” of the epistolary bracket, the I-narrator of the dream frame, and the omniscient “acteur” of the dream itself, who, at times, is associated with the I-narrator. Not only does their distance from René vary but so do their points of view and their knowledge of the whole work. René of the dedication most closely resembles René, prince d’Anjou, who composes a very personal letter. . . . The I-narrator of the frame is mainly concerned with self-analysis; he relates a specific state of mind at a certain moment in his life. The composition of the quest allegory is carried out by the figure of the “acteur” whose enlarged angle of vision encompasses the memory of past and present experience and reading. . . . René d’Anjou, as real person, stays outside the text on an invisible, inviolate level. No matter how tangled the interaction of the masks he lends to his authorial figures, he remains backstage, inviting the reader to piece together the fragments of his identity from the text. (152)

In the first instance, Rinne’s summary allows me to reiterate that this study does not presume to have any biographical tendencies. We readers may well be invited to “piece together the fragments” of King René to be found within the Livre du Cuer, but that invitation is declined: the René-as-real-person is to be left on his invisible, inviolate level.11 Beyond this, though, the multiplicity of author figures plays a subtle role as one

11 Whether the Livre du Cuer is in any sense autobiographical is a difficult question; even if we were to agree that the “je, René” in the opening letter is King René d’Anjou the real historical man, I am shortly to argue that the multiplicity of author figures employed in the Cuer runs counter to the historical evolution in the presentation of the “I” in French medieval writing, rendering problematic the seemingly obvious identification (and thus the autobiographical content) of “je, René”, the dreaming man, and Cuer. Nevertheless, some critics do attempt to read King René’s real life into the Livre du Cuer. For example: Joël Blanchard says, “L’effet autobiographique... est la véritable matière du texte: René d’Anjou, le roi qui a perdu tous ses royaumes, retrouve par l’écriture une certaine forme de souveraineté” (19); after enumerating King René’s disappointments in life, Zink, in “La tristesse du cœur”, concludes, “Au total, une vie jouée: un homme qui a joué à être roi et à être poète, dont la vie s’est écoulée dans le jeu des fêtes et des représentations de l’amour et de la gloire, mais aussi un homme qui a été joué et dont le destin, loin pourtant de tout tragique, laisse une impression d’échec et de tristesse. Ce jeu triste se lit dans son roman, Le Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris” (22); and though he rejects the idea himself, Poirion in “L’Allégorie. . . .” mentions the theory that King René offered the Cuer as a gift to his second wife, Jeanne de Laval, in which he recounts their courtship (60).
strategy in the subversion of Cuer’s stated goal, for though we may indeed be invited to assemble all of these mosaic pieces into a coherent whole, the fact remains that we are presented with a mosaic of first-person characters, and this phenomenon is different from the way medieval writers usually depicted themselves in their works before the Livre du Cuer.

Although the first monuments of French letters—Le Roman de Thèbes, Le Roman d’Enéas, Le Roman de Troie—were understood to be based on existing written Latin sources, their medieval French adapters were careful to reveal their own presence and the labor they had expended in producing their works. The prologue to the Roman de Thèbes, for example, begins

Si danz Homers et danz Platons
et Virgiles et Citherons
lor sapience celasant,
ja ne fust d’els parlé avant.
Por ce ne voil mon sen taisir,
ma sapience retenir,
ainz me delite a conter
chose digne de remembrer. (5-12)

[If Homer, Plato, / Virgil and Cicero / had hidden their knowledge / no one would ever have talked about them. / Because of this I do not want to silence my own understanding, / or withhold my knowledge, / but I am pleased to recount something worthy of remembrance.] (my translation)

As Michel Zink has argued in La Subjectivité littéraire, the first French writers were concerned with questions of authority and truth—historical truth (as it was understood in the Middle Ages) in recounting what actually happened in antiquity, guaranteed by
translating and adapting into French authoritative Latin texts (22-25). The writer of the Roman de Thèbes wants his audience to be aware of his knowledge, gleaned from reading Latin histories; Zink observes the same concern for fidelity to an authoritative (i.e. Latin) source evinced by Wace in his prologue to the Roman de Troie, “Le latin sivrai e la lettre, / Nule autre rien n’i voudrai mettre, / S’ensi non com jol truis escrit” (26). [I shall follow the letter of the Latin text; my intention is to add nothing to what I find written.]

This discussion of the presence of an author-figure within a text is, in part, what Zink means by “literary subjectivity”, which he defines as follows: “Non pas, bien évidemment, l’effusion spontanée ou l’expression véritable dans un texte de la personnalité, des opinions ou des sentiments de son auteur. Mais ce qui marque le texte comme le point de vue d’une conscience” (8). Zink reveals how subjectivity evolved within the context of thirteenth-century French literature, and his work forms the basis of discussion here for works up to and including the Roman de la Rose. After a review of this subjectivity, we will see how René d’Anjou modifies the direction of this evolution and how this modification supports the subversion of his stated goals in writing the Livre du Cuer.

Quickly enough, authority for the truthfulness of a text passed from residing with some other text, as the citation from Wace serves to illustrate, to being within the
author himself. Such is the case with Chrétien de Troyes who, in Erec et Enide, asserts that he

\[\ldots\] trait [d’]un conte d’aventure
Une mout bele conjunture
\[\ldots\]
D’Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes,
Depecier et corrompre suelent
Cil qui de conter vivre vuelent. (13-14; 19-22)

[\ldots elicits a most pleasing pattern from a tale of adventure. \ldots This is the tale of Erec, the son of Lac, which those who wish to make their living by storytelling in the presence of counts and kings usually mutilate and spoil.] (Staines 1)

In his comment on this prologue, Zink observes that, “Pour la première fois, le roman ne prétend pas tirer sa valeur de celle de sa source, mais au contraire de sa faiblessé” (38). The value of the story, in fact, resided in Chrétien’s talent in fashioning the “moult bele conjunture”, that is, with the author himself, as Chrétien seemingly was well aware by concluding the prologue with the boast that his story would “toz jors mais iert en memoire / Tant con durra crestïentez. / De ce s’est Crestiens ventez” (24-26) [be remembered as long as Christianity endures. This is Christian’s boast. (Staines 1)] The author-figure is now of capital importance, as it is he alone who guarantees that the text has any value whatsoever. This role is enlarged with the appearance of the Roman de la Rose, where the author no longer merely announces that he is going to narrate something, but is also the protagonist of the tale.
In the prologue, the poet announces:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{El vintieme an de mon aage,} \\
\text{une nuit, si con je souloie,} \\
\text{et me dormoie mout forment,} \\
\text{Or vei cel songe rimeer. . . (21, 24-25, 31)}^{12}
\end{align*}
\]

[In the twentieth year of my life, . . . I lay down one night, as usual, and slept very soundly. . . . Now I wish to tell this dream in rhyme. . . ] (32)

The man who dreams, whom the God of Love later identifies as Guillaume de Lorris, is presented as the author of the text at hand. As was the case with Chrétien de Troyes, the author establishes himself as the guarantor of the veracity of his dream, both by stating explicitly that this is the case: “. . . mes en ce songe onques riens n’ot / qui tretot avenu ne soit / si con li songes recensoit.” (28-30) [. . . but in this dream was nothing which did not happen almost as the dream told it] (32), and by dismissing out of hand those who would deny that dreams have significance:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Qui c’onques cuit ne qui que die} \\
\text{qu’il est folor et musardie} \\
\text{de croire que songes aviegne,} \\
\text{qui se voudra, por fol m’en tiegne,} \\
\text{quar endroit moi ai ge fiance} \\
\text{que songes est senefiance} \\
\text{des biens as genz et des anuiz. . . (11-17)}
\end{align*}
\]

[Whoever thinks or says that to believe in a dream’s coming true is folly and stupidity may, if he wishes, think me a fool; but, for my part, I am

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12 Old French citations from the Rose are taken from Félix Lecoy’s 3-volume edition; line numbers are provided. Charles Dahlberg is the source for the English translations, for which page numbers are given.
convinced that a dream signifies the good and evil that come to men. . .] (31)

But unlike Chrétien, the man who commits to “rimeer” his dreams is also the protagonist of the dream:

En icelui tens deliteus,
que toute rien d’amér s’esfroie,
songai une nuit que j’estoie.
Lors m’iere avis en mon dormant
qu’il iere matin durement. . . (84-88)

[I was in that delicious season when everything is stirred by love, and as I slept I became aware that it was full morning.] (32)

The “I” who dreams and writes is also the “I” whose adventures, conversations and rose-pluckings form the narrative of the Rose. While author-narrator combinations can be found in the earliest French narratives, the author-as-lover derives from lyric poetry, specifically the grand chant courtois of the trouvères.

As Paul Zumthor describes it, the grand chant courtois is defined by the presence of an “I” who loves:

Les poètes que le langage d’alors désigna du nom de trouvères nous ont donné la première poésie « lyrique » qui apparaîsse à l’horizon de la langue française : mode de dire entièrement et exclusivement référé à un je qui, pour n’avoir souvent d’autre existence que grammaticale, n’en fixe pas moins le plan et les modalités du discours, hors de toute narration. (229)

An example of such a lyrical “I”, chosen from a collection of trouvère poetry, indicates Guillaume de Lorris’s debt to this tradition:
Chanter voil un novel son
Por mes dolors ralegier.
Cil n’est pas hors de prison
Q’Amors ont a justisier ;
Cele fet grant traïson
Qui deçoit a l’acointier
Et puis guerpist le prison,
Quant el l’a mis el sentier
De li amer.
Ne me sai de fause amor a cui clamer.
(First strophe of the anonymously authored poem number 46 in Marie-Geneviève Grossel’s collection, Chansons des trouvères; the alignment of each verse is as it appears in her collection.)

[I want to sing a new song / To relieve my suffering. / He is not released from prison, / He whom Love holds in his power; / She commits a serious betrayal, / Who deceives in the beginning / And then abandons the prisoner, / Once she has lead him on the path / Of love. / I do not know whom to complain to of this false love.] (my translation)

The “I” who sings (and for an audience at a performance of this song, the singer would be author, as there would be no other “I” to refer to) is also the “I” who loves. The lyric tradition provides an abundant source of material in which “I” sings of the love “I” feels—the exact combination of author and lover Guillaume de Lorris utilizes in his non-lyrical narrative.

Zink’s thesis is that the literature of thirteenth-century France “se caractérise par l’expression critique de la subjectivité” (23), and as many of his examples illustrate, this expression was usually manifested in the uses to which the “I” was put in literary works. The evolution of the textual usage of the first-person pronoun did not cease in the thirteenth century, however, but continued in the fourteenth, as Kevin Brownlee
demonstrates in his study *Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut*. By focusing on Machaut’s seven long *dits* and his general prologue, Brownlee describes the various roles the “I” assumes in Machaut’s work: “[The] poet-narrator as lover-protagonist and poet-narrator as witness-participant [to the romantic adventures of someone else]” (22). In the *Remede de Fortune*, for example, the poet-narrator is he whose desire for a beautiful lady is the subject of the narrative, and in the *Fonteinne amoureuse*, the “I” is witness to and transcriber of the amorous difficulties of the nobleman whose complaint he overhears while trying to sleep one night.

Of all writers from the fourteenth century I have chosen to look at Guillaume de Machaut because he is named in the *Livre du Cuer* as one of the poets whose tomb is to be found in the Hospital d’Amours. (Jean de Meun is there, too, rather than Guillaume de Lorris, but it is unlikely King René would have been unaware of Guillaume’s portion of the *Rose*.) Nevertheless, Jean Froissart’s *La Prison amoureuse* is also worthy of mention in this sketch of the evolution of the narrative “I”. Writing in the second half of the fourteenth century, Froissart wrote of a professional poet—the “I” of the *Prison*—entering into correspondence with Rose, a man who requests assistance in the proper manner to lead a love affair. The poet-narrator is thus a witness-participant, as was the narrator in Machaut’s *Fonteinne amoureuse*. But in addition, this poet-narrator is also the lover-protagonist of his own amorous intrigue. While Machaut presented all possible permutations of the “I” over the course of his long *dits* and prologue,
Froissart’s Prison fuses into the “I” of a single narrative the roles of poet-narrator-lover-protagonist-witness-participant.

Finally, let us look at one other author who was a contemporary of the Duke of Anjou, and who is well-known for the subjectivity of his poetry: François Villon. Readers are faced with a poet who seems to reveal his personality in a plethora of first-person speaking poems. Some poems are written in the third-person, as the Ballade finale, but Villon’s name itself appears in the text. Thus it almost appears that “we could, if we had the key,” says Jane H. M. Taylor, “find a personality, perhaps even a biography” (2). But as most readers of Villon’s Testament discover, the personality behind this “I” seems schizophrenic, as its various masks include: the lover dead on account of his love—“en amour mourut martyr” (2001) [he died Love’s martyr (2001)], of the “Ballade finale”; the sinner who writes the “Ballade pour prier notre dame” for his mother, because he knows that she has “douleur amère, / Dieu le sait, et mainte tristesse. . .” (867-868) [bitter pain, / God knows, and many sorrows (868-869)]; the bon vivant able to scoff at death as long as he can live a pleasurable life—“Mourrai-je pas ? Oui. . . se Dieu plaît, / Mais que j’aie fait mes étrennes, / Honnête mort ne me déplait” (418-420) [will I not die? Yes, if it please God; / but as long as I have had my fun, / I have no fear of honest death (418-420). As Taylor argues, though, we are not necessarily meant to assemble the “real” Villon from his poetry—the “key” to which she

13 References for the Testament are to line numbers given in Jean Dufournet’s edition of Villon’s poetry. Line numbers of the English translations are from Anthony Bonner’s bilingual edition.
refers above is likely to evade us forever—but rather we are to see the invention of a textual identity that, much to the appreciation of the original fifteenth-century audience, adroitly plays with pre-existing character types such as the martyred lover:

... the literarity of Villon’s persona in the Testament is of its very essence, and... it constitutes one aspect of what I called its symbolic capital: Villon, I shall suggest, is engaging creatively, with an essentially literary persona, and thereby operating, expertly, in a market-place in which the martyred lover is a currency. Sedulously he constructs a roman du moi—but equally sedulously, he problematises it, inviting us to recognise the clichés in which he is trading. ... What Villon explores via his martyred self is the limits of mimesis, or illusionism: his is a calculated dialogue with his predecessors, a resolutely dialectical manipulation of poetic commonplace, a recognition that identity is art. (31-32)

It is beyond the scope of this study to go into detail about Villon or Taylor’s analysis of poetic identity to be found in Villon’s works, but several pertinent observations may be made with respect to the Livre du Cuer. The first concerns the sources of the personas which the “I” assumes: if the martyred lover or the bon vivant are not original creations, but are borrowed from an established literary stock, they are used because

... fifteenth-century poetry—and in particular Villon’s exploration of the amatory and the erotic. ...—must be read dialectically [i.e. intertextually], recognising the presence of predecessors and contemporaries but in ways which register that textual recovery is not plagiarism, nor some mechanical redeployment of commonplace, but something dynamic which generates an incremental excitement. (Taylor 14)

While the Livre du Cuer is not entirely poetry, King René was still a product of the fifteenth century, and the aesthetic Taylor describes reinforces my contention that the
intertextuality, and specifically the changes wrought in the borrowings to be found in the Cuer, are of significance. Secondly, the multifaceted author-personae found in Villon’s texts are usually represented as either an “I” or as a character in the poem. In this respect, Villon remains true to the tradition stretching back to the trouvères: if “author” is a sign, the signified may be unobservable and unknowable—on an “invisible, inviolate level”, as Rinne has said—but the signifier, up to the Livre du Cuer, remains a grammatically unified persona. By this, I mean something quite simple, namely if an author persona is to be represented by an “I” (or first-person singular possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns, or verbs) at any point in a poem or narrative, it is not portrayed by someone else later on. Even in the Rose of Guillaume de Lorris, where the protagonist sometimes converses with personifications of his own personality (e.g. Raison), one might paraphrase the beginning of the poem as “I will write in verse the dream I had in which I thought I was in the month of May, and in which everything I saw later came true for me,” revealing, in quite a laborious fashion, that there is to be no confusion between who dreams, who writes, and who experiences something in waking life. Similarly, the plot to Machaut’s Remede de Fortune could be stated, “I wrote poetry; I loved a beautiful lady; I left her presence greatly distressed; I dreamt of Hope who comforted me; I returned to my lady, fortified by Hope.” In the entire evolution of role of the “I”, it has acquired more and more functions, but it is
usually, within the confines of any single work, represented by a single persona. As we have seen, this is not the case with the *Cuer’s* author, narrator, and protagonist.

The first line of the dedicatory letter contains the unambiguous, “je, René, me complains piteusement a vous [Jehan] . . .” (§1, 2-3) [I, René, sadly lament to you . . .]; this opening letter ends, “Et ainsi languissant demeure, . . . en faczon telle et estat proprement comme par paraboles en ce livret ycy vous pourrez au vray veoir, s’il vous plaist a le lire” (§1, 30-32) [Thus languishing I remain, . . . in such a way and state you will be able to see truly and properly through parables in this book, if it pleases you to read it.] We thus clearly have an author-persona, an “I”, who identifies himself as René, and claims to be in a difficulty the likes of which “parables” will help to illustrate. In the second half of the letter found at the conclusion of the *Livre du Cuer*, this very same “I” returns to explain what he hopes will be the result of Jean’s true and proper reading of the parables:

Mon treschier et tresamé nepveu et cousin, ainsi doncques comme avez peu veoir par escript, pareillement sur ce pouez comprendre mon piteux cas et ma griefve paine au long considerer. . . . Vous requerant que quant avrez bon loisir que y vueilliez penser ainsi que bien savrez, pour m’en mander vostre tresbon advis et ce qu’affaire doresenavant avray pour singulier remede et couvenant regime, sicque si fort ne souvent je ne puisse estre tempté ne ainsi tourmenté de ce subtil esperit au vouloir impossible nommé le dieu d’Amours. . . (§315, 1-3, 5-10)

[My most dear and beloved cousin, as you have thus been able to see through writing, so in writing you may understand my sad circumstance and grievous pain. . . . I beg that when you find good leisure you deign think on this, such that you will well know and send me your excellent advice so of this affair I will henceforth have a singular remedy and fitting
diet so potent I may not be so often tempted and thus tormented by this subtle spirit of impossible desire named the god of Love. . .\[^{14}\]

The story he sends reflects in some manner his current predicament in order to seek relief from it and from future instances of the same. The author-persona is thus going to great lengths to inform his audience that the story they are about to read is, using Taylor’s term, a *roman du moi*. But whereas the other works I have cited—the *Rose*, Machaut’s *dits*, Froissart’s *Prison*, and Villon’s poetry—are all *romans du moi* because they are written by an “*I*” and are about the *very same “*I*”, in the *Livre du Cuer* we have a work that explicitly claims to be such—but in the next breath the “*I*” who says essentially that “this work is about me” fades from view only to be replaced by a series of simulacra that all of us are ready to believe are still in some manner representative of “*je, René*”.

The preceding discussion of the “*I*” is meant to serve a two-fold function: first, it is part of a general presentation of the *Livre du Cuer*; second, it provides an *entrée en matière* to the problem of the subversion of the story’s own expressed goals, one of which is to elucidate the author-persona’s intolerable emotional predicament: as he says to Jean, “*Et ainsi languissant demeure, sans garir ne sans pouoir mourir, en faczon telle et estat proprement comme par paraboles en ce livret ycy vous pourrez au vray veoir, s’il vous plaist a le lire*” (*§1, 30-32*) [Thus languishing I remain, neither healing nor

\[^{14}\] In my conclusion I shall have occasion to revisit this citation and to modify Gibbs and Karczewska’s translation.
capable of dying, in such a way and state you will be able to see truly and properly through parables in this book, if it pleases you to read it]. As I have said, I take this to mean that the allegorical adventures of Cuer that follow are intended to illuminate the “faczon” and “estat” of one particular man, namely the “je, René”. In other words, I am taking the text at its word, at least provisionally, even though the very nature of allegory lends itself to the general and universal rather than the particular, that is to say that to some extent personifications inherently seem to represent both the individual and the collective: as Tuve says, “The extension of significance which gives great allegories their moving and permanent power to tell us something about man’s relation to all else we call real depends directly on the power of allegory to get the psychic stage and the cosmic relevance of what happens there into one figure” (252-253).

While it is the very nature of allegories that they mean, to paraphrase Quintilian, something other than what they say, the Livre du Cuer manifests characteristics that go beyond the genre’s natural inclination for the general. Allegory, according to Tuve, cannot help but veer towards the cosmic; no one, for example, doubts that John Bunyan’s Christian is an Everyman, even though the author did not feel it necessary to mention “This, dear reader, means you, too,” on every single page. But there is a surfeit of indications, above and beyond the inherent “cosmic” tendencies of the genre that Tuve discusses, that the Livre du Cuer is not always uniquely about Cuer (and thus about “je, René”), despite the assurance given in the last line of the opening letter to
Jean: the example of Bel Acueil in the next chapter is among these indications, the panoply of “I”s discussed above is another.

In the following chapter, then, I will discuss the two personifications of Bel Acueil and Esperance; specifically, I will reveal how they do not personify what their names suggest, namely Warm Welcome and Hope, and how Bel Acueil contributes to that surplus of indications that Cuer is not always the center of the story’s attention. For Bel Acueil, this is done by comparing his words and deeds with his homologue from the Roman de la Rose; with Esperance, the situation is more complicated, as she is not an actual personification in the Rose. For a model of her, I turn to another poet whose tomb is found in Cuer’s Hospital of Love, Guillaume de Machaut and his Remede de Fortune, wherein Esperance occupies the central role of the dit, and whose teachings are arguably the raison d’être of the story since they are the “remedy for Fortune” of the title.

The third chapter will look at the Hospital d’Amours, a dream allegory which serves as the model for the place of the same name in the Cuer. One of the most striking features of this story is the speech given by the god of Love to the sick, rejected lover, wherein he describes a “fol amoureux”, and two species of lover that fall under the general classification of “fol”: the “faulx” and the “loyaulx”. While both the “faulx” and the “loyaulx” share some of the same behavioral traits, the god of Love provides a lithmus test that can distinguish between them, namely, how the lover reacts when a
woman rejects his advances. The man who does not persue his amorous inclinations despite the lady’s refusal is categorically labeled a “faulx”. This course of action, though, is precisely the one followed by Cuer, who definitively retreats to the Hospital of Love when loses Doulce Mercy to Reffuz. The *Livre du Cuer* is subverting the literary tradition of the nominally acceptable lover—a designation that normally includes unceasing devotion—when Cuer does, in fact, cease his quest after a single defeat.

Chapter 4 examines another topos—the connection between Love and Fortune. In many medieval love stories, the male lover, in a momentary slough of Despond, will rail against a perceived alliance between Love and Fortune before eventually resuming and ultimately achieving his quest. In his letter to Jean, the author-persona complains that he does not know whom to blame for his problem, whether Love, Fortune, or Destiny. But rather than simply a rhetorical device, as it is in so many medieval love stories, this alliance is given material form in the *Livre du Cuer* by the intertextual borrowing from the *Roman de la Rose* of places and objects associated with Fortune (the House of Fortune) and Destiny (the mirror of God), and subsequent conflation of these items with places and objects belonging to the god of Love. This alliance subverts Cuer’s quest by opening the possiblilty that the god of Love is not entirely on the lover’s side, despite the god’s assurances to the contrary.
Chapter 5 argues that the very purpose for which Jean is to read of Cuer’s dream quest—to understand the author-persona’s amorous difficulty—is subverted when the narrative seems to indicate that that dream has no meaning. The conditions under which people fell asleep, as well as their reactions to dreams when they awoke, played a consequential role in the Middle Ages in determining which dreams were meaningful and worthy of interpretation, and which were not. For both the man-in-bed who dreams of Cuer and Cuer himself, who twice falls asleep and dreams during his quest, these conditions and reactions indicate either that their visions were meaningless or that their visions, while meaningful, had no consequences. Theoretical support for my arguments will come from application of Wolfgang Iser’s reader-response theory, and for this chapter in particular, his idea of “negation”. Reader-response seemed a reasonable tool to use, since the Livre du Cuer explicitly calls for a reader’s response: Jean is to give advice based on his textual experience. But by “reader”, I intend not just Jean, but also the “ideal” reader constructed by Rene’s text, someone whose horizon of expectations encompasses the abundant intertexts behind so many of the elements of the Livre du Cuer.

Chapter 6 examines a specific location along Cuer’s itinerary, Park Fac, created by Morgan la Fay under the instruction of Venus and populated by a race of immortal hairy, naked women. Parc Fac is subversive in a physical way: while normally following as direct a path as possible from his point of origin toward Doulce Mercy,
Cuer allows himself to be diverted away from his goal when he is a mere mile or two from the end of his journey. At first, there seems to be no connection between Parc Fac (whose visit is motivated solely by curiosity) and Cuer’s quest. By looking at intertextual sources for this park, which will include the *Prose Lancelot*, the *Rose* (specifically, Genius’s description of the Park of the Lamb), and the *Voyage of St. Brendan*, and by applying Iser’s theory of “blanks”, we will see that Park Fac does indeed have allusions to love, but not the love of a man for a woman; instead, the intertexts all point to a maternal, even spiritual type of emotion. Indeed, there are elements within the Parc, including Desir’s failed attempt at capturing one of the beautiful women who populate it, that indicate that carnal love is specifically excluded from the place.

In the conclusion, I will use Iser’s concepts of “theme” and “horizon” to study the effect these various subversions of recognizable medieval topoi, personifications, places and objects have on our understanding of the author-persona’s stated objective. Since reader response is, after all, what the author-persona says he wants from Jean, that understanding must surely be molded by our perception of how the intertextual elements enumerated above (the “horizon”) are subverted (the “theme”). The text, however, limits the range of what the author-persona would consider a proper response, for when he awakens, the man who dreamed of Cuer relates his vision to his
man-servant: the first “reader” of the “parboles”, as well as his reaction, are inscribed within the text itself.

To summarize: the allegorical drift of the Livre du Cuer is one that seems similar to any number of medieval romances—a young knight has adventures, overcomes adversaries and puts his chivalric prowess to the test, so that he might win the love of a beautiful woman. But though we are warned by Tuve against “ingor[ing] the stream’s main direction of flow [i.e. the meaning the story seems to be conveying], and embark[ing] on incidents which travel counter to or unrelated to it” (235), it is nonetheless the objective of this study to demonstrate that many of the individual incidents, personifications and places in the allegory can be read in fact as traveling counter to the drift.

The people, places and things from the Cuer to be discussed are all situated within that work in a context that is, according to the author-persona, intended to convey a sense of his affective state. At the same time, these very same people, places and things are not, in accordance with medieval aesthetic practices that did not particularly prize such things, entirely original creations. Instead, previous material, characters and motifs (from the Rose, the Queste, the Prose Lancelot, etc.) are recycled and put into new contexts, where they simultaneously retain something of their original significance and accrue new ones. This is an accepted technique of medieval composition, taught to students in schools. What is interesting in the Livre du Cuer,
and what I will discuss in the ensuing chapters, is that the previous uses of these
people, places and things are so at odds with (i.e., they subvert) the allegorical drift of
the story.
CHAPTER 2

PERSONIFICATIONS

One way the *Livre du Cuer* subverts its own stated allegorical meaning is in the development of the personifications who populate the narrative. As was mentioned in the introduction, medieval composition encouraged an author to adapt previously written material to his or her own needs, and this practice included the recycling of fictional characters. In his essay “Interfigurality: A Study on the Interdependence of Literary Figures”, Wolfgang Müller discusses this textual phenomenon, saying, “If an author takes over a figure [i.e. a character, as opposed to a rhetorical figure] from a work by another author into his own work, he absorbs it into the formal and ideological structure of his own product, putting it to his own uses” (107). The absorption is complicated because the borrowed figure, as Norris J. Lacy observes, “both changes and retains his or her identity” (“Motif Transfer” 157, emphasis added). This chapter will look at several personifications of the *Livre du Cuer*, two of which are the sort of recycled figures to which Müller refers: Bel Acueil and Esperance. I will show that the changes wrought in these characters by their words and deeds in the *Cuer* narrative cannot easily be reconciled with their identities as established by their past existence in the other well-known romances, even though, as we can infer from Lacy’s observation,
readers will make an attempt to reconcile the old with the new. Simply put, Bel Acueil acts at times in a manner that is not at all “fair”, and at other times far too welcoming, and Esperance dispenses singularly unhopeful counsel; these characteristics cannot be accommodated in any obvious fashion to (i.e. they are subverting) the presumed allegorical meaning of the story.

In addition to Bel Acueil and Esperance, I will look at a trio of personifications who, in Cuer’s liberation from Tristesse’s prison, act in concert: Desir, Plaisir and Deduit. Rather than comparing these characters to any antecedents in previous allegories, I situate their subversive nature in a vein of humor that Zink, in his essay on King René’s allegory entitled “La Tristesse du cœur”, characterizes as “corrosif” (30): the valiant knight who would brave anything to be at the side of his beloved, whose adventures we are encouraged to compare with those of the knights of the Round Table, finds relief from the prison of Tristesse and the torments of Melencolie when these three personifications guide Cuer through the experience of masturbation.

In another section of his essay, Zink observes other personifications who do not entirely act in accordance with their names, such as Melencolie, who at one point appears nearly joyful when hearing the news that her kinswoman Tristesse has imprisoned Cuer (29); or more directly touching the concerns of this study, that Desir is mentioned time and again as having led many other would-be lovers on a quest similar
to the one Cuer is currently engaged in (29). This raises several questions which can equally be asked of other personifications: what, for example, is the relationship between Cuer and the personifications he encounters? Is Desir a manifestation of Cuer’s own desire, an externalization of an internal psychological state? Are we seeing interior mental processes being projected outwards in the manner of Prudentius’s Psychomachia? On the one hand the answer would seem to be yes: Desir is the one who prods Cuer into the search for Doulce Mercy and maintains Cuer’s motivation throughout the journey. We are, it must be remembered, reading a story that purports to convey information relating to the emotional state of one particular man and his turmoil relating to one particular woman. On the other hand Desir’s assistance to any and all lovers projects his character from the realm of the individual to the universal—he is the “desire” of Everyman for the company of (a) woman. But which woman? Doulce Mercy? Is she the manifestation of the woman René pines for in his letter to Jean? She is still a prisoner when Cuer finds her; has Desir’s repeated guidance of other

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15 Examples of this include: Desir knows the way to Esperance’s pavilion “comme celuy qui moult bien y savoir, car mains autres y avoit ja pieça conduit” (§12, 5-6) [since he very well knew the way, for may others he had long since led there.]; Humble Requeste easily recognizes Desir because he had seen him “autrefoiz. . . en l’ostel de son maistre [the god of Love] et ailleurs” (§75, 3-4) [in the home of his master and elsewhere before.]; as Desir, Cuer and Largesse approach Love’s island, Desir realizes he has been remiss by not telling his companions what he knew of the place since “mains autres y avoit conduit et menez” (§144, 9-10) [he had guided and led many others there.]; the god of Love himself acknowledges Desir’s work on his behalf, saying, “C’est de pieça que nous savons / Qu’en Desir bon servant avons. / Jamais n’est recreant ne mat / De bien acroisire nostre estat: / Tousjours est prest de nous servir, / Ou qu’il puisse aller ne venir” (§244, 4-9) [We have long known / That in Desire we have a fine servant. / He is never slothful or sad / In increasing our estate: / He is always ready to serve us, / Wherever he may go or come.]
lovers invariably resulted in failure, or is she an Every(desirable)woman, not yet attained—again projecting us to the plane of the universal?¹⁶

These questions have not been raised because definitive answers are to be sought, but rather because they demonstrate one technique the literal level of the story uses to subvert the allegorical, which the text leads us to believe will be about one individual man, René. We of course know from his letter to Jean that René desires a woman, thus we can reasonably assume that Desir is a manifestation of Cuer’s own particular desire for Doulce Mercy. But at the same time, the very procedure of personification requires that we see Desir as “other than” Cuer: we literally visualize two separate characters who converse, argue, reconcile, attend Mass, share meals, and so on. At one point Desir even goes off on a mission of his own, leaving Cuer imprisoned in the Mount of Dejection. But beyond this built-in tension of both representing and not representing the individual emotional condition of Cuer (and consequently on the allegorical level that of René), the text takes pains pointing out Desir’s involvement in affairs not related to Cuer—he has led many lovers on quests, he is known as a good servant to the God of Love, and is praised for his efforts by the God of Love himself—as though any of this had the slightest relevance to the problem René

¹⁶ This is a subtle question: as my discussion of Tuve in the previous chapter indicated, allegory by its very nature tends to project its meaning onto the universal plane—we could not help but read “Desir” as both Cuer’s desire for Doulce Mercy as well as an Everyman’s desire for Everywoman, even without the repeated assurances that Desir had assisted an uncounted number of lovers on exactly the same path he currently leads Cuer. It is the fact that these overdetermining assurances are given numerous times that is at issue.
writes about to Jean. Since Desir has already been the subject of commentary, I propose to analyze the presentations of other personifications, namely Bel Acueil and Esperance, who have been selected because they deviate more egregiously than the other personifications from either representing what their names imply or from what other allegories with characters of the same names would lead us to expect of them, as well as the episode, not discussed by other critics in the context of corrosive humor, in which Desir works in tandem with Plaisir and Deduit.

BEL ACUEIL

Given the immense popularity of the *Roman de la Rose* in the Middle Ages, it is difficult to imagine readers of the *Cuer* coming across the personification Bel Acueil and not thinking of his counterpart in the thirteenth-century work. As his name implies, he is in the *Rose* that facet of the woman who favorably welcomes the lover, who receives the lover’s homage and allows him close access to the rosebush (2781-2808); and though it requires the intervention of Venus, it is Bel Acueil who allows the lover his fateful kiss (3391-3480). Under the pen of Jean de Meun, it is Courtoisie, after helping liberate Bel Acueil from Jalousie’s prison, who convinces Bel Acueil to allow the lover even greater favors, but only after recalling the hardships he has endured up to that point. It should be noted, too, that as part of the lady’s personality, Bel Acueil is always found in close proximity to the rose.
At times, Cuer’s Bel Acueil behaves just as the Rose’s: Doulce Mercy, for example, sends him to Cuer, asking Cuer to come to her as quickly as possible (§279, 15-16). But in other cases he acts in such a way as to twist the meaning of his name beyond all recognition as established in the Rose. It is as though he listened to and agreed with the teachings of the Rose’s La Vieille.17 For one thing, Bel Acueil is one of the god of Love’s liege men (§44, 5). Furthermore, as we have already observed, the Rose’s Bel Acueil is perpetually near the rose: the lover does not encounter him in Deduit’s company, but only when he approaches the rose bush where, in conformity to his name, he welcomes the lover and permits him to approach. In contrast, Cuer’s Bel Acueil wanders far from Doulce Mercy, away even from the god of Love’s island. Readers, in

17 I do not necessarily mean the exploitation of lovers for material benefit, which comprises a great deal of La Vieille’s discourse (however, see the discussion of Largesse’s behavior below; cupidity cannot be dismissed from Doulce Mercy’s motivations), but rather her lamentation of lost youth and concomitant implied exhortation to Bel Acueil that he profit from his (i.e. that he engage in frequent sexual activity):

Par Dieu, si me ples il oncores
quant je m’i sui bien porpensee ;
mout me delit en ma pensee
et me resbaidissent li membre
quant de mon bon tens me remembre
et de la jolivete vie
dom mes queurs a si grant envie ;
tout me rejuvenist le cors
quant g’i pens et quant jou recors ;
touz les biens du monde me fet
quant me souvient de tout le fet,
qu’au mains ai je ma joie etue,
conbien qu’il m’aient deceue. (12902-12914)

[O God! But it still please me when I think back on it. I rejoice in my thought and my limbs become lively again when I remember the good times and the gay life for which my heart so strongly yearns. Just to think of it and to remember it all makes my body young again. Remembering all that happened gives me all the blessings of the world, so that however they may have deceived me, at least I have had my fun. (224)]
fact, first encounter him imprisoned by Jalousie who apparently captured him in the Forest of Long Awaiting, where he had come “... enseigner et radressier les vrays amans qui vouldroient entrer en la Forest de Longue Actente” (§18, 15-17) [. . . to teach and guide true lovers who would enter the Forest of Long Awaiting.] When after a time he is rescued by Esperance, she overhears him praying for deliverance to the god of Love and to Venus (§40, 31). We are thus dealing with a Bel Acueil profoundly different from the one created by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Perhaps more than any other personification, their Bel Acueil seems to be straightforwardly tied to the Rose, and his behavior toward the lover tailored specifically to the individual man before him. After all, when the lover makes his request for a kiss in Guillaume de Lorris’s romance, Bel Acueil’s first response is

Amis, fet il, se Dex m’aïst,  
se Chasteé ne m’enhaïst,  
ja ne vos fust par moi veé ;  
mes je n’osse por Chasteé  
vers qui je ne veus pas mesprendre.  
Ele me seut torjorz desfendre  
que du bessier congïe ne doigne  
a nul amant qui m’en semoigne,  
car qui au bessier puet ateindre,  
a poine puet a tant remaindre ;  
et sachiez bien, cui l’en ostroie  
le besier, il a de la proie  
le mieuz et le plus avenant,  
si a erres du remenant. (3377-3390)

“Friend,” he said, “God help me, if Chastity did not hate me, I would never forbid you; but because of Chastity, toward whom I do not want to misbehave, I dare not let you. It is her constant custom to forbid me to
give permission for a kiss to any lover who begs me for one, for he who can attain to a kiss can hardly remain at that point. Know well that he to whom one grants a kiss has the best, most pleasing part of his prize, along with a pledge for the rest.” (79)

Jean de Meun’s continuation and conclusion show that the lover most emphatically does not “remain at that point”, and they certainly leave no doubt that the lover is indeed the first to redeem that “pledge for the rest”; we may reasonably conclude that Bel Acueil is acting toward the lover in ways he has never employed with any previous suitor. But his Cuer homologue, like Desir, is presented as wandering through the woods, of his own volition actively searching for any and all potential lovers, and this as though it were not problematical. Yet we remind ourselves that the allegorical import of this story is to be about the romantic problems of one specific man, and while the very nature of allegory tends to shift the sense of meaning toward the universal—as per Tuve—Bel Acueil’s unsolicited assistance to any lover who happens to wander into the Forest de Longue Actencte takes us far away from connection with the Cuer’s stated allegorical meaning.

Cuer and Desir’s first encounter with Bel Acueil occurs after the latter is freed from Jalousie’s prison. They meet when the former enter the god of Love’s Castle of Pleasure and not, as in the Rose, when the male lover is in the presence of his beloved. As Bel Acueil escorts the travelers to an audience with Love, he pauses to explain the significance of various items on display that Cuer inquires about, namely a basket Virgil climbed into, the shears Delilah used to cut Sampson’s hair, the bridle and saddle
Aristotle wore, Sardanapalus’s distaff, Solomon’s idol, and the basket Hercules used when carding wool. That these objects were the means by which famous men were humiliated on account of love is of less importance in this analysis than the reason Bel Acueil gives for explaining their history and their meaning as objects on display in the Castle:

\[\ldots\text{Escouttez moy, et je me fie} \\
\text{Qu’avant que parte de ce lieu} \\
\text{Les causes, au plaisir de Dieu,} \\
\text{Vous seront toutes devisees,} \\
\text{Et du pennier et des fusees,} \\
\text{Et des lames et de la soye.} \\
\text{Pas a l’oublier ne pensoye,} \\
\text{Car afin que demeure quitte,} \\
\text{Raison requiert que je m’aquitte} \\
\text{D’ores icy vous avertir} \\
\text{De quoy tout cecy peut servir. (§240, 93-103. Emphasis added)}\]

[\ldots\text{Listen well, and I swear} / \text{That before I leave this place} / \text{The sense, please God,} / \text{Will be told to you} / \text{Both of the basket and spindles,} / \text{Of the loom and the silk.} / \text{I did not think to forget this,} / \text{For to do my duty} / \text{Reason demands I} / \text{Henceforth advise you} / \text{What end these things may serve.}]

Reason indeed! By invoking her name here, by admitting Raison into the list of dramatis personae, we observe that she appears nowhere else in the Livre du Cuer, and that her role is strictly limited to giving instructions to Bel Acueil. In the Rose, Raison is the first personification to deliver one of the poem’s lengthy digressions, and her opinion of the kind of love the lover (and presumably Cuer) seeks is clear and unequivocal: as she says herself, her teachings on the topic can be summed up in three
commandments, “. . . c’est que tu me veulles amer, / et que le dieu d’Amors despises, / et que Fortune riens ne prises” (6842-6844) [. . . They are that you will love me, that you despise the God of Love, and that you put no value on Fortune. (132)] None of the items enumerated by Bel Acueil in the Castle of Pleasure are mentioned by Rose’s Raison, but they could perfectly well have been used by her as exempla of the consequences of trusting in both Love and Fortune. To have their purpose—“. . . que les plus rouges y sont pris plus souvent que les autres . . .” (§241, 4-5) [. . . that the most ardent are more often ensnared than others . . .]—expounded upon by Bel Acueil at the request of Raison is to recall Raison’s judgment of Love, too:

   . . . se tu n’iés ou fols ou ivres,
   savoir doiz, et bien le recorde,
   que quiconque a Reson s’acorde
   ja mes par amors n’amera
   ne Fortune ne priserà. (6852-6856)

   [. . . if you are not crazy or drunk, you should know—and mark it well—that whoever accords with Reason will never love par amour nor value Fortune. (132)]

Perhaps, though, Bel Acueil is aware that Raison’s warnings are likely to produce no lasting effect:

   En ce point dit ly contes que le Cueur, quant il eut ouý de Bel Accueil les raisons dessusdittes, que les plus rouges y sont pris plus souvent que les autres, et lors Bel Accueil commença a rire, aussi firent les autres et ainsi passerent outre. (§241, 3-6)

   [In this place the story says that the Heart, when he had heard from Fair Welcome the words related above—that the most ardent are more often
ensnared that others—Fair Welcome began to laugh, as did the others, and they then passed the place.]

Just what exactly are Bel Acueil and the others laughing at—the misfortune of famous men? the power of Love? Raison’s ineffectiveness? None of the possible answers is easily reconciled with a character who supposedly personifies a fair welcome rather than sarcasm and mockery. Bel Acueil is thus a very peculiar kind of fair welcome, one whose appeal to and possible mockery of Raison (who is categorical in her teachings to the lover of the Rose), at the very moment he performs the function his name represents casts suspicion and doubt over his motivations, and thus over whether he really is acting in accord with his name.

Cuer is led to his audience with the god of Love, who accepts Cuer as his liege man, and permits him to attempt a rescue of Doulce Mercy, with Bel Acueil as a member of the entourage making the journey to her prison, the Manor of Rebellion. When they are but a short distance from the Manor, Bel Acueil and Pitié break off from the group and arrive ahead of everyone else at their destination, because “. . . appointerent que Bel Acueil leur [to Cuer and his friends] reviendroit audavant faire scâvoir la contenance de la Doulce Mercy . . .” (§275, 118-119) [. . . they decided Fair Welcome would return to apprise them of Sweet Mercy’s demeanor . . .] The two are espied by the guardian of the Manor, Reffuz, who greets them in this fashion:18

18 Although Gibbs and Karczewska’s edition of the Cuer uses the name “Reffuz”, textual notes indicate that this appellation is a scribal substitution for “Dangier” in the manuscript.
Ceste orde vielle maquerelle
Si va serchant quelque querelle.
Dyables l’en puissent emporter!
Maishuy ne fera que troter!
Aussi ce jeune damoiseau
Bel Accueil, qui tant fait du beau,
Si luy va faisant compagnie.
S’ilz ne fussent de la mesgnie
D’Amours, ja ceans ilz n’entrassent.
Je sçay bien que bien s’en gardassent. (§276, 5-14)

[This filthy old whore / Goes forth seeking some quarrel: / May devils carry her away! / Misfortune makes her thus ride forth! / This young lad as well, / Fair Welcome, who acts so graciously, / Goes with her, ever in her company. / If they were not of the house of / Love, they would never enter within. / I know this well: let them beware!]

Though addressing them in the third-person, Reffuz is talking directly to the couple, who find him so offensive that Bel Acueil is compelled to respond in like manner:

Lors Bel Accueil le regarda par grant despit, et en rougissant, ne se peut tenir de luy resondre en telle maniere: . . .
Tais toy, puant vilain rebelle!
Onc en toy n’eut parolle belle,
Car tu ne fais tousjours que braire
De choses dont tu n’as que faire.
Ne parle plus de nostre aller,
Car a Mercy nous fault parler! (§277, 3-4; §278, 3-8)

[Fair Welcome then looked at him with great scorn, and flushing, could not keep himself from answering him in this manner: . . . Fall silent, vile stinking rebel! / Never was there a fine word within you, / For you do nothing but bray about / Things which do not concern you. / Speak no more of our passage, / For we must speak with Sweet Mercy!]

If, in the Cuer universe, Melencolie’s close encounter with joy is a cause for comment

(“Et quant Melencolie ot veu et ouÿ le mandement de sa cousine dame Tristesse, elle en
fut bien contente, a peu de joye, car sa nature ne se donnoit jamais d’estre joyeuse” (§86, 22-24) [When Melancholy saw and heard her cousin Lady Sadness’s command she was quite content, though not joyful, for her nature never gave itself to joy]), so too ought Bel Acueil’s scorn, his inability to conceal this scorn, and even his very capacity to utter the words “puant vilain rebelle”, be causes of unease: there is no way to lexically twist the meaning of “Bel Acueil” to accommodate such unwelcoming behavior and speech. Not only is Bel Acueil’s rude rejoinder odd in and of itself, so too is the fact that he is impolite to Reffuz in particular.

In the Roman de la Rose, Bel Acueil not once utters an intemperate word to anyone, let alone Dangier; if anything, he behaves quite deferentially. After Franchise and Pitié have convinced Dangier to withdraw his objections over the presence of the lover, they then go to Bel Acueil to inform him of the turn of events:

Sachiez que nos avons denté,
entre moi et Pitié, Dangier
qui vos en fessoit estrangier.
— Je feré quen que vos voudroiz,
fet Bel Acueil, que il est droiz,
puis que Dangier l’a ostraié. (3320-3325)

[“Know that, between us, Pity and I have subdued Resistance, who exiled you from the lover.” “I shall do whatever you would like,” said Fair Welcoming, “for, since Resistance has granted it, it is right” (78).]

Though Dangier may be subdued, Bel Acueil continues to recognize and to submit to his authority—at least until the arrival of Venus with her flaming torch.
At first refusing the lover’s request for a kiss, the Bel Acueil of the Roman de la Rose has a change of heart once he comes under the influence of this special firebrand:

“Ele [Venus] tint un brandon flanbant / en sa main destre, dont la flame / a eschaufée mainte dame” (3406-3408). [In her right hand she held a blazing torch, whose flame has warmed many a lady. (79)] The efficacy of the goddess’s torch is revealed after her discourse to Bel Acueil:

Bel Acueil, qui senti l’eer
du brandon, sanz plus deloer,
m’otroia [i.e. to the lover] un bessier en dons,
tant fist Venus et ses brandons.
N’i ot donques plus demoré,
un besier douz et savoré
pris de la rose erraument. (3455-3460).

[Fair Welcoming, who felt the breath of Venus’s torch, gave me a gift of a kiss with no more delay. Venus and her torch had done so much that I had no longer to wait, but straightway took a sweet and delicious kiss from the rose. (80)]

This kiss, of course, reawakens suspicions in a most dramatic way—Jalousie uses this as a pretext for building the castle to imprison Bel Acueil and to keep the rosebush safe from other attempts on the lover’s part. But the intriguing aspect of this episode in the Rose is the material prop used by Venus to persuade Bel Acueil to permit the kiss: her “brandon”, which is the word used in Lecoy, who based his edition on B. N. fr. 1573. Armand Strubel, however, uses a different manuscript, B. N. fr 12786, for his edition, and it uses the word “baston” in place of “brandon”—which is the very implement with which Cuer and his company are supplied in order to attack Reffuz, and given them by
no other than Bel Acueil. After returning from his advance foray to the Manor of Rebellion, he

... luy [to Cuer] nonça ce que Pitié et luy avoient trouvé en Doulce Mercy, et que moult desiroit sa venue, mais bien fussent advisez, car Reffuz, Jalouzie, les mesdisans, Honte et Crainte estoient tous leans en aguet, et qu’ilz se fordubtoient, comme il pensoit, de leur venue. Si debailla [i.e. Bel Acueil] chacun son baston, dont ilz s’estoient garniz au Chastel de Plaisance avant que partir ... (§279, 21-26)

[... announced to him what Lady Pity and he had found in Sweet Mercy, who greatly desired his arrival. But they should be well warned, for Refusal, Jealousy, the gossips, Shame, and Fear were all there lying in ambush, and he believed they very greatly dreaded their arrival. He then gave each his club with which they had been armed at the Castle of Pleasure before departing ...]

The Livre du Cuer thus has Bel Acueil arming Cuer and his companions with a tool that, in the Rose, was used to arouse overwhelming desire in women. This incongruous image is made even more so by comparing the result of Bel Acueil’s action—a lover approaching his lady with a big stick in his hand—with the corresponding scene from the Rose, namely after Jalousie’s castle is stormed and the lover approaches the sanctuary of holy relics armed with his “bourdon”, or pilgrim’s staff, with its sack containing the two hammers hanging off the end. The lover is careful to inform us that these tools were supplied to him by no less an authority than Nature herself:

Mout me fist grant honeur Nature
quant m’arma de ceste armeüre
et m’an ansaigna si l’usage
que m’an fist bon ouvrier et sage. (21347-21350)
[Nature did me a great honor when she equipped me with this armor and so taught me its use that she made me a good and wise workman. (348)]

While debate about the Roman de la Rose’s overall meaning has been going on for nearly seven centuries, few if any readers over the years have failed to understand the sexual nature of either the staff and sack or the use it is put to when the lover-turned-pilgrim repeatedly tries to insert his staff into the aperture leading to the relics, heroically attempting to push past the unseen barrier impeding his progress until finally, almost at the point of exhaustion, he rallies for a final, successful effort:

Mes por riens nule ne lessasse
que le bourdon tout n’i passasse.
Outre l’oi passé sanz demeure,
mes l’escharpe dehors demeure
o les martelez rebillanz,
qui dehors ierent pendillanz. (21615-21620)

[But I would have relaxed for nothing until the entire staff had entered, so I pressed it through with no delay. But the sack, with its pounding hammers, remained hanging outside . . . (352)]

It is true that the circumstances surrounding the arming of the Rose’s lover and of Cuer with their big sticks are not identical—the lover of the Roman de la Rose has definitively vanquished his opposition, while Cuer has yet to face his enemies—but Cuer was already well armed for martial combat by Desir at the very outset of his travels, his armor including a steel sword, a helm, a shield, a warhorse, sharp spurs, and an iron-tipped spear made of cypress (§3, 23-45). Indeed, special note is made that
Cuer is still in possession of his weaponry even at the moment Bel Acueil distributes the clubs; the entire sentence reads,

Si debailla chacun son baston, dont ilz s’estoient garniz au Chastel de Plaisance avant que partir, et le Cuer regarda sa bonne espee et son haubert, dont il n’estoit point desgarny, ne de sa coiffe de fer aussi, et dit bien a soy mesmes que ennuyt mettroit Jalouzie et ses mesdisans en malan s’il les pouoit actaindre. (§279, 24-29)

[He then gave each his club with which they had been armed at the Castle of Pleasure before departing; the Heart looked at his good sword and halberd, which he had not at all removed, and his iron head mail as well, and told himself he would place Jealousy and her gossips in dire straits that night, if he could find them.]

Though the other members of Cuer’s party—Desir, Bel Acueil, Humble Requeste, Promesse, and Largesse—would benefit from being so armed, it is not clear what advantage a club from the provenance of the Castle of Pleasure confers to Cuer over a sharp sword in a physical conflict; yet if the Rose echoes in the Cuer as strongly as I contend, then we have Bel Acueil proactively preparing Cuer for the type of victory which, in the Rose, allowed the lover to proclaim “... que tout le boutonet tandre / an fis ellargir et estandre” (21699-21700). [... I made the whole tender rosebush widen and lengthen. (353)] But then, we are dealing with a Bel Acueil who wanders the wilderness on his own initiative looking for any and all potential lovers and then ridicules Raison’s teachings, rather than the obedient personification of the Rose, who requires the combined efforts of Love’s army and Venus to convince him to allow the lover access to the rosebush.
DESIR, PLAIR AND RENON

Bel Acueil’s arming of Cuer and company with their “bastons” is not the only instance of allusion to sex and male genitalia in the Livre du Cuer (if it were the only one, this would, to my mind, lessen the plausibility that there were any innuendo here in the first place). In his article entitled “La tristesse du cœur dans Le Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris”, Zink points out the sexual humor of Amittié’s explanation of the fish Cuer is eating while visiting Amittié and her companion Compaignede on his way to the Castle of Pleasure. As Cuer ponders the fish, Amittié reveals

Or sachez, noble Cuer, et vueillés escouter
Que ce poisson ycy, duquel vous voy gouster,
Est appelé en France maquereau vrayement,
Lequel est savoureux et tressain pour l’amant
Qui a le mal d’am’er. (§138, 3-7)

[Know now noble Heart, and deign listen:
This fish here, which I see you eat,
In truth is called mackerel in France,
Which is pleasing to the taste and very healthy for the lover
Who suffers the sickness of love.]

About which passage Zink comments, “L’amant est donc invité à employer le maquereau comme messager d’amour avant de faire taire la pudeur de la belle à coup d’espèces sonnantes” (31), the joke of course being that “maquereau”, in addition to being a type of fish, was also the word used to name a man who acted as an intermediary between men and women intent on sexual congress; as Greimas defines the term, “Entremetteur, porteur de billet doux; homme qui débauche les femmes et les
filles.” In modern English terms, a pimp.\textsuperscript{19} I would add to Zink’s observation by noting that, (1) Amittié’s remedy for lovesickness is of the culinary sort René asks of Jean in his concluding letter, where he laments to his nephew of his need for a “singulier remede et couvenant regime” (§315, 7-8, emphasis added) [singular remedy and fitting diet] to be rid, precisely, of his own lovesickness; (2) “Maquereau” is the name give to Pitié—who is indeed facilitating the meeting of Cuer and Doulce Mercy—by Reffuz; and (3) the money to which Zink refers (”à coup de pièces sonnantes”) is precisely the means by which Cuer is finally granted access to Doulce Mercy, for Largesse successfully bribes the intransigent Reffuz with several bags of coins (§289, 6-7; §291, 3-6). Largesse’s speech to Reffuz while he throws the second bag of coins is particularly revealing:\textsuperscript{20}

Reffuz, laisse nous, je te pry,
Aller veoir la Doulce Mercy!
Nous ne demourrons tant ne quant,
Et s’en avras encoires autant. (§290, 3-6)

[Refusal, I pray you allow us / To go see Sweet Mercy! / We shall remain here no longer, / And you shall lose nothing by it.]

The last line of Gibbs and Karczewska’s translation is a litotes of the French; a literal translation might more closely be rendered, “And you will have in addition as much,” and where, according to Greimas’s Dictionnaire du moyen français, the word “autant”

\textsuperscript{19}As an amusing aside, the Larousse dictionary gives “macquereau” as the origin of the Modern French popular term for a man: macquereau > mac > mec.

\textsuperscript{20}Largesse’s gender is perplexing. The word is a feminine noun, and the Livre du Cuer employs a feminine pronoun when indicating Largesse—but the illuminations of the story (which, scholars believe, were executed under King René’s supervision) depict this personification as a man. I follow Gibbs and Karczewska’s translation, and refer to Largesse as “he”.
(‘as much’”) denotes a quantitative equivalence between two things. Saying this as he does while throwing coins at Reffuz, the implication is that Cuer’s visit to Doulce Mercy is worth exactly the amount of money Largesse is giving him, which further implies that we are witnessing a commercial transaction—money received for services rendered, in this case to “faire taire la pudeur de la belle.”

While Amittié’s double entendre has already been noted by scholars, another episode with possible comedic sexual connotations has not, namely Cuer’s dream of rescue from a tower where he is imprisoned when a turtledove, three nightingales and various other birds cause it to fall by beating their wings against it (§88); and its subsequent actualization when Desir, Plaisir and Deduit rescue him from the Mount of Dejection (§91). I shall have occasion to treat this (and other) dreams in a different section, wherein I will examine the conditions under which the subjects fall asleep and the effects their experience has on them when they reawake, but here I wish to consider the contents of the dream itself and its relationship to the events occurring in Cuer’s conscious life. Sally Tartline Carden has given one interpretation of this dream (in addition to the others in the story), in which she links it to what she considers René d’Anjou’s global poetic project, which is to be remembered:

Comme l’amour et la dame qu’on obtient facilement et qu’on perd aussi vite, le rêve ne dure pas. L’écriture, en revanche, dure. L’auteur récupère pour lui-même le prestige perdu par le Cueur au moyen de l’écriture, dans la création d’une belle œuvre à l’intérieur de laquelle René d’Anjou . . . se retrouve parmi les amants et les princes et les poètes glorifiés des
temps passés. C’est cela, finalement le rêve du Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris. (35-36)

In support of this, she notes that the nightingale is “l’oiseau lyrique par excellence, réputé pour la perfection de ses chants qui inspirent les poètes” (31). While true, this is only part of the nightingale’s symbolism: as “the most frequently cited bird in the medieval literature of Western Europe” (Pfeffer 89), it has quite a few abilities in addition to providing inspiration to poets. As Thomas Alan Shippey observes, it has, from the twelfth century onward, been associated with the theme of love (49)—and not merely as a decorative ornament of a generic locus amoenus. Most students of medieval French literature are familiar with the nightingale in the lay of the same name by Marie de France, “Laüstic”. In the poem, the lady uses the beauty of the birdsong as an excuse to her husband for talking with her lover next door. The jealous husband puts an end to the affair by killing the bird and throwing its bloody body at his wife. Of more interest (because the author is another of the poets whose tomb is found in the Hospital of Love) is the fourth story told on the fifth day of Boccaccio’s Decameron, wherein Caterina, desiring to spend the night with her lover Ricciardo, tricks her parents into allowing her to sleep on the balcony by saying she would be cooler out there and would enjoy listening to the nightingale. The ruse succeeds, and the young lovers spend “almost the entire night deriving great pleasure and satisfaction from each other—and they set the nightingale a-trilling a great many times” (343). Exhausted as they are, not even the rising sun stirs them from their sleep, and the two are therefore
found by Caterina’s father lying in such a way that, as Philostrato the narrator says, Caterina sleeps “with her left hand grasping an organ of his that you ladies are too demure to mention in mixed company” (343). The equivalence between nightingale and penis is repeated several more times, as when Caterina’s father runs to tell his wife, “Come and look: your daughter’s had such a craving for nightingales, she kept watch and managed to grab one—she’s still holding it in her hand” (343). In her article on the use of the nightingale in literature in general, and in this Boccaccio tale in particular, Louise O. Vasvari states

> The oft-repeated *l’usignuolo* [nightingale] serves as the central image of the eroticized semantic field of birdlore. It functions simultaneously on three levels: on the denotative level as a small songbird who is known for performing at night; as a debased literary topos to evoke automatically the *alba*, a widespread and highly conventionalized genre to love lyric depicting illicit and dangerous love, where “listening to the nightingale” connotes a long or endless period where the lovers cannot achieve union; and, finally, in its traditional sexual connotation in folk culture, as a term for the male sexual organ. (225-226)

Philostrato’s story, according to Vasvari, is really more like an “anti-alba”, or a parody of the genre, since both Caterina and Ricciardo sleep through the dawn, and the bird does rather more than merely provide acoustic solace to the couple (237).

In Cuer’s dream, there is no character present other than the birds and Cuer himself, although the alba is suggested by the fact that Cuer “s’endormit jusques au jour cler, combien qu’il ne savoit s’il estoit jour ou nuyt, car il ne veoit goute en sa prison” (§86, 14-16). [fell asleep until daybreak, though he did not know whether it was day or
night, for he saw nothing at all in his prison.] As Cuer is later said to awaken in the
process of having this dream (§89, 36-37), we can conclude that it occurred at
daybreak—the traditional time of the alba. The other meanings of the bird are brought
into play when the vision is revealed to be prophetic, and Cuer is in fact liberated from
the cell he was placed in by Tristesse. Carden emphasizes that the release was
orchestrated by Renon, who issues the orders to his troops to raze the castle, and thus
she equates Renon with the birds of the dream: “... dans le deuxième songe, Renom
reprend la fonction des oiseaux libérateurs. Bien que ce soit le groupe de Desir, Plaisir
et Deduwt (une autre figure tripartite) qui aide le Cueur à sortir du donjon, c’est la
parole prononcée par Renom qui fait détruire la tour” (32). It is indeed true that Renon
commands that the castle be destroyed: “Renon fist commander que le chastel fust
abatus et demoluz ...” (§97, 4-5) [Renown had the castle ordered cast down and
demolished. ...], but the chronology of events in Cuer’s waking life do not exactly
correspond to those in his dream, making any one-to-one correspondence between
elements in the vision and its realization problematic: Renon’s order to destroy the
castle comes after Cuer’s release, and not before as it occurred in the dream.
Consequently, it is just as reasonable to assign the functions of the birds to Desir, Plaisir
and Deduit as it is to Renon alone, as Carden proposes. With Desir and his companions
identified with the nightingales, a completely different reading of Cuer’s actual rescue
may be proposed. Keeping in mind the equivalence Desir-Plaisir-Deduit = nightingale =
phallus, let us look closely at the text describing Cuer’s release from prison: awakened from his slumber by the sound of Desir’s voice, he was at first uncertain he was really about to be rescued, but is then reassured by Desir’s comforting words.

A ces parolles entendit certainement le Cueur que c’estoit Desir son compagnon, lors tressaut de joye et se lieve en piedz; et Desir si avala une corde et ung baston au bout et luy escrya qu’il le mist entre ses jambes et qu’il tint la corde royde a ses mains. Et il si fist, et Desir avecques les deux chevaliers Plaisir et Deduit le tirerent amont. Et quant il fut hault hors de la prison, il regarda et voit Desir, son loyal compagnon; lors ly getta les bras au coul et s’entracollerent si roidement que de grant joye qu’ilz eurent quant ilz se virent, se pasmerent tous deux. (§91, 3-11)

[With these words the Heart surely understood it was Desire his companion, so he leapt up with joy and rose onto his feet; Desire lowered a cord and stick to the bottom and cried out that he should place the stick between his legs, and hold the cord tightly with his hands. The Heart did so, and Desire with the two knights Pleasure and Delight drew him up. When he was lifted out of his prison, he looked and saw Desire, his loyal companion; he cast his arms about his neck, and they embraced so tightly that from the great joy they felt on seeing each other they fell in a swoon.]

The translators propose “. . . and hold the cord tightly with his hands,” for “. . . il tint la corde royde a ses mains.” This is entirely justified, as Greimas’s Middle French dictionary gives the definition of tenir royde as “Tenir ferme, bon.” But what if royde is read as an adjective modifying corde, rather than an adverb modifying the verb tint? Desir’s instructions would then become, “. . . he should place the stick between his legs, and hold the rigid cord with his hands,” and Cuer would then be holding on to a stiff object originating from between his legs, being lifted higher and higher, until he finds release and passes out from the combined efforts of desire, pleasure, and delight. If
Amittié’s earlier suggestion that Cuer find a pimp to satisfy his love-sickness is part of the Livre du Cuer’s corrosive humor, then so too is this, for here we learn, it would seem, that the escape from the solitude of sadness is through masturbation.21

ESPERANCE

While Desir has been the subject of previous scholarly attention, the incongruity of other personifications with their names has not. If, to paraphrase Tuve, the Roman de la Rose is surprising because not a single character loves anyone else in the story (261), it is equally surprising that Esperance in Cuer utters not a single word of hope. She is not a personification in the Rose in the sense I have adopted from Paxson, but is instead an abstractum agens, or an abstract noun that can be the subject of an action verb, as is demonstrated the first time she is mentioned by the god of Love while he explains to the lover ways to endure the trials that service to Love entails. The most important thing, Love says, is to have hope, because

Mout est Esperance cortoise,
el ne lera ja une taise
nul vaillant home jusqu’au chief

21 Cuer is not the only one to have erotic dreams in the fifteenth century; the penultimate strophe, number XXXIX, of François Villon’s Lais,
Puisque mon sens fut à repos
Et l’entendement démêlé,
Je cuidai finer mon propos ;
Mais mon encré étoit gelé
Et mon cierge étoit soufflé ;
De feu je n’eusse pu finer.
Si m’endormis, tout emmouflé,
Et ne pus autrement finer, (305-312)
can, according to David Kuhn,”...être considérée comme une fantaisie érotique, où Villon perd conscience dans une espèce d’orgasme” (120).
ne por peril ne por meschif ;  
nes au larron que l’en veut pendre  
fet ele adés merci atendre.  
Eceste te garantira,  
que ja de toi ne partira  
qu’el ne te sequeure au besoing. . . (2617-2625)

[Hope is very courteous: right up to the end, she will never leave any 
valiant man, in any peril or distress, by so much as one fathom. Even to 
the robber whom men want to hang she always brings the expectation of 
her grace. She will protect you and will never part from you without 
helping you in your need. (67)]

Of particular interest here, as it will appear in the discussion to follow about the 
Remede de Fortune and the Livre du Cuer, is the assertion that Esperance will never 
abandon her charges, and is thus a potent weapon against the vicissitudes of love. The 
lover in the Rose expresses the same sentiment when, just before the assault on the 
castle holding Bel Acueil and the Rose, he reaffirms his oath of allegiance the Love and, 
in response to Love’s asking if he still possesses hope, says “Oîl, sire. / Cele ne me let 
desconfire, / car lonc tens est enprés tenue / Esperance une foiz creüe” (10393-10396). 
[Yes, sir; she does not let me be conquered, for Hope once believed is held to for a long 
time afterward. (185)] At the beginning of Jean de Meun’s continuation, when the 
castle is first erected, however, the lover finds himself in a deep depression and 
expresses grave doubts about the efficacy of Esperance or any of the promises of Love. 
Believing in Esperance is futile, because

    L’en ne s’en set a coi tenir, 
qu’el [Esperance] ne set qu’est a avenir.  
    Por ce est fos qui trop s’an aprime ;
car quant el fet bon syllogime,
si doit l’en avoir grant peur
qu’el ne conclue le peur . . . (4051-4056)

[No one knows what to hold to since he doesn’t know what will happen, and thus he who draws too near to Hope is a fool. For when she constructs a good syllogism, one must be in great fear lest she draw the worse [sic] conclusion . . . (91)]

This is a complaint, although parts of it may contain a grain of truth: Esperance might not know the future, as the lover laments, but then foreknowledge would not seem to be an attribute of hope. The Bible, for example, places hope and faith (rather than certain knowledge) on the same ontological ground, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1), and Godefroy defines “esperance” as “attente de ce qu’on désire, la personne ou la chose sur laquelle on fonde une espérance”—as its meaning is today, it meant an “attente” and not a “certainty of having what one desires”. None of Greimas’s definitions of “esperance” in his Middle French dictionary (to be discussed more fully later) indicates that surety of knowledge was connoted by the term. In a momentary depressed state, then, the lover appears merely to be railing against his bad fortune—a topic which Raison is soon to discuss in detail with the man. His last comment about Esperance, that she only concludes the worst in any syllogism, seems also to be a hyperbolic antithesis of the actual meaning of hope, but both of these ideas—hope is not a comfort when faced with an uncertain future, hope might only draw the worst conclusion—are momentary lapses of judgment occasioned by the sudden inaccessibility of the rose and of Bel
Acueil; soon thereafter he renounces his impotent rage and submits himself anew to the will of Love.

Esperance is an *abstractum agens* in the *Rose*, but she becomes an actual personification (using Paxon’s definition) in other medieval works. I wish to examine one of them in detail, Guillaume de Machaut’s *Remede de Fortune* (in which 1526 of its 4300 lines are devoted to the conversation between the lover and Esperance), for several reasons. In this work, Esperance develops and exemplifies the idea of hope being ever-present to the lover as expressed by the god of Love in the *Rose*; she promotes, albeit in an extreme form, the thesis that hope is the remedy for the torments of love; and Machaut is mentioned in the *Livre du Cuer* as one of the poets whose tomb may be found in the Hospital of Love. The *Remede* is the story of a man in love with a beautiful lady, but its real subject is Esperance, both the personification and the feeling of hope carried by the lover, and with this poem Machaut shows us how Esperance might act in a way harmonious with her name.

Unable to reveal to his lady that the song he has just sung in her presence was his own composition, as this would, in his mind, be an impermissible declaration of his amorous feelings, the lover wanders off by himself to lament his intolerable situation. Then, after singing of his outrage at suffering Fortune’s unfortunately all too predictable slings and arrows, he falls into a trance and sees Esperance. Her strategy for comforting the ailing man is similar to Reason’s in Boethius’s *Consolation of*
Philosophy: to remind the lover of things he already knows. Her doctrine is summed up in a song she sings in order “. . . pour toy un petit deduire / Et pour tes mauls a joie duire . . .” (1973-1974) [. . . to distract you a little and bring your sorrows to joy . . .].

. . . vraye Amour en cuer d’amant figure
Tres dous Espoir et gracieus Penser:
Espoir atrait Joie et Bonne Adventure;
Dous Penser fait Plaisance en cuer entrer.
Si ne doit plus demander
Cilz qui a bonne Esperance,
Doulz Penser, Joye, et Plaisance;
Car qui plus requiert, je di
Qu’Amours l’a guerpi.
Dont cilz qui vit de si douce pasture
Vie d’oncourt puet bien et doit mener,
Car de tous biens a a comble mesure,
Plus qu’autres cuers n’en saroit desirer;
Ne d’autre merci rouver
N’a desir, cuer, ne beance,
Pour ce qu’il a Souffissance;
Ne je ne sçay nommer cy
Nulle autre merci. (1994-2011)

[True Love in a lover’s heart creates / very Sweet Hope and amiable Thought: / Hope attracts Joy and Good Luck; / Sweet Thought causes Pleasure to enter the heart; / so he who has good Hope, / must not ask for more; / for I tell you, if he demands more, / Love will abandon him. / Therefore he who lives on such sweet nourishment / can easily and must live a life of honor, / for he has all blessings in abundance, / more than another heart would dare desire; / nor does he have the heart, desire, or longing / to implore any other reward, / because he has Sufficiency; / nor can I name here / any other reward to ask for.]

22 Kevin Brownlee has said that Esperance “. . . in the Remede thus appears as, in some sense, a transformation of [Boethius’s] Lady Philosophy” (46).

23 Line numbers are given from James I. Wimsatt and William W. Kibler’s edition of the Remede, which includes the English translation used here on the facing page.
Hope, in and of itself, is sufficient to cure the lover of his turmoil; in no wise should his happiness depend on actions, favorable or not, of his lady. Even to ask for more than to hope the lady loves him, too, is to risk being cast into the outer darkness. As far as the lover’s happiness is concerned, the lady is to act much like a catalyst does in a chemical reaction: her existence incites love in the poet, but then she can be dispensed with, as hope—and only hope—guarantees continuing bliss. Indeed, as Douglas Kelly in *Medieval Imagination* has said of this doctrine,

> The fact that Esperance envisages a lover unmolested by desire, and therefore content with less than might satisfy desire, makes it clear the Machaut is proposing sublimation when he replaces desire with hope. Only in this manner is it possible for him to describe love—‘vraie amour’—as a ‘bien de vertu’. . . Love is to rise above desire if the lover is to be happy and virtuous. To wish for more is immoderate. Moderation is essential to the reasonable, happy, virtuous life in the *Remede*, as in Boethius. Again we are brought back to hope as the remedy of misfortune borne of desire, and to ‘vraie amour’ as the remedy to Fortune. (136)

This clarifies the reason the *Remede*’s Esperance was chosen as the model for comparison to Cuer’s personification of the same name: she is arguably the most important character in Machaut’s *dit*, portraying herself as the essential quality for any lover to possess. She is also the only personification to appear in the story, and thus we see, as it were, how an unalloyed Esperance would act. Austere though “Souffissance” might sound, its effect on the lover is exactly what one would expect from counsel coming from Esperance: he cheers up and expresses in song his gratitude to her:

> Aussi doy je, se trop ne fail,  
> Loer Esperance, a qui bail
De moy et de mon cuer le bail,
Et mercier; car se rien vail
Ne s’a bien faire me travail,
C’iert sans doubtance
Par li; car en mortel travail
Fui entre le coing et le mail,
Si que je ne donnassee un ail
De ma vie; mes soustenail
Me fu, dame, amie et murail,
Tour et deffence. (3253-3264)

[And unless I shirk my duty I must also / praise and thank Hope, to whom I give / dominion over my heart and myself; / for if I am worth anything and if I strive to do well, / it is undoubtedly because / of her; for I was in mortal agony / between the hammer and the wedge, / so that I wouldn’t give a garlic / for my life; but, my lady, you were / my subsistence, my friend and rampart, / my tower and bulwark.]

Feeling much the better for his time with Esperance, the lover retraces his steps to the lady’s castle, in raptures that he will soon see again the face of his beloved—at least until he comes in sight of the place and falls victim yet again to his fears and doubts.

But true to her word never to abandon him, Esperance returns with comforting words:

Mais Esperance qui a soing
D’aider ses amis au besoing,
Et qui ne dort pas ne sommeille
Pour euls conforter, ainçois veille,
A celle heure ne dormi pas . . . (3065-3069)

[But Hope, who is ever attentive to help her friends in need, and who doesn’t sleep or doze but stays alert to comfort them, was not sleeping at this moment . . .]
She gently chides the man for forgetting all she had tried to teach him previously, and
reminds him yet again that she would always be with him as guide and protector. As
before, her words are a veritable balm for his soul:

Lors s’en parti; je demouray
Et moult doucement savouray
En mon cuer ce que dit m’avoit;
Et si tres bon goust me savoit
Que je fu tous assurez
Des mouvemens qui figurés
Estoient en mon cuer si fort
Qu’en moy ne savoye confort. (3181-3188)

[Then she left. I remained and in my heart I sweetly savored what she’d
told me; and it was so very flavorful that I was completely reassured
about the perturbations which had welled up so strongly in my heart that
I could find no comfort.]

Naturally, at the lady’s first opportunity to speak with the man in private, she
inquires about the reason for his abrupt departure which, we recall, was his fear that he
would have to declare his love. Now here he is again, faced with the same dilemma,
except it really is no longer the same, as he is now equipped to overcome his fears:

Lors recouri je sans paresse
A Esperance ma deesse,
Qui me mist en cuer et en bouche
De dire ce qui plus me touche. (3545-3548)

[Then I quickly had recourse to my goddess Hope, who inspired heart and
lips to say what touched me most deeply.]

And he does just that, confessing that he was the composer of the song he had sung in
her presence, his reason for fleeing from the castle and also his encounter with Hope.
The lady listens and, much to his wonder and delight, agrees to be his love, in large part because she, too, believes Hope requires it.

Et certes, amis, bien pensoie
Que la vostre amour estoit moie,
Comment que riens n’en deïssiez
Et que semblant n’en feïssiez.
Mes quant Esperance s’en melle,
Je ne doy pas estre rebelle
A son vouloir, ains vous otroy
Loyaument de m’amour l’otroy,
Qu’elle m’a dit que vous m’amés
Et vueut qu’amis soïés clamés. (3839-3848)

[And indeed, my friend, I was sure that you loved me even though you said nothing and gave no sign of it. But since Hope has become involved, I shouldn’t rebel against her wish, but instead grant you faithfully the gift of my love; for she has told me that you love me and want to be called my beloved.]

Later, when it is time for the lover to depart, the lady suggests that they exchange rings to symbolize their new relationship. As they do,

... soudainement venoit
Entre nous .ii. Douce Esperance
Pour parfaire ceste aliance,
Dont moult liés et moult joyeus fumes
Quant a nostre conseil l’eümes ... (4080-4084)

[... Sweet Hope suddenly appeared between the two of us to complete this alliance, which made us very happy and joyful to have her to advise us ...]

Esperance is acting in conformity with her name: by her transmutational ministrations, the melancholy of the man metamorphoses into hope. Through her cajoling and exhorting, sometimes even through her mocking words, she provides the
lover with the strength to continue with his life. And true to her word, she is able to assist even when the lover is tempted to fall back again into immobilizing despair. Her teachings are tailored to meet his specific needs, by reminding him of things he already knows (but has momentarily forgotten) to be efficacious in solving his problem, and by being present at precisely those moments when he needs her the most. In sum, she delivers exactly what her name promises (and also what the Rose’s god of Love intimated she would give)—hope to the seemingly hopeless. This ability is curiously transformed by the personification of Esperance in the Livre du Cuer, where Cuer does indeed take comfort from the words Esperance says to him—but for the reason that all the horrible things she predicts actually come to pass.

Esperance is the first character Cuer and his companion Desir meet on their quest for Doulce Mercy. She is richly attired, wearing a golden crown, but interestingly she “ja estoit ung pou ancienne par semblance” (§7, 4-8) [(was) already a bit aged in appearance]. Amazingly, we have here the physical description of someone in Love’s service—someone whose services to lovers are so essential that she says of herself “De moy ne se puent passer, / Sans moy laboureroient en vain . . .” (§10, 22-23) [They cannot do without me, / Without me they would labor in vain . . .]—given in less than superlative terms. This slightly aged appearance contrasts with Machaut’s Esperance, whose visage alone is sufficient to transport the distraught lover nigh to ecstasy:

Quant je l’esgardai vis a vis,
Que ce fust creature humaine
Di li, ne qu’elle fust mondaine,
Dont j’avoie moulx grant merveille;
Car sa face blanche et vermeille,
Par juste compas faite a point
Si que mesfaçon n’i ot point,
Si clerement resplandissoit
Que sa clarté esclarissoit
Les tenebres, la nuit obscure
De ma doulereuse aventure,
Et de son ray perchoit la nue
Qui longuement s’estoit tenue
Trouble, noir, onuble, et ombrage
Seur mon cuer et seur mon visage;
Si que, comment qu’a meschief fusse
Tel que de mort paour eüsse,
Moult volentiers la regardoie,
Pour ce qu’a veoir me sentoie
Un petitet reconfortez
De mes dures maleürtez. (1512-1532)

[But as I looked at her face, I didn’t think she was human or of this world, which astounded me greatly. For her white and rosy face, so perfectly proportioned that there was no fault in it, shone so brightly that its brightness lit up the shadows, the dark night of my unhappy adventure, and its ray pierced the cloud that had long loomed troubled, black, shadowy, and gloomy over my heart and my countenance; so that, although I was so distressed that I was afraid I’d die, I most willingly gazed upon her, because in seeing her I felt just a little consoled in my harsh afflictions.]

The adverbial modifier “ung pou” ought not cloud the fact that Cuer’s Esperance is being revealed as anything less than perfect. It should also be recalled that in the Rose, not a single person living inside Deduit’s garden suffers from the slightest physical blemish; Deduit, Oiseuse, Cortoisie—they are all young, beautiful and perfect. Only with the statues on the outer wall of the garden, where those qualities antithetical to
love are relegated, do we find imperfection and age. But in the Cuer, where Esperance is sartorially described as “tresrichement aournée d’abitz royaux” (§7, 4-5) [very richly adorned with royal garments], her body is summarily dismissed in what is, ultimately, an irrelevant observation: where, after all, in the semantic range of the word “Esperance” is there room for a notion of chronological age, let along old age?

Despite her somewhat advanced years, Esperance is apparently quite strong—strong enough physically to stop Cuer from charging off on his horse when she first appears. Seeing that he cannot escape, he dismounts and proceeds to excuse his unseemly behavior:

Et si j’ay esté, par avant,  
De si rude et petit savoir  
De vers vous ne faire devoir,  
S’a fait certes le pencement  
Ouquel je m’estoye ensemement  
Si for bouté, quant je visoye  
Les lettres cy, que je lisoye,  
Qu’escriptes sont en la colonne,  
Car je croy bien qu’ oncques personne  
Nulles telles ne vit jamais. (§8, 6-15)

[If I have heretofore been / So coarse and unschooled / That I not act towards you as I ought, / This is surely due to the thought / Into which I was just / So thoroughly plunged / When I saw these letters, which I was reading, / Written into this column, / For I well believe never did anyone / Ever see such letters.]

To be sure, Cuer was pondering the meaning of an inscription he had read just before seeing Esperance, but this is not the reason he tried to escape, because when she grabbed the horse’s reins to restrain Cuer,
Lors [Cuer] prist a tressaillir et a muer de couleur, et de la vergoingne que pour l’eure il eut d’avoir ainsi esté pris par la bride par une seule femme (car tant bien cuidoit estre si vaillant et si preux que non pas seulement deux chevaliers l’eussent peu en ce point arrester), cuida brochier le cheval des esperons, mais ce fut pur neant, car la luy couvint demourer, voulsist ou non, si durement s’estoit laditte dame de sa bride saisie. (§7, 9-15)

[He then began to tremble and change color, and from the shame he had been thus taken by the rein by a single wom[a]n (for he well believed himself so valiant and courageous two knights alone could not have seized him), he thought to prick his mount with his spurs, but this was futile, for it was fitting he should remain, whether he wished to or not, so harshly had the lady seized his reins.]

The text is silent on Esperance’s motivation for stopping Cuer in such a fashion, but its effect on the knight is plain: the first emotion elicited by Esperance is shame! Whether or not she is fooled by his lie is also not known, but at the least she is persuaded when Cuer “eut si doulement parlé à la dame [Esperance]” (§9, 1) [had so gently spoken to the lady] to answer his inquiry about her name. This, however, is in itself peculiar, since Esperance (and Boethius’s Reason, too) come when their charges are in the midst of anguish and suffering, when sweet words are the last things to issue forth from their lips. In any event, answer Cuer’s question she does, saying “Je te dy: j’ay nom Esperance, / Sans qui nul homme ne s’avance / De faire ne dire nul bien” (§10, 7-9). [I tell you I bear Hope as name, / Without whom no man arrives at / Doing or saying any good thing.] So far, so good: Machaut’s Esperance could have said much the same thing. But then, her speech takes a striking turn: rather than offering up comforting words or promises of eternal protection, she calmly informs the knight that
Tu avras des maulx a foison
Tel foiz que ne sera raison,
Car Amours seult ainsi partir
Ses biens et ses maulx repartir,
Soit a desserte ou sans desserte:
Ne luy chault qui ait gaing ou perte. (§10. 29-34)

[You shall have sorrows in profusion / So often it will be unjust, / For Love by custom so apportions / His rewards and afflictions / Whether deserved or not: / He cares little who wins or loses.]

The insouciant god of Love is a commonplace, and his evocation would not normally be remarkable but for the fact it is coming from Esperance; likewise, it is stretching the limits of believability that the character incarnating hope would ever say “You shall have sorrows in profusion so often it will be unjust”, yet there it is, with no palliative suggestions. In fact, her next speech is given to explaining in minute detail precisely what those “maulx” are going to be: in the course of his journey to Doulce Mercy, Cuer will (1) pass through the Forest of Long Awaiting; (2) drink from the Fountain of Fortune; (3) go through the Valley of Profound Reflection; (4) cross the River of Tears; (5) visit the Mount of Dejection; (6) obtain further directions and feed his horse at the meadow of Harsh Reply; and (7) ford the Perilous Pass (§10, 35-50).

If Esperance seems to have few hopeful things to say, we at least know this about her (or we will, once we have read further along in the story): she is an excellent soothsayer, because everything she predicts comes about; Cuer does indeed eventually
visit all of these places along his journey toward Doulce Mercy.\textsuperscript{24} The text makes it clear that Esperance is indeed foretelling Cuer’s future in particular, rather than, say, indicating the only path available that anyone would have to take to reach his goal: when she later searches for Cuer, she is confident she can find him because she knows his entire itinerary “comme celle qui l’avoit deviné” (§40, 17-18) [since she had foretold it]; later in her search she knows she is on the right path “car bien savoit que les deux compagnons [Cuer and Desir] y estoient allez, comme celle qui leur avoit tout dit et prophétisé ce qu’ilz avoient depuis trouvé . . .” (§44, 6-8, emphasis added) [for she well knew the two companions had gone that way, since she had told and prophesied to them what they had since then found . . .]; after their final meeting with her, Cuer and Desir take comfort because everything has come to pass “qu’elle leur avoit prophétizez” (§127, 7, emphasis added) [she had predicted to them]. Her foretelling abilities apparently have limits, as she warns them that they might wander onto the Path of Madness that leads to the manor of Despair (§10, 51-54), which, as events transpire, they never do. But it is after this warning of events that might occur, yet do not, that Esperance utters the sort of promise that so comforted Machaut’s lover:

\begin{quote}
Et si d’aventure y entroyes [Despair’s manor],
Je te diray que tu feroyes:
Ayes moy tantost en memoire,
Et cela te donra victoire,
Et te pourra tost radrecer
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Or he nearly does: rather than finding directions and having his horse graze at the meadow of Harsh Reply, he does these things at the Plain of Sorrowful Reflection (§120, 5).
Ou Chemin de Joyeux Pencer,
Par ou trouver pourras Mercy. (§10, 55-61)

[If, by chance, you should enter within, / I shall tell you what you should do: / Keep me then in memory, / And this will grant victory to you, / And you can soon retrace your road / To the Path of Joyful Thought, / Through which you shall find Mercy.]

We recall that in the Remede, Esperance did not designate times to remember her that might be more appropriate than others, quite the contrary in fact, as is seen when she gently reprimands the lover who has momentarily faltered during his return to the lady’s castle:

Je t’avoie dit et enjoint
Que ton cuer fust a moy si joint
Qu’adés de moy te souvenist
Loing et pres, quoy qu’il avenist. (3141-3144, emphasis added)

[I had instructed and enjoined you to unite your heart to mine, so that, near and far, come what may, you will always be mindful of me.]

After cataloguing a series of daunting trials that Cuer will definitely endure, without the slightest offer of assistance or admonition to remember her, Esperance promises her help to win a victory for an event that will not happen. Her foray into offering hope is brief, though, and she quickly resumes her role as a prophet of doom, ending her speech with a perverse promise:

Mais ains [when Cuer has found Doulce Mercy] avras le cuer nercy,
Car avant qu’ayes la conqueste,
Tu avras maint coup sur la teste
De dur Discort et de Reffus,
Qui presque te rendront confus.
Et si Desespoir y venoit,
En toy joye plus ne seroit:  
Si ayes tousjours souvenance  
De moy, qui ay nom Esperance,  
Par quoy avras Doulce Mercy,  
Et de tous biens assez sans cy.  

[But your heart shall then be overcast, / For before this conquest / You shall receive many blows upon your head / From Harsh Discord and Refusal, / Who will quite overcome you. / If Despair comes upon you, Joy would no longer remain within you: / So be you ever mindful of me / Who bears Hope as name, / Through whom you shall receive Sweet Mercy, and / Sufficient supply of all goods, without objection.]

It is unclear what sort of hope exists in the idea that your enemies “presque te rendront confus”, yet Esperance says precisely that, and as with her previous prognostications she is perfectly correct—in the end, Refuz does rain blows on Cuer’s head in a fight scene worthy of Homer or the Chanson de Roland for its gory detail:

. . . et l’un [Reffuz], qui estoit gros, villain et bossu, quant il le [Cuer’s blow upon his own helm] sentit ferir, luy ramena ung coup de toute sa force sur la teste, tellement que la coiffre de fer ne le garantist qu’il ne luy abbatist une des machoueres, et si cruellement l’ataindit que la cervelle de la teste luy paroissoit. Si cheut de celuy coup comme mort . . . (§313, 39-43)

[. . . Refusal, who was fat, base, and hunchbacked, when he felt the Heart strike, with all his force struck back upon his head such a blow that the Heart’s iron head mail did not prevent Refusal from hacking off one of his jaws, and he so cruelly struck the Heart his brains appeared from out of his head. From this blow he fell as though dead . . .]

It is difficult to imagine Esperance predicting this sort of thing, but not necessarily impossible. From Greimas we learn that “esperance” means “espoir”, yet one of the definitions of “espoir” is “crainte”. If Esperance intended to frighten Cuer, she succeeded, as he is “triste”, “pensifz”, and “espoventez des grans perilz et travaulx.
que dame Esperance luy avoit raconté et dit lesquelz luy couvenoit passer avant que parvenir a son entreprise” (§11, 2-5) [sad [and] pensive, horrified by the great dangers and labors Lady Hope had related, through which it was fitting he should pass to carry out his undertaking].25 But this meaning, if indeed we may apply a definition of “espoir” to “esperance”, is lacking from both the Rose and the Remede; in these works, Esperance works overtly to quell sadness and pensiveness—recall that Esperance comes to the lover’s rescue in the Remede precisely _because_ he is sad, and returns to his side at the very moment when fear threatens to overcome him anew. In any event, Cuer is only momentarily fazed by these prophecies of “grans perilz et travaulx” since we next learn that “Toutefois la presence et bonnes parolles de la dame le resconfortoyent grandement” (§11, 5-6) [The lady’s presence and fine words nevertheless comforted him greatly]. Later in the story, we also learn that this same speech by Esperance brings comfort to Cuer during his imprisonment at the hands of Tristesse (§88, 9-11).

Unless Cuer is a masochist, and there is no reason to suspect he is, the only “bonnes parolles” Esperance gives is her assurance that, through her, Cuer will come to have Doulce Mercy, the goal of his quest. As we have seen, Esperance’s talents in foretelling difficulties and tribulations are impeccable, but now that it comes to telling Cuer something that he should be pleased to hear, that is, something hopeful, she is

25 There is an error in the line numberings for this and the following paragraph (§11 and 12) in Gibbs and Karczewska’s edition. In my citation, I mean the second through fifth lines as they actually appear on the page; using the numeration of the text, this would be lines 1-4.
either wrong or being cruel. Cuer does indeed free Doulce Mercy from the confines of
the Manor of Rebellion, but only briefly: after Reffuz scatters Cuer’s brains to the wind
he takes the woman back into custody. If Esperance’s powers extend to seeing into the
future, then it is interesting that the one area where those powers should prove lacking
is that which is in other romances her very raison d’être.

Cuer’s next encounter with Esperance is in some ways a repeat of this first one,
although the circumstances leading up to it are different. Concerned that she has
received no news of Desir and Cuer’s progress, even though she is regularly apprised of
the affairs of other lovers, she sets out to search for them (§40, 7-11)—which of itself is a
departure from Remede’s Esperance, who is instantly aware of the lover’s condition.
This is fortunate for Cuer, as she finds him just after his battle with Soulcy, floundering
in the River of Tears. She rescues him, and after hearing of all his and Desir’s
harrowing adventures, proceeds to “comfort” them in her own special way—by
informing them of yet more dangers they must face. They will: go to the Mount of
Dejection; follow a road where “La ou mains tourmens sont entrez” (§46, 20) [Where
many torments have entered]; experience a painful sea crossing; and meet Desconfort,
“Qui maintes gens a mis a mort” (§46, 24) [Who has put to death many people]. They
must do all of this in order to arrive at Love’s island where they will find Doulce Mercy
in Jalouzie’s prison, even though, she warns, “...ains que l’ayez conquerue, / Il vous
fault combatre a Dangier / Et a Reffuz, cel estrangier” (§46, 46-48) [. . . before you win
her / You must battle Danger / And Refusal, the foreigner. Once again, events will prove that Esperance’s predictions are accurate, as long as they are for pain and suffering, but when it comes to offering hopeful information, she feels the need to qualify her statements with the verbs vouloir and pouvoir:

Si soiez en ferme propos,
Si acquier voulez grant los
De vostre queste parfournir,
Car grant bien vous en peut venir. (§46, 49-52)

[So be you firm in purpose / If you wish to earn great praise / For completing your quest, / For great good may come to you from it.]

Not great good will come to you, but it may; this distinction would likely not be so striking were Esperance any less categorical or confident in her predictions of the harsh trials Cuer must endure, but she is quite sure in her knowledge of future suffering:

“Prendre vous fauldra vostre adresse / Au Tertre deveé de Liesse” (§46, 9-10, emphasis added) [You must now take / The road to the Mount of Dejection]; “En lieu de dances et chansons / N’ourrez que lamentacions” (§46, 15-16, emphasis added) [Instead of dances and songs / You will hear only lamentations]; “Il vous fault combatre . . .” (§46, 47, emphasis added) [You must battle . . .]. As in their first meeting with Esperance, Cuer and Desir “furent moult contens et resconfortez des parolles de la bonne dame” (§47, 5)

26 Or they are for the most part: the companions never encounter the personification of Desconfort, although the Manor of Rebellion is populated with no end of characters who are willing to put them, at least, to death. Then there is the (inexplicable) reference to Dangier and Refuz the foreigner, as though they were two separate people, when one of the meanings of “Dangier” is, as given by Greimas, “Refus, résistance”. This is the usual meaning applied to Dangier in the Rose, who most certainly does incarnate refusal to the lover in that poem. Finally, in what way Reffuz might be a foreigner is not clear, as later Love will clearly identify Reffuz as one of his own men (§248, 9).
[were very happy and comforted by the good lady’s words], this time without the least bit of worry concerning the (certain) arduous effort they would expend before receiving their (possible) reward.

Cuer, Desir and their new companion Largesse have one additional encounter with Esperance, which appears to occur only as a happy coincidence. They meet her at a hermitage, asking that she tell them of her own adventures, and further “luy pleust leur dire une partie des aventures qu’ilz devoient avoir, comme autrefois avoit ja fait, car trop scevent que bien en savra a parler s’il luy plaist” (§125, 7-9) [that she relate to them some of the adventures they were to have, as she had already once done, for they know very well she could speak of these matters if it so pleases her]—indicating that they were aware of Esperance’s ability to predict the future. In response, she relates how she has just seen Bel Acueil off on his sea voyage to the island of the god of Love, the very same Bel Acueil she had rescued from capture at the hands of Jalouzie, and then

Et puis de vous m’est souvenu,
Avant que vous fussez venu,
Combien que toujours me pensoye
Vous trouver cy, se g’y passoye;
Si suis venue ceste part,
Sans prendre aultre chemin a part. (§126, 21-26)

[She [Jalouzie] then recalled you to me / Before you arrived / Such that I thought I would find you here / If ever I passed this place; / So I came here / By the most direct road possible.]
The editors’ translation of line 21 (“Et puis de vous m’est souvenu”) is incorrect; it should read, “I then remembered you”. True, the auxiliary verb is in the third person singular, and Esperance was talking of Jalouzie in line 20, but Greimas indicates that “souvenir” could be used as an impersonal verb: “Il me souvient de, je me souviens de, je me rappelle que”, so that the subject of the verb in a modern French or English translation would be the same as the object pronoun. Furthermore, Esperance’s story of Jalouzie was a recollection of something that had happened long before then—before Esperance’s rescue of Cuer from the River of Tears, in fact. The temporal referent of the adverb “puis” in the phrase “Et puis de vous m’est souvenu” is either the moment when Esperance is present by the sea as Bel Acueil returns to Love’s island, or some undefined time subsequent to that moment. In either case, Esperance had apparently forgotten about Cuer (you do not remember something that is already on your mind) until her memory is jogged either by being in a place she had told Cuer he would have to go or, even more disturbing, for no reason whatsoever. This lapse in memory is a sharp contrast with Love’s assurance in the Rose that Esperance would never abandon the lover (2617-2622), or Remede’s Esperance, “qui ne dort pas ne sommeille / Pour euls conforter, ainçoys veille” (3067-3068).

Having told them somewhat of her own affairs, she is prepared to inform them of their own, albeit in her own fashion:

Encor arez assez a faire
Ains que Doulce Mercy aiez,
Mais de riens ne vous esmaiez!
Car si creance avez en moy,
Vous l’avrez, qui qu’en ait esmoy,
Et non obstant que du tourment
Avrez sur mer bien largement,
Et aussi des griefz maulx assez,
Mais trop plus en avez passez. (§126, 30-38)

[You will have yet enough to do / Before you win Sweet Mercy, / But be in no way dismayed! / For if you have belief in me / You shall find her, no matter the difficulty: / Though you shall find / Great upheaval on the sea / And many grievous torments as well, / You have already passed through many more of these.]

At first glance, it seems as though Esperance is actually trying to instill a sense of hope in Cuer and his band: despite the incongruity of promises of “tourment” and “griefz maulx assez” coming from her, she does point out that as they have successfully come through similar past experiences, so too will they make it through those yet to come. But this is said only for the purpose of demonstrating the efficacy of believing in her, the result of which belief is to be the realization of Cuer’s desire: “Vous l’avrez”, which while true in the letter is not so in spirit, leaving us to ponder yet again how a force who can usually see what is to come with such clarity can be so wrong about the only thing that really matters.

After instructing them how they should proceed in order to arrive at Love’s island, Esperance disappears and is never heard from again. Cuer and Desir are momentarily startled at her sudden departure, but they “autrefois luy avoient veu ainsi faire et qui tant de maulx avoient passez qu’elle leur avoit prophetizez, prient
confort en eulx et si resconforterent Largesse” (§127, 6-8) [had seen her do this before, and] passed through so many torments she had predicted to them, [they] took comfort within themselves and comforted Largesse. Perhaps they were comforted by thinking that, if Esperance could be right about the torments they did and would endure, she must be right about their finding Doulce Mercy. But a little later, as they face the boat that Esperance had just predicted would ferry them across the sea and wonder what they should do, Desir chides Cuer for his indecision, and in the process reveals that the company might not have been listening to Esperance attentively after all:

Quel peur esse que nous avons?
Point avoir, certes, n’en devons!
Ne nous a bien dit Esperance
Que si en elle avons fiance,
Tousjours nous contregardera
De tous maulx, et nous gardera? (§128, 3-8)

[What fear is this that grips us? / We must, to be certain, have none! / Has not Hope told us that / If we have trust in her / She shall ever guard us / Against all evils and keep us safe?]

Perhaps Desir is thinking of Esperance in the Remede, who might have claimed these things to Cuer were she present, but the Esperance they have dealt with made no such promises. The only time she offers to be of direct help is if they find themselves at the Manor of Despair (§10, 57-58), which they never do. As for the rest, we are left with the words of Esperance that signify a great deal when it comes to suffering, but nothing when it comes to hope.
These personifications are found in a story that we are told compares in some manner with the high chivalric adventures of Lancelot, Gawain, Tristan and other knights of the Round Table, and although Cuer does indeed heroically battle with opponents and humbly submit to the omnipotent force of Love, along the way he encounters personifications who, while offering aid and succor in his noble quest, simultaneously and subversively either act salaciously, provide inappropriate comic relief, or sow seeds of despair.
CHAPTER 3
FOL / FAULX / LOYaulx

In the previous chapter we saw how personifications were not necessarily what they seemed to be, that is, how Esperance was not always hopeful, nor Bel Acueil entirely welcoming. These personifications were subverting expectations of their behaviors, expectations based on the characters’ actions and words from previous works of fiction whose titles or authors are mentioned in the Livre du Cuer. The intertextual references also contribute to expectations of another sort that King René’s allegory subverts, namely that a man who in all respects appears worthy of love will in the end surmount all impediments in his quest to win the object of his desire.27 Cuer, of course, does not, and after his defeat at the hands of Reffuz renounces any further attempts to convince Doulce Mercy of his suitability as a lover. Antecedents for this course of action are rare in medieval literature, but I will look at two of them in detail and examine how they contribute to an understanding of Cuer’s comportment: one from the Arthurian tradition, when Lancelot renounces his love for Guinièvre, and another from the Belle Dame sans mercy, whose author, Alain Chartier, is the beneficiary of special consideration in the text of the Livre du Cuer. In both cases,

27 See p. 16 for a sample of works (taken from those whose titles or authors are mentioned in the Livre du Cuer) where this is the case.
however, comparisons between the male protagonists and Cuer result in very unfavorable conclusions regarding the latter, especially when another intertext is considered, the fifteenth-century allegorical L’Hospital d’Amours by Achille Cautier. In this work, the god of Love’s illustration of a “false” lover corresponds to Cuer’s behavior after his battle with Reffuz, thereby creating doubt concerning Cuer’s acceptability as a lover. This chapter, then, examines the subversion of a literary tradition—the seemingly worthy knight who never gives up and always achieves the goal of his quest—since the text can be construed as labeling its apparently virtuous hero as a “false” lover when he abandons his amorous quest after a single defeat.

When Cuer, Desir and Largesse land on the god of Love’s island, the first place they visit is the Hospital of Love, an institution established for the care of those wounded by Dangier and Reffuz. Upon their arrival the three travelers are greeted by the nurse Courtoisie, who leads the party to the prioress, Pitié. Desir informs them of Cuer’s quest and requests counsel, which Pitié says she is happy to do, although she must think about it overnight. Before retiring, Cuer, curious to see the cemetery of the hospital that Desir had talked about before their arrival, asks Courtoisie that she show it to him in the morning, to which she readily agrees. When dawn finally arrives, Cuer proceeds to inspect a long series of coats of arms belonging to various and sundry lovers—mythological, historical and contemporary, even one belonging to René d’Anjou—that, by and large, serve to illustrate the dominion Love has over all men
regardless of rank, wealth or wisdom, and which Catherine M. Jones has discussed as warnings that Cuer fails to understand properly (198). Following the display of coats of arms, Cuer inspects the tombs of famous poets of love, including Jean de Meun, Boccaccio, Guillaume de Machaut and Alain Chartier, after which he goes to his meeting with Pitié. In many respects, this portion of the Livre du Cuer originates in Cautier’s Hospital d’Amours, a brief summary of which is given here.\textsuperscript{28}

Refused by his lady, the disconsolate lover of the Hospital wanders away and falls asleep, dreaming that he sees a terrible landscape of suicidal lovers hanging from trees, the fountain of Narcissus, and Dido’s funeral pyre. Leaving this frightful place he encounters Esperance and Sapience, who escort him to the Hospital of Love. He is greeted by Bel Acueil and taken to the nurse Courtoisie, who listens to his complaint and then shows him to the prioress, Pitié. Esperance is the physician of this Hospital, and she provides a soothing draught that calms the ailing lover. Now that he is feeling better, he asks Pitié to be allowed to kiss the flower in the garden he so loves. Though fearful of the possible response from the flower’s guardian, Dangier, Pitié in fact obtains his permission, and the lover is granted his request. The lover now feels completely restored, and avails himself of his newfound health to tour the cemetery of the Hospital, where he sees the honored graves of famous lovers like Tristan, Lancelot and Alain Chartier, and the naked, decomposing bodies of unfaithful lovers left out in the mud

\textsuperscript{28} Erroneously attributed to Alain Chartier, the Hospital d’Amours is still to be found in Chartier’s collected Œuvres.
and rain: Jason, Narcissus, and La Dame sans mercy among others. When he leaves the cemetery, desire for another kiss returns, but Dangier is not at all amenable this time, so the lover relapses to his old sickness. Various characters try to help him, including Souvenir, who tries a bit of tough love by reminding him that, “Vng homme est bien peu à priser, / Quant pour vn seul coup est rendu” (736) [A man is worth very little when he is defeated by a single blow].29 Unable or unwilling to accept comfort from others, the lover prays for deliverance to the god of Love, who deigns to grant his supplicant a theophany. After a long speech (lasting 12 pages out of a total of 32, almost 40% of the total work), Love grants his boon, and the lover kisses his beloved flower a second time. He awakes and writes his dream down, hoping that the lady who initially refused him will find pleasure in reading it.

In many respects, the Livre du Cuer contains elements relatively unchanged from the Hospital: Courtoisie is still the nurse, Pitié is the prioress; there is still a cemetery for faithful lovers (although this is greatly expanded in the Cuer) as well as a place outside the Hospital for the naked, decomposing bodies of the unfaithful ones. The Hospital scene in the Cuer, however, lacks Love’s monologue, the longest segment in the Hospital d’Amours. To be sure, Love appears in the Cuer, but only after the travelers leave the Hospital and its cemetery: he accepts Cuer’s homage, and permits him to attempt the rescue of Doulce Mercy on condition he spare the life of Reffuz, who

29 Translations for the Hospital d’Amours are my own.
is, despite the obstacles he presents to Cuer and other potential suitors, a member of Love’s household. In the Hospital d’Amours, while Love does eventually permit the lover another kiss, the bulk of his didactic discourse is devoted to describing a “fol amoureux”, or agitated lover (a translation I explain below), and while the Cuer’s god of Love does not deliver a similar lesson, the type of “fol amoureux” exemplified in the Hospital does appear elsewhere in the Cuer, namely in Cuer himself.

A “fol amoureux” is usually rendered as “foolish lover”, the opposite of the wise lover, and he is typically the sort of man that lovers are counseled not to be like. This translation does not seem to apply in the Hospital, because Love has just distinguished between good and bad lovers—the “loyaulx” and the “faulx”:

Les loyaulx en ont la douleur,
Et les faulx cueurs eschappent sain:
Car ilz n’y mettent rien du leur.
Mais les bons n’ont pas mal en vain:
Car ilz en ont le bien haultain.
Lequel bien aux faulx rien ne monte:
Car quant ilz ont ce bien en main,
Ilz ont ce dont ilz ne font compte. (743)

[The loyal ones have pain because of it,
And the false hearts escape unscathed:
Because they do not put anything of their own into it.
But the good ones do not suffer in vain:
Because they have the highest good [i.e., the lady].
Which good does nothing to increase the worth of the false:
Because when they have this good in their hands,
They have what they do not care about.]

30 The pages are misnumbered in the text; what are actually pages 742 and 743 are marked as 734 and 735.
This division of lovers into two antithetical camps, as well as a great deal of what Love will eventually say to the lover in the Hospital, is an extension of the teachings of the god of Love in the Roman de la Rose, who tells his pupil that he, too, must suffer for the sake of love, and for the same reason that people value only what they work hard for:

> Biaus amis, par l’ame mon pere,  
> nus n’a bien s’il ne le compere ;  
> s’en aime l’en mieuz le chaté  
> quant l’en l’a plus chier acheté ;  
> et plus en gré sont receü  
> li bien ou l’en a mel eü. (2583-2588)

[Fair friend, no one has anything good unless he pays for it. Men love a possession more when they have bought it at a higher price, and the good things for which one has suffered are received with greater thanks. (67)]

The Rose’s Love explains this after the lover expresses his dismay over all the hardships his liege has just enumerated as the typical fate of men in the service of Love—more or less the same hardships the Hospital’s Love is about to explain to his own supplicant. Love in the Rose is not describing a “foolish lover”; he is, in fact, giving the description immediately after his commandments to all “fins amanz” (2040), or “pure lovers” (59). Thus, even though the Hospital’s Love begins by calling the sort of man he is about to talk about as “Le fol”, this lover is the kind known in the Rose as “fins amanz”; also, the description follows the definition of the good and bad lover, where they were named “loyaulx” and “faux”—not “fol”. Furthermore, while Greimas does allow the word “fol” to mean “Homme insensé” and the opposite of “sage”, another definition is “Homme excité qui fait le fou”, or someone who only acts like a fool because of his
extreme emotions. And extreme would certainly apply to the type of lover described in the Hospital:

Le fol, qui loyaulté dessert,
En ensuiuant ma loyal queste,
le te diray dequoy il sert
De veiller, de rompre sa teste,
De faire en vain mainte requeste,
De perdre mainte longue voye,
De faire veille à point de feste,
A grant dueil & à point de ioye. (743)

[The excited (passionate? love-sick?) man, who serves loyalty while following my loyal quest, I will tell you what it serves to be sleepless, to beat his head, to make many requests in vain, to destroy many a long route, to keep vigil at the moment of a feast, of a great sorrow and of joy.31]

In what follows, much (though not all) is the same in both the Hospital and the Rose: a man cannot stop thinking about his lady; he passes by her house at all hours, hoping to catch a glimpse of her; his constant thoughts of her prevent him from sleeping; in the Hospital, Love says that this man “Lors se hait, & mauldit sa vie, / Et tence à fortune & à moi. . .” (747) [Hates himself and curses his life, and reprimands fortune and me. . .]

The gods of Love in both the Hospital and the Rose note that, should the man ever have occasion to speak with the lady, he will be tongue-tied and unable to convey his

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31 Greimas defines “Faire veilles de” as “participer aux prières le jour précédant une fête religieuse”; given the context, I thus interpret the man who “faire veille” at the moment of a feast—as well as while greatly afflicted or at the moment of joy—rather than the day before, as a metaphor for speaking or acting inappropriately.
agitated emotional state to her. But then, the Hospital’s Love poses a hypothetical situation not found in the Rose:

Mais prenez qu’il die à son aise  
Or tout ce que dire il vouldra,  
Et que tout à sa Dame plaise,  
Pour ce conforté en sera:  
Car elle luy reffusera.  
Pour l’esprouuer luy fait ce mal:  
Car en la fin luy semblera,  
Que s’il endure il est loyal. (751)

[But imagine that he says everything he would want to say at his leisure, and that everything pleases his Lady, for this he will be comforted: because she will refuse him. She does him this wrong in order to test him: because in the end, it will seem to her, that if he endures he is loyal.]

This god of Love envisions the possibility of a lover who actually can summon the courage to make his request of his lady, and who can be tested by her: if he can endure her refusal he is loyal, that is to say, the “good” sort of lover, one of the “loyaulx”; if he cannot then we can assume, though Love does not explicitly say it, that he is that other type the god has defined, the “faulx”. In either case, Love has amended this discriminating test to his examination of the “fol”, implying that he is not establishing three mutually distinct categories of lovers, but two subsets—the “faulx” and “loyaulx”—that can exist under the general appellation of “fol”; apparently, even a false lover can act in an agitated, hyperventilating fashion, just as well as the loyal. When it comes right down to it, the true test comes in how the lover reacts to the lady’s refusal.
The obsessive, all-consuming desire of the “fol” is a commonplace in medieval literature, and examples are easy to cite: one need only think of the men in the romances I have been using up to this point—the lover of the Remede de Fortune—or even others in stories I have not mentioned, such as Lancelot lost in contemplating Guenièvre’s strands of hair in the Chevalier de la charrette, or Perceval’s contemplation of the three drops of blood in the snow. The origin of Cuer’s obsessive nature lies in the fact that he is intended to reflect the emotional distress of the author-persona who, in his letter to Jean, includes unceasing thought of his lady as one of his complaints:

Mais toutefois en moy y a ung point: c’est assavoir que, de trois, ne scay pas contre qui m’adrecier pour l’acuser du tort fait et martire que mon cuer, pour voir, seuffre: de Fortune ou d’Amours ou de ma Destinee, pour ce que l’un des trois si m’a si griefment mis en soulcy et tourment que ne le savroye dire, ne lequel, au vray, prendre pour en baillier la charge ne lui en donner la coule. Car le jour que je passay premier devant ma dame, Fortune me conduist celle part la plustost qu’ailleurs, d’assez sans faulte. Et toutefois, pourquoi ne ou ainsi aloye n’en savoie riens, ne mal je n’y pensoye. Et d’aultre part, quant la fuz arrivé, sans gaires y tarder Amours, lequel estoit embusché soubz la tour de la tresbelle et gente, par l’archiere de l’ueil doulcet et esveillé me tira le regart qui me frappa au cuer. Et oultre plus, puis lors ma Destinee, quelque part que je soye, jugea mon souvenir a devoir sans cesser penser, et a toute heure sans loysir de repos, a celle la qui cy dessus est dit, trop plus d’assez que d’aultre riens qui vive. Doncques auquel des trois dessus nommez de mon martire a qui en baillier la coule pas ne scay dire, fors que a tous trois et a chacun pour le tout. . . (§1, 12-28)

[A dilemma troubles me: namely, between Fortune, Love, or my Destiny, I do not know whom to accuse of the wrong done and [the] torture my heart truly suffers, for one of the three has so grievously cast me into affliction and torment, and, truly, I do not know which to charge with the crime or the guilt. For the day I first passed before my lady, Fortune led me there rather than elsewhere, innocently enough. Why I went in that
direction I knew nothing, nor did I think evil of it. On the other hand, once I arrived there, Love, who lay in ambush beneath the mien of the most lovely and noble lady, through the archer’s window of her sweet and watchful eye at once drew her gaze upon me, which struck my heart. My Destiny moreover then judged [that] my memory must ceaselessly reflect, wherever I may be, at all hours and without leisure of repose, upon this lady, above all else living. I thus do not know which of the three to charge guilty of my torment save all three, each guilty of everything. . .]

It is true, the obsessive nature of the man is a commonplace in medieval romance, but it is also the behavior of the “fol amoureux” as described by Love in the Hospital. And although we are looking here at the difficulty of the author-persona, the dream sequence—which is the allegorical representation of this very difficulty—has Doulce Mercy using the exact terminology of the Hospital’s god of Love when she first encounters Cuer and wonders which type of lover he might be: “Cueur, decepvans estes et faulx, / Ou tresparfaittement loyaulx!” (§302, 3-4) [Heart, you are deceptive and false, / Or most perfectly loyal!]

Initially, Cuer is the speechless lover overwhelmed in his lady’s presence when they first meet face to face:

Lors s’aproucha le Cuer de Doulce Mercy, mais quant il fut prez d’elle, il fut si esperdu que ne savoit mot dire. Et Desir s’avança, qui vouloit parler pour luy, mais le Cuer luy pria qu’il laissast parler Humble Requeste, car bien estoit en langage et bien savoit la maniere de parler pour tous vrais amoureux. (§293, 3-7)

[The Heart now approached Sweet Mercy, but when he came near her he was so overcome he did not know a single word to say. Desire came forward, who wished to speak for him, but the Heart prayed he allow
Humble Request to speak, for he was skilled with language, and knew the manner in which to speak for all true lovers.]

Doulce Mercy hears Humble Requeste’s plea that Cuer be permitted to enter her service, but requires that Cuer state his own case before her. However “esperdu” he might be, Cuer is now commanded by his lady to speak, and that is something he cannot refuse, and he says:

Si aiez un peu de regart,
Non pas du tout, mais d’une part,
De la pâine que j’ay souffert
Pour la vostre amour sans desserte.
La desserte en est à venir,
Dont je pense à joye advenir:
Retenez moy pour serviteur
Belle, et j’avray assez honneur! (§298, 11-18)

[So may you have a little regard / Not of it all, but only of part / Of the sorrow I have suffered / For your love without recompense. / Recompense is yet to come, / Whence I think of future joy: / Retain me as your servant / Lovely one, and I will have honor enough!]

She is sufficiently impressed by the man that she no longer hesitates and plainly states that she accedes to Cuer’s request:

Si c’est pour ma decepcion,
Dieu vous en doint gueredon!
Quant a moy, plus n’estriveray,
Et de bon cuer vous retendray
Pour amy et pour serviteur. (§302, 9-11)

[If this is to deceive me, / May God grant you a fitting reward! / As for myself, I will not resist at all, / And will retain you with good heart / As friend and servant.]
Clearly, Cuer has unequivocally voiced his greatest desire, and that desire has pleased Doulce Mercy—just the conditions I have already cited for the loyal lover’s hypothetical test proposed by the Hospital’s god of Love: “Mais prenez qu’il die à son aise / Or tout ce que dire il vouldra, / Et que tout à sa Dame plaise...” (751). Doulce Mercy’s pleasure is manifested by her acquiescence in going with Cuer back to the Castle of Pleasure, a trip, however, that is interrupted almost as soon as it commences:

Mais ilz n’eurent pas allé plus d’un trait d’arbaele arriere du Manoir de Rebellion que Reffus et sa mesgnie et les quarante mesdisans, qui s’estoient embuchez davant la porte, comme le conte vous a divisé, saillirent sur eulx, bien armez et embastonnez et espris d’ye et de maltalent, et commencerent a ferir et a maillier sur le Cuer et ses gens de toutes leurs forces. (§313, 6-11)

[But they had not at all traveled far behind the Manor of Rebellion when Refusal, all his house, and the forty gossips, who were lying in ambush before the gate as the tale has told you, set upon them, well armed and bearing clubs, and full of anger and ill will; they began to strike and beat down the Heart and his men with all their might.]

The battle goes badly for Cuer, who loses not only his army but also Dulce Mercy to the gossips and Reffuz. Pitié finds the nearly dead Cuer, but he, once revived, searches for his beloved.

Et dame Pitié luy dist que a sa dame ne pensast plus, car elle restoit es mains de Reffus, et quant a ses compagnons, ilz estoient ja a plaisance a l’ostel d’Amours. Lors dist et pria a dame Pitié que puisque sa dame estoit de rechief es mains de Reffus, que pour Dieu le menast a l’Ospital d’Amours, car la vouloit finer le remenant de ses jours en prieres et oroisons. Et dame Pitié le fist ainsi que le Cuer le luy requist. (§313, 66-72)
[Lady Pity told him he should no longer think about his lady, for she remained in Refusal’s hands, and as for his companions, they were already at their pleasure at Love’s home. He then prayed Lady Pity that since his lady was again in Refusal’s hands, for God’s sake she should take him to the Hospital of Love, for he wished to end the remainder of his days there in prayers and meditations. And Lady Pity did just as the Heart requested.]

Thus ends the dream sequence of the Livre du Cuer: Cuer has tried, but failed, to win the love of his lady, and as a consequence renounces any further attempt to wrest her from the hands of Reffuz, preferring to spend the rest of his life as an invalid in the Hospital of Love.

   When Desir first describes the Hospital to Cuer while they are still traveling to the island of Love, he says,

   Il a nom Hospital d’Amours:  
   Leans vous pourrez veoir les corps  
   De mains léaulx amoureux mors,  
   Car des faulx il n’en y a nulz:  
   Ilz sont hors a la pluye nudz. (§145, 38-42)

   [It is called the Hospital of Love: / There you will see the bodies / Of many loyal lovers now dead, / For you will not find false ones there: / They are without, exposed in the rain.]

This both repeats the two types of men that the Hospital’s god of Love talks about and accurately describes what Cuer discovers once inside; Desir does not, however, evoke the presence of any still-living patients. Nonetheless, they do exist, for as Courtoisie leads Cuer and Desire through the Hospital, “. . . ilz trouverent Pitié, ou elle alloit, a tout une torche devant elle revisitant les malades de leans, dont il en y avoit largement,
et la pluspart estoient malades des blesseures que Dangier et Refus leur avoient faictes. . . .” (§148, 21-24) [. . . they met Pity as she proceeded, holding a torch before her, visiting the ill within, of which there were many; most were sick from wounds Danger and Refusal had inflicted on them. . . .] Pitié’s living charges are mentioned twice more (§152, 15; §228, 5-6), and in both cases they are referred to as “povres amoureux malades” [poor, sick lovers] rather than either “loyaulx” or “faulx”. No mention is made as to whether they will ever recover sufficiently to resume their crusade against Reffuz and Dangier; Cuer’s fate, however, is clear: he has given up and will never again attempt to win the love of Doulce Mercy—a conclusion that results in a paradox.

On the one hand, there could be no other ending possible: it would hardly do to have Cuer win possession of his lady, or harbor hopes for obtaining her favors in the future, if the story of Cuer is to correspond with the emotional distress of the author-figure who complains precisely of an unrequited love in his letter to Jean. On the other hand, a man who renounces his love after his lady’s rebuff falls squarely under Love’s anathema in the Hospital: he is a “faulx”32. Yet this verdict seems unduly harsh; throughout the dream sequence, Cuer has been nothing but a sympathetic, if somewhat obtuse, character, bristling with righteous indignation whenever he perceives the slightest doubt in Desir’s mind about his valor, worthiness or commitment to the task of winning Doulce Mercy. If Doulce Mercy is spared the inventory of Cuer’s difficulties in

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32 Or rather, this is the implication: Love says that the “loyaulx” will persevere, despite the lady’s refusal.
making the journey to the Manor of Rebellion, we readers are not: we know he has suffered; in many of the nearly 300 paragraphs leading up to his encounter with Doulce Mercy we have seen him toil, fight, experience sea-sickness and fall prey to treachery, finally to reach the point where he expresses his desire and, it must be added, where this desire is pleasing to the lady. Of course our sympathies are for Cuer; at no point during his voyage had he said or done anything that would cast doubt on his determination or sincerity, and if modern readers would rebel against the idea that Cuer might, after all this effort, be labeled “faulx”, that is because it seems, frankly, unfair. But, I would argue, our sensibilities are, in this instance, misplaced, and we are ignoring the fifteenth-century aesthetics described by Taylor in the previous chapter, which prized the “dialectical [i.e. intertextual] manipulation of poetic commonplace” (32). And the “fol” as described by Love in the Hospital, a group of which Cuer is a member, as well as the “loyaulx”, are assuredly medieval commonplaces. What is not a topos is that the suitor of a beautiful woman, one who in all respects is an acceptable choice as a lover, should in fact give up at all.

The lover of the Rose is at first denied, but except for an initial momentary lapse, he never gives up hope for victory, and of course eventually (after more than 20,000 lines) achieves his goal.33 Though Machaut’s lover in the Remede is at first too frightened even to express his feelings, and is convinced that “souffisance” is enough,

33 See the discussion of Esperance in the preceding chapter on the lover’s wavering when the castle protecting the Rose and Bel Acueil is first built.
even he in the end obtains the love of his lady. Chrétien de Troyes’ Chevalier de la charrette provides an excellent example of how a true loyal lover reacts to both a rejection and a test from his lady: however shocked Lancelot may be over Guenièvre’s cold welcome when he finally meets her in the kingdom of Gorre, he does not hesitate to offer amends at the first opportunity. Later, when the queen tests the knight’s love by commanding him to fight in a cowardly and humiliating fashion at a tournament, he complies without question, his only response—“La soë merci” (5857) [Since this is her command, I am grateful to her. (Staines 241)]. Even when the stakes for the man are higher than the initiation of a new love affair, as is the case when Laudine terminates her relationship with Yvain in Chrétien’s Chevalier au lion, he does not typically admit utter defeat when faced with rejection. Reminded that he has broken his promise to return to Laudine at the appointed time, Yvain at first goes mad, but when he is cured, he performs various feats of knightly bravery and with the assistance of Lunete, he and Laudine are reconciled. To find an example of one of the very few lovers who actually renounces his emotional attachment to his lady, we must travel far from the case presented by the god of Love in the Hospital, to Lancelot in the Queste del Saint Graal. Convinced by a hermit that he would lose his immortal soul if he continued his adulterous affair with the queen, Lancelot repents of his sin and vows henceforth to lead a life of chastity:

Et tant li dist li hermites bones paroles que Lancelot se repent mout de la vie qu’il a si longuement menee. Car il voit bien, s’il i moreust, il perdist
s’ame; et li cors par aventure en fust maubailliz s’il poïst de ce estre atainz. Et por ce se repent il qu’il ot onques fol amor vers la reine, car il i a usé son tens. Si s’en blasme et honist, et creante bien en son cuer que ja mes n’i rencharra. (71)

The hermit preached to him so persuasively that Lancelot sincerely regretted the life he had led for so long. He realized that if he were to die in that state, he would lose his soul, and his body too would suffer. He repented that he had ever had an illicit love for the queen and had thus wasted his life. He accused and blamed himself and promised with all his heart that he would never again fall into sin. (24)\[34

Lancelot’s repentance is, of course, temporary, and he returns to that “vie qu’il a si longuement menée” in the Mort le roi Artu, but throughout the remainder of the Queste Lancelot is determined to amend his ways and continue his search for the Grail.

The Queste seems so different from many medieval romances because, as Albert Pauphilet reminds us in his introduction to this volume of the Lancelot cycle, “La Queste est . . . une description de la vie chrétienne telle qu’on la concevait à Cîteaux” (x). Rather than a tale of knightly errantry or another story of courtly love, the Queste was intended as a refutation of such worldly pursuits and an incitement to reach for the spiritual. Again, as Pauphilet says,

La « quête » du Graal, par suite, n’est, sous le voile de l’allégorie, que la recherche de Dieu, que l’effort des hommes de bonne volonté vers la connaissance de Dieu. Ce livre, sous l’apparence d’un roman de chevalerie, est un tableau de la vie chrétienne telle que pouvait l’observer ou la rêver une conscience du XIIIe siècle. (ix)

\[34 Old French quotations of the Queste are by page number to Pauphilet’s edition; English translations are given with page numbers to volume IV of Norris J. Lacy’s edition of the entire Lancelot-Grail cycle.
On the one hand, this sort of world does not seem to be the one Cuer inhabits: he does not retreat to the Hospital d’Amours out of any sense of sinfulness or religious conviction, but he goes there because Reffuz has defeated him in battle and has recaptured Doulce Mercy. On the other hand, the Queste would appear to loom large on the horizon of expectations—I have previously argued that in the beginning of Cuer’s dream, this work is mentioned as a model. At the time I emphasized that it was the “haulx faiz et prouesses, des grans conquestes et vaillances en guerre, et des merveilleux cas et tresaventureux perilz qui furent a fin menez” (§3, 1-3) as well as the “termes du parler” (§3, 10) of the Queste (and other Arthurian tales), rather than any theological significance that would be important. Nevertheless, it remains the case that the Queste counsels a life that is the antithesis of the one sought by Cuer; as another “prudhom” explains to Lancelot, the knight’s fall from grace began when he first felt desire for Guenìèvre:

Einsi te perdi Nostre Sires, qui t’avoit norri et escreu et garni de toutes bones vertuz, et t’avoit si haut levé que en son servise t’avoit mis. Si que quant il cuida que tu fusses ses serjanz et le servisses des biens que il t’avoit prestez, tu le lessas maintenant, si que quant tu deus estre serjanz Jhesu-crist tu devenis serjanz au deable, et meis en toi tant des vertuz de l’anemi com Nostre Sires i avoit mis des soes. Car contre virginité et chasteé herberjas tu luxure, qui conflont l’une et l’autre. . . .(126)

[Thus did Our Lord lose you, Our Lord who had nourished and raised you, bestowed all the virtues upon you, and taken you into His lofty service. Just when He thought you were His soldier and would make use of the attributes He had given you to do His service, you abandoned Him. Just when you should have acted as the servant of Jesus Christ, you became the devil’s servant, taking on as many attributes from the devil as
you had formerly held from Our Lord. In place of virginity and chastity, you harbored lust, which defeats them. (41)]

The religious dimension of the Queste, combined with the fact that the only other work of fiction by King René is the deeply religious allegory Le Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance (wherein one of the most memorable images is that of a heart being crucified in order to wash away its sins), open the question of just how religious the Livre du Cuer might be.

In his article “Le Cœur de René d’Anjou”, Daniel Poirion compares the Cuer with the Mortiffiment, and citing the alchemical symbols and tapestries in the Castle of Pleasure that are critical of love, as well as the interaction with Esperance that does not lead to Doulce Mercy and carnal pleasure, concludes that

\[
\text{De la naissance de son désir à l’immobilisation par la blessure infligée par le refus de l’aimée, l’expérience suggérée est plus complexe qu’une simple histoire sentimentale ou sensuelle : l’échec doit faire réfléchir et préparer au repentir. (52)}
\]

Furthermore, though the Mortiffiment is clearly a religious text, while the Cuer seems not to be, nevertheless, according to Poirion, both describe a similar experience:

\[
\text{Mais on perçoit un même mouvement, interrompu dans un cas par l’échec, abrégé dans l’autre par la démonstration doctrinale, du désir charnel vers une certaine transcendance. Après avoir longtemps divergé dans l’histoire littéraire, les chemins du raffinement amoureux et de la purification religieuse se sont de nouveau rapprochés. (54)}
\]

As the title of Poirion’s essay makes clear, his analysis centers on the figure of the heart, the central personage in both of King René’s works, as a literary representative of what
“un homme du XVe siècle pouvait se faire de son Moi...” (49). Though my concerns are not psychoanalytical, I mention Poirion’s observations in order to demonstrate that the Cuer might, in general, be read through a spiritual optic, while focusing on Cuer’s definitive retreat to the Hospital d’Amours in particular, especially as Cuer will spend the remainder of his days there in “prieres et oroisons” (§313, 71).

A look at Greimas’s definitions of these words that name Cuer’s occupation in his retreat, however, both does and does not support the view that Cuer will spend his life in religious meditation. For “priere”, he gives 1. demande instante; 2. souhait; 3. corvée; 4. “Faire une priere,” convoquer les vassaux (pour résister à l’ennemi). And his Middle French dictionary defines “oraison” as “1. Oraison. Oraison dominicale, le pater. 2. Discours (d’un orateur). 3. Prose, par opp. à carme, poésie. 4. Ouvrage en prose. 5. Les parties de l’oraison, les parties du discours.” On one level, Cuer does indeed appear to choose a quiet, reflective life, now that he believes Doulce Mercy is forever beyond his reach. I have previously mentioned Lancelot, who repented of his love for Guenièvre, but this was only temporary, lasting for the duration of the Queste del Saint Graal. However, in the post-apocalyptic desert that is the kingdom of Logres at the conclusion of La Mort le roi Artu, when Guenièvre, Arthur, and most of the Round Table are dead and Mordred’s treachery has erased almost everything that Arthur’s court has achieved, an elderly Lancelot chooses to spend his remaining days in the sort of life that Cuer has elected; when the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lancelot’s cousin
inform him that they will spend “le remenant de noz vies el servise Nostre Seigneur Jhesucrist et li proierons qu’il nos pardoint noz pechiez” (§200, 35-37),35 [the rest of our lives in the service of Our Lord Jesus Christ and will pray that He forgive our sins (158)]—essentially “prieres et oroisons” —Lancelot requests permission to join them:

Je vos dirai, fet il, que ge ferai ; vos avez esté mi compaignon es deliz del siecle ; or vos ferai compaignie en cest leu et en ceste vie, ne jamés tant com ge vive ne me mouvrai de ci ; et se vos ne me recueilliez, ge le ferai ailleurs. (§200, 39-44)

[I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” he said. “You have been my companions in the pleasures of the word; now I’ll join you in this place and in this life, and for as long as I may live I won’t leave here; and if you won’t accept me, I’ll do it somewhere else.” (158)]

Lancelot does not retire from the world because Guenièvre rejects him, but because Guenièvre and the world that he has known are gone, yet the conclusion of La Mort offers one of the few, if not the only, examples of a knight known for his amorous exploits who retires from the world to end his days in “prieres et oroisons”. But as the other meanings of these words intimate, Cuer’s future activities can also be construed as producing prose, that is, the textual representation of his life that accompanies the wish that “je René” articulates to Jean for assistance; a wish that arrives in the form of a request, but maintains something of the obligatory nature of “corvée”, the work due a lord by his vassal, when the author-persona tells Jean near the end of the concluding

35 Quotations are taken from Jean Frappier’s edition of La Mort le roi Artu. As with the Livre du Cuer, paragraph numbers (§) are given, followed by line numbers within the paragraph. Translations are from, and page numbers refer to, Norris J. Lacy’s Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation, volume IV.
letter that he “m’en mander vostre tresbon avis” (§315, 6-7) [send me your excellent advice]: for Greimas indicates that “mander” means not only “faire savoir, informer” but also “commander, ordonner”.

There is one additional model for Cuer’s abandonment of his quest after the lady’s refusal, the lover of Alain Chartier’s Belle dame sans mercy. Several times in the course of Cuer’s voyage, Chartier has been brought to readers’ attention: while describing the wonders of the Hospital of Love they are about to experience, Desir informs Cuer and Largesse that there will be one tomb of particular note:

Ce fut maistre Alain Charretier,  
Qui tant sceut d’amour le mestier  
Qu’il en fist les tresplus beaulx ditz  
Qu’oncques puis son temps furent ditz. . . . (§145, 47-50)

[This was Master Alain Chartier, / Who so well knew love’s longing / He made about it the most lovely songs / That were made in his time. . . .]

When Cuer asks Courtoisie to show him the cemetery of famous lovers, he mentions Chartier explicitly:

D’une chose vous veulx prier:  
Qu’il vous plaise moy octroier  
Qui me vueillez montrer demain  
La sepulture maistre Alain. . . . (§151, 5-8)

[One thing I wish to pray you do: / May it please you to grant me / That tomorrow you deign show me / The tomb of Master Alain. . . .]

36 The verb “mander” is in the infinitive. But to produce a grammatically correct and readable English translation, Gibbs and Karczewska do not literally translate from the original structure where the infinitive is appropriate: “Vous requerant que . . . y vueilliez penser ainsi que bien savrez, pour m’en mander vostre tresbon avis. . . .” (§315, 5-7)
Chartier’s is the last tomb to be viewed in Cuer’s inspection of heraldic devices and tombs (from §152 to §216) and distinguished from the others by the presence of a coffin (§217, 4). The embroidered cloth on the tomb informs the reader that Chartier suffered from the absence of his beloved lady, but not, like Cuer, from her rejection:

Que depuis que Fortune me volt tollir par mort  
Lors ma tresgente dame et ma seule maistresse,  
Finay mes jours du tout en langueur et tristesse,  
Voire faisant chançons, ballades et dittiez. (§218, 7-10)

[Since Fortune wished to take from me in death / My most noble lady and only mistress, / I ended my days in all languor and sadness, / Making, truly, airs, ballads, and songs.]

If Chartier’s last days were as despondent as Cuer’s, this was due to his lady’s death, and not, according to the tapestry, to her rejection of him. The woman’s rejection of her suitor is, however, the central element in Chartier’s Belle dame sans mercy, wherein the narrator overhears a debate between a man who tries to convince a woman that she ought to be his lover. He fails in his attempt, not because she dies, or because she is testing his resolve, but because she lucidly observes the vacuity of his traditional arguments:

Elle dénonce leur fadeur, leur caractère convenu, leur manque de sincérité. . . . Elle dénonce surtout le chantage insupportable de la requête amoureuse : pourquoi une dame devrait-elle, sous peine d’être jugée insensible et cruelle, aimer un homme au seul motif que pour sa part il est épris d’elle ou le prétend ? Quel droit cet amour lui donne-t-il à son attention ? (Zink, Littérature française 287-288)
And yet, as David Hult has recently argued, for its original fifteenth-century audience the unsettling figure in the Belle dame might not have been this atypical lady but instead could have been the man and his unchivalric response to her refusal, since he dies of his chagrin:

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\ldots \text{il faut convenir que l’amant de la } \textit{Belle Dame}, \text{ qui meurt de chagrin, est aberrant, dans ce sens justement qu’il meurt. De tout temps, les amants parlent de leur souffrance, de leur martyre, de leur mort prochaine—mais la mort reste hypothétique et métaphorique.} \ldots \text{ A une époque où les valeurs chevaleresques sont intimement liées aux comportements amoureux, surtout quand la constitution et survivance même de la société sont en danger, il faut interpréter un manquement tel que celui de l’amant de la } \textit{Belle Dame} \text{ comme une défaillance des plus nettes, un découragement dans tous les sens du terme qui correspond au manque de courage chez les fuyards [à la bataille d’Azincourt en 1415].} \ (258)
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Consequently, as the lover does in fact die rather than merely claiming that his sorrow is greater than he can bear, Hult finds that the poem might indeed be innovative:

\[\text{“L’innovation de ce poème } \ldots \text{ c’est peut-être bien cette figure de l’homme amoureux mais faible, incapable de se prendre en main devant la netteté de la situation, à tel point qu’il s’avoue vaincu”} \ (259). \text{ If the lover is to be judged guilty for giving up, at least he cannot be blamed for not trying: he attempts throughout most of the poem to convince the lady to love him. But if, as Hult suggests, the Belle dame is scandalous because the lover is too weak to persevere regardless of obstacles, then how much more so the Cuer, where the lover gives up after just one refusal?} \]

\[\text{By the definition of the Hospital d’Amours’s god of Love, Cuer, having abandoned his quest, is now a “faulx”. Furthermore, Cuer compares unfavorably if we}\]
read his behavior through the lens of other fictional lovers about whose existence (or authors) the text of the Livre du Cuer itself reminds us: Lancelot, the lover in the Rose, Machaut, and Chartier. Apart from the Belle dame, either the male lovers continued in their pursuits despite all obstacles or, as with Lancelot, it required the cataclysmic destruction of Camelot and the death of Guenièvre to convince the knight to retire to a life of “prieres et oroisons”; and the one poem wherein the lover does give up is problematic precisely because he admits defeat. As I have said previously, however, Cuer cannot persevere because his story is meant to reflect the condition of the man writing to Jean and asking for the means whereby he might overcome his feelings of love, or as he himself expresses it so eloquently, that

\[
\ldots \text{si fort ne souvent je ne puisse estre tempté ne ainsi tourmenté de ce subtil esperit au vouloir impossible nommé le dieu d’Amours, qui embrase les cuers de tresimportun desir, lequel fait gens tant amer qu’ilz en meurent, ou si treffort languissent qu’ilz n’ont ung seul bon jour.} \quad (§315, 8-12)
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[... I may not be so often tempted and thus tormented by this subtle spirit of impossible desire named the god of Love, who enflames hearts with most inopportune desire, and makes people so love they die of it, or languish from it so greatly they live not a single good day.]

Thus we see the paradox at the very heart of the Livre du Cuer: just as I have claimed that the personifications of the previous chapter were subversive because they do not act in accord with their names, so too is Cuer’s acceptance of his defeat at the hands of Reffuz, for resignation is not in the lexicon of the literary tradition of noble, courtly lovers enumerated in the Livre du Cuer. “je René” may indeed wish to be set free from
“subtil esperit au vouloir impossible nommé le dieu d’Amours”, but he has chosen to describe this desire using models in which Cuer’s definitive retreat—the allegorical counterpart to the author-persona’s renunciation—is extremely problematic.
CHAPTER 4

LOVE, FORTUNE, DESTINY

The “fol” lover, says the god of Love in the Hospital, blames both Fortune and Love for his problems, as does the author-persona of the Livre du Cuer. Actually, the author-persona goes even further, bringing Destiny into the picture, confessing confusion as to which one is to blame, if not all three together. This same triumvirate is, in a sense, responsible for setting the stage in the Belle Dame sans mercy, since in the beginning of Chartier’s poem the narrator is distraught because “Fortune a le forcier cassé / Ou j’espargnoie ma richesse / Et le bien que j’ay amassé / Ou meilleur temps de ma jeunesse” (37-40) [Fortune broke into the strongbox where I saved my riches and the goods I had kept from the best times of my youth]. If the narrator had anything of value that Fortune could take back, it was because “Amours a gouverné mon sens, / Se fault y a, Dieu me pardonne” (41-42) [Love governed my senses; if that be a fault, may God forgive me.] While in this melancholy condition, it is only “par droitte destinee” (55) that he happens across the assembly of merry makers who include among their number the lover and Belle Dame, whose dialogue forms the bulk of the poem.

The author-persona’s conflation of potentially guilty parties is reflected in the dream narrative of the Cuer, which borrows places and objects found in the Rose
associated with Fortune or Destiny (namely the House of Fortune discussed by Raison, and the mirror Nature mentions that God uses to know men’s destiny) and reassigns their significance to include Love—to the detriment of the god of Love, producing in the process yet another subversive strategy: as neither the personifications nor the protagonist are what the allegorical level of meaning appears to claim they are, so too do places and objects elude simple one-to-one correspondence with meanings on the literal level. The personifications, places and things in the narrative are endowed with a fluid ontological status because they are elements, not of an allegory of love, but of an allegory of a failed romantic affair. Cuer, as we have seen, is not simply another typical exemplary knight on a quest, he must also be a “faulx”; Esperance not only inspires hope, she must also be the source of fear and shame. In this chapter, we will examine a situation that other fictional lovers appreciated as possible, namely that Love and Fortune were allied against the lover (and thus to be shunned), yet did not truly believe. Raison in the Rose provides a clearly articulated discourse on the interconnection of the two, but the lover in that allegory dismisses her teachings out of hand. And as we have seen, though “souffisance” is Machaut’s remedy for Fortune, his lover nonetheless obtains a promise of love and an exchange of rings from his lady. But as the Livre du Cuer is, according to the author-persona, to be read as an allegory of a man who does not reach his amorous goal, we move from mere discourse—Love and Fortune are discussed as things to be avoided—to something where the Love-Fortune-Destiny
alliance is clothed in the ontologically real and physical: the houses of Love and
Tristesse, and the god of Love’s mirror.

The first borrowing from the *Rose* comes from an image developed by Raison in
her lecture to the lover. She finds the lover wallowing in despair and self-pity, ready to
die because he no longer has access to the rosebush after his first kiss. He is, like the
author-persona of the *Cuer*, unable to see the way out of his current troubles:

Tant com ainsinc me dementoie
des grans douleurs que je sentoie
ne ne savoie ou querre mire
de ma tristce ne de m’ire,
lors vi droit a moi revenant
Reson, la bele, l’avenant,
qui de sa tour jus descendi
quant mes complanites entendi. (4191-98)

[While I raved thus about the great sorrows I was suffering, not knowing
where to seek a remedy for my grief and wrath, I saw fair Reason coming
straight back to me; as she descended from her tower she heard my
complaints. (93)]

In her efforts to convince the lover that his suffering originates from the fact that he has
sworn allegiance to the God of Love and that to be free of his pain he must renounce his
oath of loyalty to Love and love only her, Raison has occasion to discuss—at great
length—Fortune. Indeed, Raison’s speech concerning Fortune is prompted specifically
by the lover’s request for an explanation of the nature of Love:

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37 After more than 2500 lines of argumentation, Raison finally delivers her remedy: “c’est que tu me
veullles amer, / et que le dieu d’Amors despises, / et que Fortune rien ne prises” (6842-44). [They are that
you will love me, that you despise the God of Love, and that you put no value on Fortune. (132)]
Se la voliez defenir,
por fol me pourroie tenir
se volentiers ne l’escoutoie,
savoir au mains se ja pourroie
les natures d’amors aprendre,
s’il vos i plesoit a entendre. (4637-4642)

[. . . if you would define it, I should consider myself a fool if I did not
listen and find out at least if I might learn the nature of love, if it would
please you to explain it. (100)]

If he is suffering now—and at this point in the narrative the lover is suffering because of
the imprisonment of the Rose and Bel Acueil behind the walls of Jalouzie’s castle—it is
only the result of the turning of Fortune’s wheel, from which no one is immune. As
part of her global project of convincing the lover to renounce his allegiance to the god of
Love and to serve only her, Raison teaches him that everything external to a human
being (and for the lover, this would of course include the Rose) are possessions rightly
belonging to Fortune, which she can offer or withhold as she sees fit:

touz les biens que dedanz toi senz
et que si bien les connois enz,
qui te demeurent sanz cessier
si qu’il ne te peuent lessier
por fere a autre autel servise :
cist bien sunt tien a droite guise.
Es autres bien, qui sunt forain,
n’as tu vaillant un viez lorain ;
ne tu ne nul home qui vive
n’i avez vaillant une cive,
car sachiez que toutes vox choses
sunt en vos meïsmes encloses.
Tuit autre bien sunt de Fortune,
qui les esarpille et aüne
et tost et done a son voloir,  
dom les fols fet rire et doloir. (5301-5316)

[All the good things that you sense within, and which you so well understand in yourself, which will dwell in you constantly nor can ever leave you to perform similar service for another—these good things are yours in a right way. The other benefits which you have, alien ones, are not worth an old bridle rein; neither you nor any man living has anything worth a shallot; for know that all your possessions are enclosed within yourself. Every other good belongs to Fortune, who dispenses and collects them, gives and takes them away as she pleases and with them makes fools laugh and weep. (110)]

In order to be happy, she proposes the following remedy: “Ceste amor que je t’ai ci dite,  
/ fui la conme vils et despite, / et d’amér par amors recroi / et soies sages et me croi”  
(5337-5340) [Fly from this love that I have described as from a thing base and despicable. Renounce loving *par amour*; be wise and believe me. (110)] She also advises the lover to model his behavior on that of Aristotle, who “Le dex d’Amors onc ne cremut / ne por Fortune ne se mut” (6859-60). [. . . did not fear the God of Love in any way, nor did he budge on account of Fortune. (132)] Raison thus forcefully establishes a necessary link between love and Fortune.

In developing metaphorical images of Fortune, Jean de Meun mentions the traditional blindfolded woman turning a wheel, but he also borrows an image from Alain de Lille’s *Anticlaudianus* in which Fortune is depicted as living on an island where there are two very different rivers, each one symbolically representing the two sides of fortune: “par la, soit esté soit ivers, / s’en queurent dui fleuve divers, / sordanz de diverses fontaines / qui mout sont de diverses vaines” (5949-52). [Two rivers . . . flow
there summer and winter: they issue from two different fountains which come in turn from very different springs. (119)] Fortune herself lives in a house on the side of a mountain on this island. As Fortune has two aspects, good and bad, so too does her house:

Mout reluit d’une part, car gent
i sunt li mur d’or et d’argent,
si rest toute la couverture
de cele meesmes feture,
ardanz de pierres precieuses,
mout cleres et mout vertueuses:
chascuns a merveilles la loe.
D’autre part sunt li mur de boe,
qui n’ont pas d’espés pleine paume,
s’est toute couverte de chaume.
D’une part se tient orgueilieuse
por sa grant beauté merveillieuse;
d’autre tremble toute effraee,
tant se sent foible et esbaee
et porfendue de crevaces
en plus de .v. c. mile places. (6069-6084)

[In one part it shines brilliantly, for there the walls of gold and silver are fine, and the entire roof as well is of the same workmanship, glowing with the clearest and most brilliant precious stones. Everyone praises this part as a marvel. In another part, the walls are of mud not as thick as the width of a palm, and the entire roof is made of thatch. In one part the house remains proud of its marvelously great beauty, and in another it feels so weak and gaping, so rent with cracks in more than five hundred thousand places, that it trembles with fright. (121)]

Fortune acquires a different appearance according to which side of her house she happens to be living in at the moment. Should she be in the beautiful portion,

lors pare son cors et atorne,
et se vest, comme une reíne,
de grant robe qui li treîne,
de toute diverses ouleurs,
de mout desguisees couleurs
qui sunt es saies et es laines (6092-97)

[Then she apparels and adorns her body and, like a queen, clothes herself in long dresses that trail behind her, with many different perfumes and with highly varied colors, dresses made of silks and woolens (121)]

The only certain thing about Fortune, though, is that she is not stable; she constantly turns her wheel, forever moves from one side of her house to the other, and as she does so, changes her physical appearance:

et quant iluèc se voit cheüe,
sa chiere et son habit remue,
et si se desnue et desrobe
qu’el est orfeline de robe
et semble qu’el n’ait riens vaillant,
tant li vont tuit bien defaillant. (6121-26)

[and when she sees herself fallen there, she changes her countenance and her clothing; she bares and undresses herself until she is stripped of her clothing, and she is so lacking in every good thing that it seems that she has nothing worth anything. (122)]

This image of Fortune is also to be found in the Livre du Cuer, and as Fortune and Love seem to be indistinguishable in the author-persona’s dedicatory letter to Jean, so too are Fortune and her house models for allegorical representations of both Love and sadness.

In his wanderings, Cuer comes across the character Tristesse who, in accordance with her name, appears quite sad. She is a woman who is “assez grande, de corps maigre, de couleur palle, toute eschevelee et hideuse, mal gentement abillee, toute dolente et esplouree; et s’en venoit le grant pas, grant dueil faisant, comme une chose
toute desconforte” (§65, 5-8). [(a) large woman . . . thin of body, pale in color, all disheveled and repulsive, badly dressed, sorely grieving and in tears; she walked along quickly, lamenting loudly, like one disconsolate.] Though she does not live on an island, her house is built on a mountain, the Mount of Dejection [Tertre deveé de Liesse]. Like the decrepit half of Fortune’s house, Tristesse’s castle seems on the verge of collapse, for Cuer and Desir look upon “ung grant chastel viel et despecié, de mauvaise muraille, mal plaisant, de meschans et petites pieres noires et rousses de couleur tannée, tout fendu et crevé en plusieurs lieux” (§51, 8-10) [a great castle, ancient and decrepit, with crumbling walls, unpleasant, made of wretched, small black and red stones of faded hue, split open and broken throughout.] Tristesse has a close relative, Melencolie, with whom she sometimes collaborates and who lives not far away. Her appearance and dwelling, though more modest than Tristesse’s, are described in similar terms. Next to Melencolie’s house flows a river, the River of Tears, from which she draws water for Cuer and Desire when they visit her. The source of the river is none other than the Fountain of Fortune, next to which the wandering knights had slept the evening before.

René has selected elements from the Rose—decrepit houses, disheveled women, rivers—to associate sadness with (bad) Fortune. This is partially what Raison was trying to get the lover to understand when she introduced Fortune into her speech. In addition to the Rose, René may also have taken the idea of an alliance between Fortune
and sadness from his contemporary Charles d’Orléans, with whose poetry scholars acknowledge René was familiar. In Charles’s 43rd ballad, for example, Fortune and Sadness unite to act against the narrator:


Mon cœur est devenu hermite
En l’ermitage de pensee,
Car Fortune, la tresdespite,
Qui l’a haï mainte journée,
S’est nouvellement aliée
Contre lui aveques Tristesse,
Et l’ont banny hors de liesse. (1-7)

[My heart is become a hermit / In the hermitage of thought, / Because Fortune, the very spiteful, / Who has hated it for a long time, / Is newly allied / Against it with Sadness / And they have banished it away from happiness.] (my translation)

As in the ballad, Cuer is indeed banished by Tristesse away from happiness [hors de liesse] when he is made prisoner by Tristesse in the Mount of Dejection [Tertre deveé de Liesse]. But while Charles’s ballad makes Fortune and Tristesse allies, it is the Rose’s Raison who provides the model for giving the alliance concrete form in the Livre du Cuer. This, however, accounts for only half of Raison’s description of Fortune and her house; there remains the half belonging to good Fortune.

We are about to argue here that the God of Love’s castle corresponds to the good half of Fortune’s house as described by Raison, in the same way that the houses of

38 See, for example, Zink, “La tristesse du cœur” p. 30 and Douglas Kelly’s Medieval Imagination, p.212-218. In addition, manuscript 24399 of the Bibliothèque Nationale includes Charles’s coat of arms among those examined by Cuer while in the Hospital of love. See Susan Wharton’s edition of the Livre du Cuer, p. 136. Charles’s Ballad 79 provides an example of René’s direct borrowing. The imagery of the first two lines, “En la forest de longue actente, / Chevauchant par divers sentiers,” is reflected in Cuer’s wandering on horseback, due to Jealousy’s misdirections, through “la Forest de Longue Actante” (§22, 9).
Sadness and Melancholy correspond to the bad half. This is not to imply, however, that as a manifestation of good fortune Love is therefore to be sought after or trusted; however desirable good fortune might seem in comparison to bad fortune, Fortune is still Fortune—and Raison’s desire to dissuade the lover from following the god of Love remains as valid when she describes good fortune as when she discusses bad fortune. Good and bad fortune are just two sides of the same capricious deity in whom the lover, were he wise, would place no confidence. Likewise, if we are able to demonstrate that the god of Love’s castle is a mirror of the good half of Fortune’s house, this should not be interpreted as meaning that love is an unqualified good. The god of Love can be just as capricious as Fortune ever could be.

As Raison explains to the lover in the *Rose*, Fortune’s residence is to be found on top of a mountain on an island in the middle of the sea. The good half is bright and shiny because the walls are made of gold and silver, while the roof is made of precious gems. There is in the *Livre du Cuer* a beautiful house, covered with precious gems, located on a mountain on an island in the middle of the sea: the Castle of Pleasure, residence of the god of Love. Cuer first sees the castle while he and his companions are still at sea, at a time of day when the sun

... estoit ja hault et fort et avoit passé la force de la nuee tellement qu’il raioit tout a plain sur ung beau chastel qui estoit en celle isle, qui resplendidsoit et reluisoit si tresclerement que c’estoit si tresmerveilleuse chose a veoir qu’il n’est langue qui le sceust dire ne plume qui le sceust escripre. (§139, 90-94)
was already high and strong in the sky, and had broken through the clouds so that it shone fully upon a fine castle on the island, which glittered and glowed most luminously; it was such a wondrous thing to behold there is no tongue that could speak of it, nor pen that could write of it.]

Be that as it may, the narrator’s pen later somehow manages to write at length on the ineffable beauties of Love’s castle (§234, 10-18; §235, 1-26).

We recall that Fortune, when living in the good half of her house, was quite richly adorned. Likewise there is a beautifully attired female character living in the Castle of Pleasure, Love’s mother Venus: “De ses habillemens ne vous vieulx-je parler pour cause de briefveté, et aussi mon engin n’est pas suffisant de les savoir diviser” (§107, 14-16). [I do not wish to speak of her garments for reasons of concision, and because my craft does not suffice to speak of them as well.] Here the narrator speaks truly, as his pen writes nothing more about Venus’s beauty.

Finally there is the God of Love himself who, though not said by Raison to live in Fortune’s house, is just as capricious in the Livre du Cuer as Fortune is in the Rose. In her concluding remarks about the house of Fortune, Raison reminds the lover that Fortune “. . . ne set qu’el se veut, ce semble, / por ce li oill bendé li furent / des anciens, qui la connurent” (6142-44) [. . . does not know, it seems, what she herself wants. For this reason the ancients, who knew her, thought of her with her eyes bandaged. (122)]

The same insouciance characterizes the god of Love as he carries out his divine functions: when Cuer enters Love’s audience chambers in the Castle of Pleasure, he
finds the god, who was “moult richement vestu d’abitz royaux et s’esbatoit tenant ung arc turquoys en sa main et tiroit sayettes et moult fleiches par les fenestres de la salle a la volle hors, et pas ne lui chailloit sur qui elles cheussent” (§241, 98-101). [very richly dressed in royal garments and amused himself by holding a Turkish bow in his hand and shooting many darts and arrows through the windows by the volley, for it did not matter to him on whom they fell.] It is chance, or perhaps Fortune, which dictates on whom the arrows will fall.

René has therefore taken the image of the house of Fortune found in the Rose and adapted it for his own purposes. He has taken the two halves of the house, separated them, and put the unfortunate half in a context that is to be expected of a knight experiencing setbacks in the conquest of his lady: sadness and melancholy. The fortunate half of Jean’s house is incorporated into the presentation of the personification of Love. By mixing the Rose’s images of Fortune into the surroundings of Love, the narrative is reflecting the inability of the author in the dedication to choose which personification to blame for his unhappy condition. In the Rose, however, this representation of the house of Fortune is given by Raison as part of her program to dissuade the lover from pursuing love: the gifts of Fortune, whether they be wealth, power, or love, can just as easily be taken away as they are given. Raison’s warning to her pupil could just as well be given to Cuer: “Garde donc que ja riens ne prises / ne ses honors ne ses servises; / lesse li sa roe torner, / qu’el torne adés sanz sejorner. . . .” (5867-
72). [Take care then never to take anything from her {Fortune}, neither honors nor services. Let her turn her wheel, which she turns constantly without stopping. . . (118)]

But just as the man does not heed Raison’s warning, neither does Cuer take note of the fundamentally fickle nature of Love, nor does he become conscious of the skepticism which seems to be demanded by the alliance between Love and capricious Fortune.

Even before questions of intertextuality are raised, the following analogy would hold: the God of Love is to the Castle of Pleasure as Fortune is to the House of Fortune, in the sense that both are suzerains of their respective abodes. The intertextual blending described above, however, suggests a conflation of the Castle of Pleasure and the House of Fortune, which in turn blurs the boundaries between the God of Love and Fortune. This blurring of identities provides the major premise of a syllogism: the God of Love is like Fortune. Fortune is capricious and not to be trusted. Therefore the God of Love is not to be trusted. A corollary of this conclusion would be that the fate, or destiny, of any who would trust in the God of Love is, at best, highly questionable. The untrustworthiness of Love (that is to say, the lamentable destiny of Love’s followers) is shown in various ways in the Livre du Cuer, notably in the material furnishings found in and near the God of Love’s home, such as the blazons of famous lovers found in Love’s Hospital of Love—most of which testify to the failure of love to bring joy and satisfaction. As one example, Cuer reads the following below the shield belonging to Troilus:
Maintes vaillances fiz, dont on scet a parler,
Et de faiz d’armes maintz, qui moult sont a louer.
Mais neantmoins tout ce j’ay esté combatu
D’Amour et assailly a oultrance et vaincu
Par Brisaïde, dont le cueur j’ay si espris
Que fus en ses liens fort enserré et pris. . . . (§174, 5-10)

[I performed many valiant deeds of which men speak, / And many feats of arms which are fit to be praised. / Despite all this by Love I was / Vanquished, sorely assailed, and conquered / For Brisaida, with whom my heart was so smitten / That in her strong bonds I was ensnared and trapped. . . .]

 Appropriately, Diomedes’ shield and blazon are next to Troilus’, where Cuer learns that this very same Criseyde betrayed Troilus during the siege of Troy (§176, 8). Like the tapestries and artifacts found in the Castle of Pleasure, these blazons serve as a warning to Cuer of the destiny awaiting him if he continues on his quest for his lady. Catherine M. Jones has said of the blazons, “Far from being an ornamental digression, these thirty star-studded examples of amorous suffering are clearly intended as exempla to be contemplated by the inexperienced protagonist. . . . [T]he hero’s eventual defeat, as well as his pathetic return to Love’s hospital, are inscribed in [these] shields and epigraphs. . . .” (198-99). With 30 blazons and many other objects within Love’s domain telling the stories of the unhappy fate of lovers, Cuer has an abundance of material for studying the mixture of love and destiny. But at the main entrance to the Castle of Pleasure there is a singular object, a mirror, which brings to mind a passage in the confession of Nature in the Rose, where the idea of destiny is explicitly evoked.
As Nature discourses about planets, plants and prisms in the *Rose*, she also talks to Genius, her confessor, about the apparent contradiction between human free will and predestination, comparing divine foresight to a mirror:

\[
\ldots \text{si la voit Dex des maintenant}
\]
\[
\text{ausinc con s\'el fust avenue,}
\]
\[
\text{et de tourjorz l\’a il ve{"e}}
\]
\[
\text{par demonstrance veritable}
\]
\[
\text{a son mirouer pardurable,}
\]
\[
\text{que nus fors li ne set polir,}
\]
\[
\text{san riens a franc voloir tolir.}
\]
\[
\text{Cil mirouers c\’est il me{"e}smes,}
\]
\[
\text{de cui commencement pre{"e}smes.} \quad (17434-42)
\]

[\ldots still God sees it [any event in time] from this very moment as if it had taken place. And He has seen it always in true detail in His eternal mirror, which no one, except Him, can polish without taking away his free will. This mirror is the same one from which we took our beginning. \quad (292)\]

The mirror of God is Jean’s way of describing the way in which God knows—a way that is different from the way humans know. As Philosophy explains in Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*—Jean’s source for this digression on free will, although not for the mirror metaphor—the proper way to reconcile God’s foresight and human free will is to recognize that God’s and humans’ ways of knowing are indeed different. She lays out a 4-level hierarchy of ways of knowing, of which humans possess the first three, and God all four. First, there is sense perception: we know an object when we see it. Secondly, there is imagination. We can picture the object in our minds, even if it is not physically present. The third tier is reason. By knowing a particular person, it is reason which allows us to comprehend the abstract idea “human”. Above these ways
of knowing is intelligence, which belongs to God alone. As Philosophy says, God’s intelligence “passes beyond the sphere of the universe to behold the simple form itself with the pure vision of the mind” (Book V, IV, 158). God’s intelligence allows him to see all of time in a single glance; all of eternity is present to him in a single instant. Philosophy continues, saying that God’s knowledge “embraces all the infinite recesses of past and future and views them in the immediacy of its knowing as though they are happening in the present. . . So that [God’s foreknowledge of the future] is better called providence or ‘looking forth’ than prevision or ‘seeing beforehand’” (Book V, VI, 165). “Looking” is precisely what Nature in the Rose says God does with his mirror:

An cest biau mirouer poli,
qu’il tient et tint tourjorz o li,
ou tout voit quan qu’il avendra
et tourjorz present le tandra,
voit il ou les ames iront
qui leaument le serviront,
et de ceux ausinc qui n’ont cure
de leauté ne de droiture;
et leur promet en ses ydees,
des euvres qu’eus avront ouvrees,
sauvement ou damnacion:
c’est la predestinacion,
c’est la presciance divine,
qui tout set et riens ne devine. . . (17443-56)

[In this beautiful polished mirror, which He keeps and has always kept with Him, in which He sees all that will happen and will keep it always present, He sees where the souls will go who will serve Him loyally; He sees also the place of those who have no concern for loyalty or justice, and in His ideas He promises them salvation or damnation for the deeds that they will have done. This is predestination, this the divine prescience that knows all and divines nothing. . . (292)]
The mirror Nature describes is God’s intelligence, used to discriminate between loyal Christians and the unsaved, and to know the fate, or destiny, of each, whether it be salvation or damnation.

The God of Love in the *Livre du Cuer* has his own mirror, located at the entrance to his castle, supported by two statues named Fantasy and Imagination, the architects of the castle. The special property of this mirror is revealed by an inscription carved into the heads of the two sculptures:

S’en ce mirouer cy nul se mire  
Qui ne soit voir loyal amant,  
Le dieu d’Amours si luy fait dire  
Qu’il s’en repentira briefment.  
Car ceulx la avront dueil et yre  
Qui en amours font faulcement,  
Et verront l’en entierement  
Leur barat la et leurs faulx tours,  
Leur tricherie evidamment.  
Or s’en garde qui avra paours! (§237, 4-13)

[If any shall look within this mirror / Who is truly not a faithful lover, / The god of Love shall make it speak so that / He shall soon repent of it: / For they who are unfaithful in love / Will know sorrow and anger, / And in it shall see / All their corruption, false dealings, / And treachery most evidently. / Beware it, he who fears to see this!]

The function of René’s mirror is similar to Jean’s: it discriminates between loyal and disloyal followers, and although it does not apparently reveal the rewards of the true lover, it certainly indicates an unhappy destiny for the disloyal. But the two figures who support the mirror, Imagination and Fantasy, are of equal interest. As we have
seen, Imagination was considered a way of knowing. Fantasy was a closely allied form of Imagination. V. A. Kolve calls it “the creative aspect of the imagination,” but notes that medieval attitudes toward it were somewhat ambiguous, since “it could also mislead, presenting the unreal as though it were real” (22). Furthermore, according to Douglas Kelly the distinction between Imagination and Fantasy was for some medieval writers that between truth and falsehood, and thus Kelly interprets Imagination and Fantasy as somnium and insomnium (Medieval Imagination 97), or visions with and without prophetic significance, respectively.

The destinies of both the Christian God’s and the god of Love’s followers are knowable through a mirror. When God looks into his mirror, his knowledge is informed by his intelligence and is therefore infallible. When lovers look into Love’s mirror, they obtain knowledge acquired by Imagination and Fantasy—knowledge that is at best possibly true, lacking the certainty conferred by divine infallibility, and at worst a lie. And lies are apparently what Cuer sees when he looks into Love’s mirror. Though the inscriptions on the statues’ heads are silent about the effect the mirror would have on a true lover, Cuer appears to have been well pleased by what he saw: rather than turning away in “sorrow and anger”, he stood looking into it for quite a long time. Furthermore, unless Cuer is to be considered another Narcissus or a libertine, it can reasonably be assumed that Sweet Mercy figured somehow in the visions that so engrossed him. This would correspond to the complaint René made
specifically against Destiny in his letter to Jean: “Et oultre plus, puis lors ma Destinee, quelque part que je soye, jugea mon souvenir a devoir sans cesser penser, et a toute heure sans loysir de repos, a celle la qui cy dessus est dit, trop plus d’assez que d’aultre rien qui vive” (§1, 23-26). [My Destiny moreover then judged my memory must ceaselessly reflect, wherever I may be, at all hours and without leisure of repose, upon this lady, above all else living.] But however agreeable it might have been, it must be classified as insomnium, the vision without prophetic significance, since Cuer ends his quest defeated in Love’s Hospital. What, then, is offered to those who would become faithful disciples of the God of Love and would look into his mirror to learn of their destiny? If faithful Christians could look into Jean de Meun’s mirror of God they would see the truth: their salvation and eternal happiness. The God of Love seemingly offers his loyal followers only deceptions and lies.

In addition to this jaded, worldly-wise view of love, there is a certain irony in adapting a symbol of infallible knowledge to a source of dubious knowledge concerning love: the complaint of Nature, which she shares with her priest Genius, is that humans do not have sex enough to please her. She even requires that Genius excommunicate all those who do not practice procreation as often as they might. The image of the mirror thus originates within a complaint of humans who could have sex, but won’t, and is transferred to a complaint of someone who wants to have sex, but can’t.
In his introductory letter, René admitted to his kinsman that Fortune, Love, and Destiny had blurred together in his mind till he could not distinguish one from another. This emotional confusion is reproduced in the dream narrative as physical objects from the *Roman de la Rose*—Fortune’s house (at least the good half) and God’s mirror showing human destiny—are reworked into the God of Love’s Castle of Pleasure and mirror in the *Livre du Cuer*, thereby blurring the distinctions between Fortune, Love, and Destiny in the dream. What the hapless Cuer therefore does not realize is that while the Usual Suspects—Tristesse, Melencolie, Male Bouche—try to thwart his efforts in the course of his quest to win the favor of and liberate his lady Sweet Mercy, his overlord Love is simultaneously part Fortune—blindly giving and taking back his gifts, and allied with Cuer’s enemies; and part destiny—which at best cannot be trusted, and at worst is actively leading him to defeat. Like Keyser Soze, Love is leading him on rather than to the object of his Desire.

* * *

The allegorical subversion discussed in this chapter centers on the physical manifestation of places and objects that concretely demonstrate the confusion in the author-persona’s mind concerning love, fortune and destiny. Just as Esperance is not what her name says she is, nor Cuer the *fin amant* he appears to be, so too are the god of Love’s castle and mirror not entirely what they seem to be. They are, rather, more like the blazons in the Hospital’s cemetery, the memorabilia on display in Love’s castle, or
Venus’s tapestries: warnings that Cuer never deciphers, not even when he is utterly defeated at the hands of Reffuz, one of Love’s very own men.
CHAPTER 5
DREAMS, OR THE METAPHYSICS OF FUTILITY

One of the Roman de la Rose’s many important influences on medieval literature was its use of dreams as the frame for amorous intrigue. In his introduction to Chaucer’s English translation of the Rose in the Riverside Chaucer, Larry D. Benson observes that,

The love vision, as Guillaume [de Lorris] 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. (685)

Chaucer’s own Book of the Duchess and Parliament of Fowls are dream visions, and many of the fictional works I have cited in previous chapters either are presented as dreams, or have them as major elements of the story, such as the Hospital d’Amours, the Prison amoureuse, the Remede de Fortune and the Queste del saint graal. The Livre du Cuer, however, presents its own dream in a way not used by these other narratives. In the Rose, for example, the lover’s vision is presented as something that is true, while admitting at the same time that the veracity of dreams is a subject of debate:

Aucunes genz dient qu’en songes
n’a se fables non et mençonges ;
mes l’en peut tex songes songier
qui ne sont mie mençongier,
ainz sont après bien aparant,
si en puis bien traire a garant
un auctor qui ot non Macrobes,
qui ne tint pas songes a lobes,

..............................

El vintieme an de mon aage,
el point qu’Amors prent le paage
des jones genz, couchier m’aloie
une nuit, si con je souloie,
et me dormoie mout forment,
et vi un songe en mon dormant
qui mout fu biaus et mout me plot ;
mes en ce songe onques riens n’ot
qui tretot avenu ne soit
si con li songes recensoit. (1-8, 21-30)

[Many men say that there is nothing in dreams but fables and lies, but one
may have dreams which are not deceitful, whose import becomes quite
clear afterward. We may take as witness an author named Macrobius,
who did not take dreams as triftles . . . In the twentieth year of my life, at
the time when Love exacts his tribute from young people, I lay down one
night, as usual, and slept very soundly. During my sleep I saw a very
beautiful and pleasing dream; but in this dream was nothing which did
not happen almost as the dream told it. (31)]

These opening lines of the *Rose* highlight two ideas that are of interest when
considering the dreams of the *Livre du Cuer*: they can be significant, and they can be
prophetic. The *Rose* narrator seems to imply that if one condition is met, namely that a
dream does not lie (and presumably a truly prophetic one is in this class), then it is
significant, “après bien aparant”, although it is not clear either for whom the vision is
significant (the dreamer? those around him?), or when this significance manifests itself
(after the dream? after its fulfillment?). In actual practice, the *Rose* narrator clarifies
these abstract uncertainties surrounding his own experience, since he is clearly aware of
the prophetic nature of his own dream, and that after its realization. In other medieval oneiric fictions, foretelling the future is not necessarily the only criterion separating dreams that either are or are not “mençongier” (they might, for example, be didactic, as Esperance teaches the truth about love in the *Remede de Fortune*), but these visions are invariably “après bien aparent”, and specifically to those who had the dream.

The *Livre du Cuer* is, like the *Roman de la Rose*, a retelling of a dreamer’s dream, although unlike the *Rose*, the author-persona of the *Cuer* does not pretend to have experienced the vision; it is, instead, portrayed as a fiction, a “parable”, but one that possesses significance nevertheless, since after reading the account Jean de Bourbon will hopefully be informed enough to offer consoling advice to his ailing uncle. The “parable” opens with a man tossing about in bed who proceeds to have a dream wherein the god of Love entrusts the man’s heart to Desir, who in turn charges the heart to seek out Doulce Mercy. In the course of this amorous quest, Cuer himself has two prophetic dreams that come true within the primary vision. As oneiric hermeneutics is of great importance to the *Livre du Cuer*—indeed, if Jean fails to interpret the story properly, the author-persona is unlikely to receive his needed advice—Cuer’s two dreams, as *mise en abîme*, ought to provide instruction on the proper method of dream interpretation. It is at this point, though, that things go awry, for while clearly prophetic, Cuer’s dreams have little to no effect on him: he ignores one, and futilely ponders for a brief moment the meaning of the other. This atypical treatment of a major
element in medieval literature calls into question the interpretability of the primary vision, the one Jean is supposed to understand: if patently significant dreams can be shown to be pointless, wherein lies the meaning of a dream where the existence of significance is vouchsafed only by the word of its author?

Sally Tartline Carden has looked at the three dreams—the quest for Doulce Mercy and Cuer’s two dreams-within-a-dream—and has drawn interesting conclusions from them, but her concern was mainly with the content of Cuer’s dreams, and how this prophetic content is reflected in and modifies the significance of the quest narrative: she deduces that the three dreams are René’s means of fictionally finding himself “dans le portrait du souverain idéal: prince-amant-poète” (21). The present study, however, looks at these dream visions in an entirely different way; other than the fact that Cuer’s dreams are prophetic, and that the primary dream reveals the nature of a problem with love, the subject matter of all three dreams is irrelevant. What interests us here is the effect these dreams have on both dreamer and reader of the dreams.

Cuer’s two prophetic dreams are both short and rather insignificant episodes, which, if removed, would leave the plot virtually unchanged; it might thus seem odd to attach any sort of importance to them, let alone to look to them as guides for rethinking the entire narrative. Yet it is this seeming insignificance itself which cries out for analysis as the second of Cuer’s dreams demonstrates, the one he has while imprisoned by Tristesse in the Tertre Deveé de Liesse. Alone in his cell, and after dining on the
unpalatable Dure Pain and water from the Fleuve de Larmes given him by his jailor’s kinswoman Melencolie, Cuer lies down and promptly dreams of a white turtledove, three nightingales, and various other unidentified birds who fly to the prison and cause the walls to fall by batting their wings. Cuer, in his dream, then leaves the place of confinement with no harm done to him at all (§88).

If Lancelot, Gawain, or another knight in the Quest of the Holy Grail had had this dream, he would have awakened thoroughly vexed by his inability to fathom the meaning of the dream, and sought the counsel of the first priest, hermit, or long-lost saintly aunt he encountered. Indeed, the character who dreams and records Cuer’s quest for Dulce Mercy states explicitly why he models his story on the Quest.

...pour vous mieulx donner a entendre ceste mienne euvre, qui est de la maniere de la queste de Tresdoulce Mercy au Cuer d’amours espris, ensuyvray les termes du parler du livre de la conqueste du sang greal. . . (§3, 1-10, emphasis added)39

[. . . to better grant you the means to understand my present work, which tells of the quest for most Sweet Mercy by the love-smitten Heart, I will follow the plan of the book of the quest for the Holy Grail. . . ]

The Quest was chosen as a model for a specific reason: to aid the reader in understanding René’s work, “pour vous mieulx donner a entendre ceste mienne euvre.” Dreams, or rather their interpretations, are one of the primary epistemological tools used in the Quest.

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39 A longer citation of this long sentence can be found in chapter 1, page 16.
For example, Bohort, one of the knights seeking the Grail, has his own dream, in which two birds speak to him: a white swan-like bird who promises him all manner of worldly riches if only Bohort would serve him, and a black rook-like creature who informs the knight that he, the black bird, is really the more beautiful of the two and the one who ought to be served (170-171). Bohort awakens after experiencing a second vision, shaken and aware that something extraordinary has occurred:

Einsi li avindrent la nuit ces deus avisions qui mout le firent merveillier, car il no pooit onques penser que ce pooit ester. Et tant li greverent en son dormant qu’il s’en esveilla et fist le signe de la croix en son front, et mout se comanda a Nostre Seignor; et atendi jusqu’a tant qu’il fu jorz. (172)

[So it came about that night that Bors had these two visions which left him amazed and perplexed, for he could not at all conceive what they might mean. So troubled was he by them that he woke from his sleep, and making the sign of the cross on his forehead, commended himself most devoutly to Our Lord and settled down to wait for the dawn. (184)]

Luckily for Bohort the fictional world he inhabits abounds in wise, devout men who can tell him what to think and what the dream might mean; yet, and this is crucial in the comparison of the dreams between the Quest and the Livre du Cuer, none of these men could be of any use to Bohort unless he were conscious of the need for explication, and then asked for it:

Sire, por Dieu, menez moi a celui des freres de ceenz qui plus est a vostre escient preudons. Car hui m’est avenue une trop merveilleuse aventure, dont je voldroie ester conseilliez a Dieu et a lui. (182-183)

[Sir [says Bohort to a monk in an abbey], in God’s name, take me to that member of your community whom you esteem most highly. For I met today with a most singular adventure [a portion of which is the dream of the two birds], and would be counseled both of God and him. (195)]

The knight’s active search for the meaning of his dream was a necessary condition for his vision to have value, according to St. Augustine’s theory of dreams.
As Steven M. Kruger points out, the Bishop of Hippo’s dream theory was as well known in the Middle Ages, if not more so, as Macrobius’s familiar five-fold dream classification (62). Augustine insisted that merely having a dream, no matter how prophetic or divinely inspired, was without value as long as the dreamer’s intellect was not involved in trying to interpret either the meaning or the origin of the vision. Using the terms ‘spiritual visions’ to mean images formed by the imagination, and ‘intellectual vision’ to mean “an intuition of the mind” (Augustine, quoted in Kruger, 37), that is, comprehension or understanding, Kruger analyzes the Saint’s theory as follows:

Only if intellectual vision functions can dreams provide reliable knowledge; in order to attain the status of prophecy, a dream must be seen not only spiritually, but also intellectually. Left alone, spiritual vision cannot interpret the images it forms, or even decide which images are worthy of interpretation. (41)

Without some attempt at interpretation, even the most divinely inspired of dreams is ineffective. This view was held not only by dream theoreticians, but also by some medieval poets, as noted by Kathryn L. Lynch in her study of medieval dreams and visions:

In his Prologue to the Anticlaudianus, Alain de Lille suggests . . . that his poem be read only by those who do not allow their reasons to dwell in the . . . “foul images” of dreams. The dreamer ought, he says, to remember more than simply what he has seen. He ought, the poet implies, to remember an interpretation capable of giving abstract and reasonable significance to dream images. (67)

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40 Macrobius is, of course, the classical Roman author cited by Guillaume de Lorris in the opening lines of the Rose (6-8) to justify the truth value of a prophetic dream.
While Augustine was concerned with actual dreams of real, living people, writers were also conscious of the need for interpretation of visions within a work of fiction. Though the characters of the Quest often seem particularly dull-witted when interpreting their own dreams and visions, they are always aware that their experiences mean something, and promptly seek the good offices of someone to enlighten them. This is not the case with Cuer and his dream of the rescuing birds.

When Cuer’s dream concludes, the action immediately shifts to his companion, Desir, and the friends he has found from the God of Love’s army (Renom, Plaisir and Deduyt), who rescue Cuer from his prison. Once inside the Tertre Deveé de Liesse, Desir calls out Cuer’s name, “lequel se esveilla de son songe et l’entendit a son advis, incontinent qu’il oït sa voix; mais il n’estoit pas bien certain que ce fust Desir son compagnon, ains estoit comme tout esbahy” (§89, 36-39) [who awoke from his dream and seemed to hearken as soon as he heard his voice, but was not certain it was Desire his companion, so he was quite astonished.] Certainly in the confines of his cell there was little opportunity for Cuer to seek out the advice of a hermit in the interpretation of his dream, but there is no indication when Cuer awakens that he is even conscious of having had a meaningful dream—even though the fulfillment of that vision is instantaneous. Since the rescue occurs immediately after the dream, and given Cuer’s lack of response to the dream—more accurately, he is so far from feeling any encouragement that he is not even certain he is being rescued—the purpose of the
dream is called into question. Cuer’s lack of Augustinian intellectual vision, or even memory of the dream, renders the dream pointless, even though readers, who supposedly do possess intellectual vision, know that it is meaningful. Similar comments can be made concerning the other prophetic dream Cuer has near the Fountaine de Fortune.

In this dream, Cuer is crossing a bridge over a river when a hideous bull throws him into the water; he would have drowned but for the timely aid of a beautiful blond woman who carries him to the river bank (§28, 7-32). Later during his (real) travels, Cuer battles the knight Soulcy on the pont du Pas Perilleux; he falls into the water, but is saved from drowning by Dame Esperance, who leads him to safety by the river bank (§44, 14-22). Cuer no more recognizes the similarity between the dream and its realization here than he does in the later episode of his rescue from prison; it is as if the vision had never occurred. When he awakens near the Fontaine de Fortune, though, there is an indication that Cuer is disturbed by the dream: “Si s’esveilla de paine et d’ahan qui souffroit en son songe. . . . Enclina son chief en terre, pensif durement a son songe qu’il avoit songé” (§28, 33-34, 37-38). [He awoke from the torment and labor he suffered in his dream. . . . He lowered his head onto the ground, deeply pensive about the dream he had dreamed.]

This awareness of some as-yet unknown meaning to his vision, utterly lacking in the prison episode, is the Round Table knights’ common reaction to their dreams in the
Queste, who then seek counsel from a hermit or abbot. Unfortunately for Cuer, the only people he meets before coming across Soulcy are Melencolie and his own companion Desir. Desir’s competencies, however, apparently do not extend to the interpretation of dreams, and he is only able to offer the following: “Cueur, on peult tel songe songier / Qui n’est pas trouvé mensongier” (§31, 1-2). [Heart, one may dream such a dream / One can find no lie with it.] Had Cuer but read the Roman de la Rose—as Loyauté would soon suggest he do (§263, 13-15)—he might have recognized the similarity between Desir’s statement and the beginning of the Rose: “... l’en peut tex songes songier / qui ne sont mie mençongier” (3-4), and perhaps made more of an effort to fathom the sense of his vision. But after this, no further mention of the dream is ever made, not even when Esperance saves Cuer from drowning. Once again a dream vision is presented as both meaningful, in that it is clearly prophetic, accurately foretelling what will happen to Cuer, and of no narrative consequence, since the prophecy falls on uncomprehending deaf ears.

Our assumption that Cuer’s dreams should have a meaning for the dreamer arises from the narrator’s own admission of the connection between his work and the Quest, where all dreams are seen by their dreamers as requiring interpretation. At least one critic, though, has found another function for dreams in a medieval literary context. Reginald Hyatte finds that the dreams of Arthur and Prince Galehout in the Lancelot
Proper section of the Lancelot-Grail cycle point to each other rather than to some hidden meaning. Arthur’s and Galehout’s dreams... mirror and complete one another. We contend that to a great extent, the narrative function of these enigmatic dreams and their demystification is not the disclosure of meaning. Rather, the interpretation of the rulers’ songes, fictional mystifications, leads readers into ever more obscure enigmas, of which the terrible meanings are withheld or denied in the end. (343)

The narrative function of Cuer’s dreams is certainly not the disclosure of meaning, either, at least not to the dreamer himself: except for Cuer’s brief and apparently fruitless ruminations over his vision near the Fontaine de Fortune, both dreams are ignored and are not mentioned further in the story. Nevertheless, as Arthur’s and Galehout’s dreams “mirror” each other, and lead readers “into ever more obscure enigmas”, the reader of the Livre du Cuer might wonder if the two sets of dreams—(1) the primary dream that is the quest for Doulce Mercy and (2) Cuer’s two dreams set within the primary vision—mirror and complete each other. Therefore, is the mixture of meaningfulness and meaninglessness found in Cuer’s dreams also to be read into the primary dream—the dream written for Jean explicitly to be meaningful?

René, we recall, asks Jean for advice, and says that a story may help him understand the troubling situation. Let us look more closely at the condition of the man-in-bed who is about to experience the vision of Cuer and his quest:

Et ne savoye que devenir,
La nuyt que j’ay dit: tant confus
Me vy que prez de morir fus,
The tormented lover’s heart is taken from his body by the God of Love, and becomes the Cuer in the quest for Dulce Mercy; but already doubt exists concerning the meaningfulness of the dream the man in bed is about to relate. First, he admits to being in a state halfway between wakefulness and sleep, which Carden compares to the state of “dorveille”, the chivalric technique of simultaneously resting and remaining vigilant while on horseback, and additionally points out that this state was exploited by some medieval poets to add an air of mystery and otherworldliness to their writings (23). In “La tristesse du cœur”, Michel Zink says of the “dorveille” in general, and of its occurrence in the Livre du Cuer in particular, “D’une façon générale, elle a fréquemment décrit les visions dans le cadre de cette conscience crépusculaire, indépendamment même de toute référence à un déplacement à cheval. C’est le cas ici [in the Cuer] . . .” (26). But this midway position between consciousness and sleep also qualifies the dream as a visum in Macrobius’s dream taxonomy, the very authority cited
by the Rose narrator in his defense of meaningful dreams. In his Commentary on the
Dream of Scipio, Macrobius declares that

The apparition (phantasma or visum) comes upon one in the moment between wakefulness and slumber, in the so-called “first cloud of sleep.” In this drowsy condition he thinks he is still fully awake and imagines he sees specters rushing at him or wandering vaguely about. . . . [This type of dream is] of no assistance in foretelling the future. . . . (89-90)

Macrobius clarifies his opinion of dreams lacking prophetic significance as “not worth interpreting” (88)—and yet René requires interpretation by Jean when the latter reads the story.

Secondly, this man-in-bed is clearly described as being in distress over some romantic entanglement, as he clearly identifies the source of his discomfort as love:

Plus de paine et de martire
Qu’oncques corps d’amant si souffrit,
Car mon doloureux cœur s’i frit
Si fort, en ardant desirer,
Qu’il n’a pouvoir de s’emperer
Pour pire avoir sa maladie. (§2, 10-15)

[Never did a lover’s body / More sorrow and torment suffer, / For my grieving heart strongly / Burns in ardent desire / It has no power by which to worsen / And suffer its sickness more grievously.]

Unlike the Rose, whose narrator dreamed of his affair before it occurred, this man is about to have his experience while in the midst of emotional turmoil. Macrobius places this sort of dream squarely under the classification of insomnium, or nightmare:

Nightmares may be caused by mental or physical distress, or anxiety about the future: the patient experiences in dreams vexations similar to those that disturb him during the day. As examples of the mental variety,
we might mention the lover who dreams of possessing his sweetheart or of losing her. . . (88)

Nightmares, as well as the visum, are, in Macrobius’s words already cited, “not worth interpreting”.

The questionable worthiness of attaching any significance to the man’s dream, fulfilling as it does the requirements of being classified as both a visum and an insomnium, is reinforced when, at the conclusion of Cuer’s quest, the dreamer wakes up, writes his experience down, and begs

Que on excuse ma folie,
Car le mal d’amours si est tieulx
Qu’il n’espargne jeune ne vieulx,
Lequel fait maintefois souvent
Songier dormant et en veillant,
Quant bien a son gré on n’a pas
Allegement des estroitz las
En quoy Amours tient maint de rire. (§314, 42-49)

[That one excuse my madness, / For the sickness of love is such that / It spares neither young nor old, / And often makes men / Dream while sleeping and waking, / When one has not as one wills / Relief from the tight bonds / In which Love laughably holds many.]

After the dreamer says that he has written down his vision, René returns to tell his kinsman that, now that he has read the story, he can understand King René’s situation and offer advice, specifying the reason why he wants Jean’s counsel:

. . . ce qu’affaire doresenavant avray pour singulier remede et couvenant regime, sicque si fort ne souvent je ne puisse estre tempté ne ainsi tourmenté de ce subtil esprit au vouloir impossible nommé le dieu d’Amours, qui embrase les cuers de tresimportun desir, lequel fait gens
tant amer qu’ilz en meurent, ou si treffort languissent qu’ilz n’ont ung seul bon jour. (§315, 7-12)

[. . . so of this affair I will henceforth have a singular remedy and fitting diet so potent I may not be so often tempted and thus tormented by this subtle spirit of impossible desire named the god of Love, who enflames hearts with most inopportune desire, and makes people so love they die of it, or languish from it so greatly they live not a single good day.]

In other words, René is asking for advice on how to relieve the terrible pain he feels caused by desire. Dreams, however, if they are at all significant, are a medium requiring interpretation, a ferreting out of hidden meaning, amply illustrated in the Queste del saint graal and by the other major literary model of the Livre du Cuer, the Roman de la Rose. While René’s authorial persona prepares his reader(s) for an exercise in dream interpretation, his narrator and protagonist work to undermine the premise that dreams in the Livre du Cuer are at all worth interpreting—a paradox, if René’s solicitation were the last word of the story. It is not, because René has one final comment to his kinsman in which he talks no longer about his own predicament, but about Jean’s, and which potentially reverses the dynamics between the two, so that it is no longer clear who is supplicating whom.

The final, ambiguous lines of René’s letter raise the question as to whether advice is being solicited or given:

Et pour ce que je sçay certainement que esprouvé l’avez, ainsi je vous en parle, en vous priant que s’il est riens que pour vous faire puisse que le me faites savoir, et vous me ferez tressouverain plaisir. . . . (§315, 12-15)
[For I know surely you have experience it {i.e., the pains and torments of desire mentioned above}; I thus speak of it to you, praying you that if there is anything [I] might do you inform me of it, and you will thereby grant me a most lofty pleasure. . . .]41

Is René making the true, but banal, observation that one might profitably obtain good advice from someone who has lived through and resolved a similar predicament (and if he has, what is René’’s point in couching his experience in an allegorical dream?), or is he politely informing Jean that he knows of Jean’s own troubles in love (“For I know surely you have experienced it. . .”), while clearly offering to be of assistance to the suffering Jean?42 Several items make plausible the idea that Jean is the recipient of advice rather than the one from whom it is sought. In the last line of his letter, René writes, “. . . priant a Dieu qu’il vous doint ce que vostre cuer desire. . .” (§315, 17-18, emphasis added). [. . . praying God grant you what your heart desires. . .] While this is a fairly standard way to end a letter (Guillaume de Machaut has his lovers in Le Livre du Voir Dit end their letters similarly), René’’s choice of words is nevertheless noteworthy, as Cuer and Desir are his two principal protagonists, and readers know perfectly well what Cuer desires. After a story about Cuer and Desir which somehow illustrates a problem of love experienced by René, the revelation that Jean has experienced the same

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41 I have corrected Gibbs and Karczewska’s mistranslation of this line; they give, “. . . praying you that if there is anything you might do you inform me of it. . .”

42 Concerning these lines, Susanne B. Rinne believes that the author-persona is able to offer assistance to the similarly stricken Jean because “. . . he seems to have recovered considerably through the process of writing” (A Study in Narrative Technique and Allegory 14).
predicament and that René hopes Jean gets what his heart desires is, at least, thought provoking.

Secondly, there is the matter of their ages. René calls Jean cousin and nephew, but more suggestive than that is that René writes as the coeval of Jean’s father: “... despieça et presques des mon enfance avons esté, vostre feuz pere et moy, tousjours l’un avec l’autre et portant l’un a l’autre parfaitte amour, comme freres germains” (§1, 5-7). [. . . for almost since my childhood your late father and I have been always together, bearing for each other perfect affection, like blood brothers.] Although not impossible, it seems odd that an older man would seek advice from someone young enough to be his son, whereas it would be reasonable to expect René to take an avuncular interest in the romantic problems of the son of his deceased childhood friend.

Assuming that Jean rather than René is the one in need of help provides an explanation for the tangle of advice, meaning and dreams: René claims to have a problem with love, but it is really Jean who needs advice; René says that to obtain the proper advice, Jean must find the meaning in his story, that is, advice and meaning are bound together—but having experienced the same problem with love himself, Jean would already know the meaning, and thus his search becomes itself the advice René is offering. This point can be made clearer by couching the problem of the three dreams’ meaningfulness/meaninglessness in the terminology of Wolfgang Iser’s reader-response theory. For literary communication to be successful, the text must use conventions, or a repertoire, which Iser defines as “... all the familiar territory within the text. This may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged ...” (69). The Queste and the Roman de la Rose are clear elements of the Livre du Cuer’s repertoire, and both works feature
dreams that are unequivocally meaningful to the ones who experience these phenomena, and by extension to the reader: either the dreamers recognize the need for interpretation and then seek it out (the Quest), or the narrator assures his public that an interpretation will be forthcoming (the Rose). In neither work is a dream portrayed as simultaneously meaningful to the reader and meaningless. But by using these works as his repertoire, the author of the Livre du Cuer creates the conditions by which this paradox acquires its significance. As Iser says,

43 An objection can be raised here about the meaningfulness of the Rose’s dream: despite the narrator’s assurance, a gloss is never forthcoming, and the meaning of the Rose is never spelled out. For my purposes this is irrelevant; I am concerned with the conviction of both dreamer and reader that a dream is significant. If the Rose narrator (who, we recall, is also the dreamer) promises a gloss, we can at least assume he is convinced of his vision’s meaningfulness. The centuries-long “Querelle de le Rose” demonstrates, if nothing else, that the dream has significance for readers, as well.

44 In Internal Difference, Douglas Kelly observes that Nature’s digression on dreams in the Rose suggests that “dreams like Amant’s are not true (v. 18334-94). Amant’s dream changes from a somnium to an insomnium” (100). If this is indeed what we are to end up believing, we are confronted with an insoluble paradox: for what are we to make of a dream that is not true, but where the dreamer has assured us that everything in the vision has come true? If we look at one of the examples Nature provides, included in the lines Kelly cites from the Rose, we see that she discusses lovers who “. . . sognent les choses amees / que tant ont par jour reclamees; / ou sognent de leur adversaires / qui leur font annuiz et contraires” (18371-18374) [. . . dream of the beloved things that they have asked for so much by day; or they dream of the adversaries who make so much trouble and opposition for them, (305)]. Close examination of this particular case reveals it to be a description of the type of vision experienced by the man-in-bed from the Cuer rather than the lover of the Rose, who never claims to have met his beloved lady before he had his dream. Indeed, if we are to believe his assertion that “. . . en ce soneg onques riens n’ot / qui tretot avenu ne soit / si con li sorges recenoit” (28-30) [. . . in this dream was nothing which did not happen almost as the dream told it (31)], he only met the lady after the dream concluded. This chronology invalidates the dream’s classification of insomnium. Nature, however, actually dismisses all dreams as lies, regardless of content (18334); no amount of temporal juggling will help us wiggle out of such a categorical judgment. But we are faced with this conundrum only if we are ready to adopt Nature as “the” definitive authority for the Rose, and as Kelly has so pertinently warned us in Internal Difference, “The poem’s definitive meaning dissolves . . . into diverse morals and definitive, but local[,] glosses set forth by different textual voices as well as more intimate voices in the reader’s own mind and conscience” (4-5). In other words, a definitive meaning (and consequently a definitive authority) does not exist. Finally, if the above arguments are not enough—why would anyone accept as definitive the pronouncements about dreams from someone whose only avowed interest in humans is that they have procreative sex as often as possible?
The repertoire reproduces the familiar, but strips it of its current validity. What it does not do, however, is formulate alternative values, such as one might expect after a process of negation; unlike philosophies and ideologies, literature does not make its selections and its decisions explicit. Instead, it questions or recodes the signals of external reality in such a way that the reader himself is to find the motives underlying the questions, and in doing so he participates in producing the meaning. (74)

The “negation” of the familiar is a crucial element in Iser’s theory—it is negation which produces an effect within the reader, who “... is constrained to develop a specific attitude that will enable him to discover that which the negation has indicated but not formulated” (213).

René tells Jean in his letter what the story is to indicate: it is a parable of a love problem, and once the problem is understood, advice on how to overcome it is to be given. As Iser has said, however, the meaning of a tale is linked with making the familiar unfamiliar, or with “negation”. The familiar in the Livre du Cuer is dreams: in both the Queste and the Rose, the repertoire of the Livre du Cuer, dreams occupy a privileged space where hidden meaning awaits interpretation. While readers know what the meaning of the dreams in the Livre du Cuer is supposed to be about, namely love, these dreams are presented in such a way that they seem to have meaning and are meaningless simultaneously—a clear negation of the story’s repertoire. Yet it is precisely in the negation where the reader “participates in producing the meaning.” If René is the one consoling the love-smitten Jean, his advice—the meaning of the story—is to be found in the paradox of the meaningful, meaningless dreams. A review of the
dreams and what they say about meaning will help in understanding the advice René is giving to Jean:

1. René asks for advice on how to find relief from the pains of love. In order that Jean understand what René has gone through, he gives him a story, which has meaning because René says it has. The portion of the story which has meaning begins with

2. a framing narrative of a man who dreams. But his dream is of the type that readers will recognize as having no meaning at all (nightmare or visum). Within his supposedly meaningful dream of Cuer and his quest occur

3. two of Cuer’s own dreams. These are clearly prophetic, meaningful dreams, but serve no purpose because their meaning is lost on the dreamer; but that does not matter, as Cuer’s dreams come true despite his lack of insight. Nevertheless, there are at least two readers who will recognize the meaningfulness of the dreams, if only because they are so obviously prophetic: the reader, and Jean himself. Thus both Jean and we learn that, even when clearly present, meaning and understanding are sometimes elusive.

If René is offering advice to Jean, the questions about meaning and how to ease the pains of love cease being questions and instead become declarative sentences about meaning and love. To succinctly restate the summary above, when you look for meaning, it isn’t there; or if it were, you wouldn’t understand; or if you did understand, it wouldn’t help. Thus, the advice on how to ease the pains of love—or, perhaps, René’s
credo of the metaphysics of futility—is: there isn’t any; or if there were, you wouldn’t understand; or if you did understand, it wouldn’t help.
CHAPTER 6

PARC FAC

In previous chapters, I have applied the idea of “subversion” in a variety of different contexts: with the personifications of Bel Acueil and Esperance, I meant that their names were not reflected in their words or deeds; in the section on “fol” and “loyaulx”, I emphasized the presentation of the hero as simultaneously both “fol” and “faulx”; and in “Love, Fortune, Destiny”, I examined the physical manifestation of what in medieval fictions had heretofore been a verbal linkage between Love and Fortune—a combination that multitudes of lovers had decried, but which in the Livre du Cuer took on a material aspect, much to Cuer’s detriment. “Subversion” will now assume yet another form, one that describes the hero’s deviation from his single-minded quest to find Doulce Mercy as he turns aside to visit Parc Fac. If Cuer was hindered in his travels by imprisonment in the Tertre deveé de Liesse, or dallied for a moment in the god of Love’s cemetery, these were apparently necessary way stations along his path, lying along his straight-line trajectory toward Doulce Mercy. This is not the case with Parc Fac, where of his own volition Cuer chooses to deviate from his course to explore something that, as far as Cuer or even readers know when it is first encountered, may have nothing to do with the imprisoned woman or with her rescue. As peculiar as that
may seem, it is nevertheless the case that Cuer, after swearing fealty to the god of Love, and just before arriving at the Manor of Rebellion, espies a lovely wood just off the road and asks Desir what that place might be. It is here that the Parc Fac episode begins.

The digressive nature of this portion of the story is metonymically reflected in its manuscript existence: it is present only in the Vienna manuscript, and then as two intercalated pages (Wharton 20). Parc Fac would appear at first glance to be something of an “optional” episode, which a reader (or editor) might or might not choose to include in the narrative. The seemingly digressive nature of the episode, however, is an indication that something interesting is going on, for as Douglas Kelly points out, medieval authors sometimes used digression as part of their rhetorical strategy.

In Internal Difference and Meanings in the Roman de la Rose, Kelly enumerates the *modi tractandi*, or modes of treatment writers used in composing their texts (54). One of these is the Digressive Mode, wherein an author might graft an apparently unrelated topic or passage onto his or her work—apparently unrelated, though in reality the topics do in fact serve the author’s purposes. One of his examples of the Digressive Mode is found in Reason’s discussion of fortune in the *Rose*, which seems to be irrelevant to her definition of love, but is finally seen to be pertinent when Amant submits to the god of Love (Kelly 124). Likewise, Parc Fac seems to be an irrelevant digression to Cuer’s quest—until we recall that the story is supposed to present a

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45 Indeed, Wharton’s edition of the *Livre du Cuer*, based as it is on BN 24399 rather than the Vienna manuscript, omits the Parc Fac visit from the narrative, although it is presented in an appendix.
problem related to love. The short episode fulfills this presentational function in three ways: by the intertextual references made by the park’s gatekeepers, by the actions of the protagonists in the park, and by the fact that the episode is a digression.

The intertexts for Parc Fac, which include the Rose and the Prose Lancelot among others, are used differently than in other portions of the Cuer; whereas personifications in the Cuer, for example, behave in almost diametrically opposite ways compared with their incarnations in other works, the literary allusions to previously written fictions made in the Parc are made with no attempt to subvert them. Instead, the subversive nature of the episode resides in the hero’s passing interest (literally and figuratively) in the Parc and his equally rapid loss of interest in it when he does not obtain instant gratification of his desire to possess what the Parc offers.

Leaving the god of Love with permission to seek out Doulce Mercy, Cuer spots in the distance is a lush, wooded area enclosed by a fence:

... le Cueur gecta ses yeulx et apparceust ung hault paliz qui a l’entour d’ung grant pourpris estoit, auquel dedans n’y avoit que arbrres par trochez par lieux lesquelz estoient rempliz de fueilles drues e vertes et le fuit et les fueilles pesle mesle ensemble. (§275, 2-5)

[... the Heart looked about and saw a tall fence surrounding a great enclosure which held only trees clustered throughout, which were full of thick, green leaves, with fruit and leaves jumbled together.]

This wooded place is located within the god of Love’s domain, and while woods are not at all uncommon in medieval fictions, this one recalls another enclosed wooded area under another god of Love’s dominion—the verger de Deduit in the Roman de la Rose.
But in addition, the Parc Fac episode alludes to intertexts unique to it alone, for when Cuer and his friends arrive at the woods, they are admitted through the gate by two maidens who explain the origin and the name of the place:

Et sachez pour tout vray que le parc que cy voyez sy a nom le Parc Fac. Mais la cause pourquoy ainsy est appellé fut pour ce que ou temps de Merlin, qui en la grant Bretaigne estoit, ledit Merlin ayma par amours la seur du roy Artus, qui avoit nom Morgain et aprint de Merlin tout l’art d’enchanterie, que on dit art magicque, lequel art ledit Merlin luy avoit enseigné. Et fut celle la propre qui Lancelot roba a son pere et sa mere, et l’emporta ou bers petit enfant en valee en Anjou, en ung petit lieu qui encores le Lac n a nom, la ou avoit fait faire ung tresriche palays, ouquel demoureit et y nourrist l’enfant jusques a ce qu’il fut bien grant. Puis de la s’en alla ledit Lancelot en la court du roy Artus pour estre chevalier et la porter armes. Advint depuis que laditte dame vint vers Venus; par cy passa, laquelle a la request de Venus par enchantement composa ce parc tel que le voyez. (§275, 39-51)

[Know truly that the park you see here bears as name Lake Park. The reason it is so called is that in Merlin’s time, who lived in Britain, Merlin loved King Arthur’s sister, who bore as name Morgan and learned from Merlin the entire art of enchantment, which one calls the magical art; this art Merlin had taught her. This was the very woman who stole Lancelot from his father and mother and carried him off as a small infant from his cradle into the Anjou valley, into a small place which still bears Lake as name; she there had built a most rich palace where she lived and nourished the child until he had quite grown up. From there Lancelot departed for King Arthur’s court to become a knight and bear arms. This lady then came to Venus; she passed by here and at Venus’s request made this park such as you see it by enchantment.]

As the narrator previously has informed his readers that stories of Lancelot are a source for this allegory, the reference to the woman who stole Lancelot and carried him off calls to mind the thirteenth-century Prose Lancelot, in which the boy’s abduction and subsequent growth to knighthood are recounted. The account given to Cuer of the
founding of Parc Fac, though, conflates several details from previous stories: in the

Prose Lancelot it is not Morgan who takes the child from his mother, Hélène, but rather
Niniene, Lady of the Lake. She takes the boy after his father Ban dies and while Hélène
is lamenting the loss of her husband and her lands from the conqueror Claudas. When
Hélène sees what Niniene is doing, she begs her to stop, but to no avail:

A chose que la dame die, la damoisele ne respont un mot, et qant ele la
voit aprochier, et ele se lieve atot l’anfant qu’ele tenoit entre ses braz, et si
s’an vient droitement au lac et, joint les piez, si saut anz. (1: 76)

[But the young woman had no answer for anything the queen might say.
Indeed, as she saw her draw nearer, she rose and, still holding the child in
her arms, turned and hurried toward the lake. At the edge, body poised,
she jumped in. (II, 9)]

Niniene is, in fact, Lancelot’s savior: Claudas has effectively disinherited the baby by
seizing all of Ban’s lands and burning Ban’s last remaining castle to the ground, and
would soon hold Lancelot’s infant cousins Lionel and Bohort hostage. Ban dies of grief
seeing his castle destroyed, because “ce seul chastel estoit s’esperance de recovrer tote
sa terre, et ses conforz” (1: 70) [in that castle alone lay his hope of recovering all his
land, and it was his only comfort (II, 8)]. Ban’s death leaves Hélène alone in hostile
territory with only one servant and an infant. Niniene doubtlessly saves Lancelot from
the fate soon to be visited upon Lionel and Bohort.46

46 See Anne P. Longley’s article, “The Lady of the Lake: Lancelot’s Mirror of Self-knowledge”, p. 314, for a
summary of the various hypotheses scholars have advanced for Niniene’s actions. For the purposes of
this study, it is not essential that we know precisely why Niniene took Lancelot, only that all the possible
reasons Longley enumerates contribute to Lancelot’s well-being.
Niniene shows Lancelot nothing but kind, maternal love the entire time he lives with her: “Et qant ele l’[Lancelot] an ot porté, il ne fait pas a demander se ele lo tint chier, car ele lo gardoit plus doucement que nule autre fame ne poïst faire qui porté ne l’aüst dedanz son cors” (1: 96, 98) [Once she had him there, there is no question that he was very dear to her, for she took care of him more tenderly than any other woman could who had not actually given birth to him. (II, 12)]. She later provides him with instructors to teach him the skills necessary for a knight and how to be a gentleman. Much later, Niniene clarifies her relationship with Lancelot when she comes to cure him of a madness and speaks comfortingly to a distraught Guenièvre, to whom she admits her love for Lancelot but with the following caveat: “Et sachiez que ge ne l’ain fors por pitié de norreture…” (2: 546) [But be assured that my love for him is only that of a mother for her child. . . (II, 232)]. She clearly distinguishes her maternal love from the amours par amour shared between Lancelot and the queen (Kennedy 137). The two maidens who are explaining the significance of Parc Fac to Cuer and his band thus evoke a place associated with love—appropriate for a park under the dominion of the god of Love—but rather than a carnal love it is instead the love of a mother for her child.

Still, the maidens do say is was Morgan who constructed the place, and while Morgan can be a destructive force—as in La Mort le roi Artu when she reveals to Arthur the pictures Lancelot drew illustrating his love for the queen, thus setting in
motion the events which lead to the collapse of the kingdom of Logres (61-63)—there is one episode in the *Lancelot* that associates Morgan with the construction of a special, magical enclosure with ties to love (although even here her work is socially destructive), the *Val des amants infidèles*. Finding her lover with another woman, Morgan takes revenge on him and all unfaithful lovers by casting a spell over a valley where

... ja mais chevaliers n’i entrast qui puis en issist, puis k’il eust viers s’amie faussé de nulle cose, nes de volenté; et tout cil ki d’aucune cose i aroient faussé i remanroient jusc’a celle eure ke .I. chevaliers i enterroir ki de nulle cose n’aroit onkes mespris enviers s’amie ne d’oevre ne de pensé ne de talent. . . (4: 254)

... no knight who entered might ever leave if he had been unfaithful to his lover in any way, even in desire alone; and all those who in any way had been unfaithful would remain there until such time as a knight would enter who in no way had ever slighted his lady even in thought or desire. (II, 305)]

The imprisoned men do not suffer physically—they live in comfortable houses and have an abundance of food to eat—, and women can come from and go into the valley at their pleasure, as well as men who have never loved at all. The *Val des amants infidèles* serves only to punish, albeit relatively benignly, men who have in some way been unfaithful. The magic can come to an end only when the perfect lover who has never wronged his beloved enters the valley, and this, of course, turns out to be Lancelot. Consequently the association of Parc Fac with Morgan can evoke in the minds of readers the idea, among other things, of the redeeming power of faithfulness in love.
Park Fac’s two gatekeepers also reveal that the park is inhabited by very special creatures:

Et en icelluy mist encloses pucelles gentes et belles, qui sont sauvaiges et couvertes de poil qui ressemble a fin or, et sont immortelles, sans jamais mal avoir, toujours joyeuses, lyez et esbatans d’enfans, d’ung bout a autre courans et a la foiz chantans, sans nul mesaise avoir. Pas n’ont soucy de leur mangier: autre chose jamais ne mangeüent que des tresbeaulx fruictz, qui ou parc croissent, lesquelz sont sy tresdoulx et ressasians qu’il n’est viande qui a gouster les passent. (§275, 51-57)

[In it she {Morgan, although possibly Venus} enclosed noble and lovely maids who are wild and covered with hair resembling fine gold; they are immortal, never knowing sorrow, ever joyful, glad, and frolicking like children, running from one end to the other singing, knowing no distress whatsoever. They have no thought for what they shall eat: they have never eaten anything save most splendid fruits which grow in the park, which are so very sweet and satisfying there is no meat which surpasses them in taste.]

These immortal, naked, hairy women seem to have taken Jesus’ words to heart: “For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?” (Matthew 6:25). Their sustenance supplied by the ‘tresbeaulx fruictz’, the women’s thirst can be satisfied by one of the triune fountains in the center of the park, from which flow wine, milk and water (§275, 72-75). As I mentioned earlier, the enclosed wooded area Cuer and company first espy in the distance brings to mind Deduit’s garden in the Rose; but now that we are inside the enclosure and can examine its interior at closer range, we can refine our preliminary assessment. These carefree, deathless beings living in the midst of a lovely park recall
another park from the Rose, whose inhabitants are also carefree and deathless—

Genius’s parc dou champ joli (also referred to as the parc de l’Agneau) where immortal sheep graze peacefully under the watchful eye of the Lamb who guards the sheep from the predatory wolf.

    Genius describes this park in his sermon to the god of Love’s barons, assembled together before their assault on Jalousie’s fortification in which Rose is held captive. The parc dou champ joli is his description of the reward awaiting those who faithfully endeavor to carry out Nature’s command to procreate, and he declares it to be far superior to the garden of Deduit, where pleasure seems to be an end in itself. Genius uses easily identified Christian images and symbols in his description of this park, including the Lamb who guards the sheep, and a triune fountain in the park’s center whose life-giving waters flow ex nihilo symbolizing the Trinity (20435-20456).47 A work other than the Rose, however, might have contributed to the inclusion of the women who populate Parc Fac, a work that adds another Christian connotation, as will be seen below.

    It is difficult to think of any other medieval work featuring naked, hairy women. Certainly, there are several famous ‘wild men’: Yvain in the madness occasioned by his loss of Laudine comes to mind, possibly even Marie de France’s werewolf Bisclavret, who is condemned to remain a beast when his wife steals the clothes that would

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47 Genius also describes a three-faceted jewel shining above the fountain, another symbol of the Trinity. The fountain is mentioned here because of the fountain in Parc Fac.
otherwise allow him to regain human form. But the women of Parc Fac are neither insane nor humans transformed into something else.\(^{48}\) And most medieval wild men are not immortal. There is, however, a character in the *Voyage of St. Brendan*—a story that Marie-Thérèse Gousset and her collaborators note is a possible source for another segment of the *Livre du Cuer* (66)\(^ {49}\)—who strikingly resembles the Parc Fac women.

During his sea voyage, Brendan meets a holy man, the hermit Paul, who was clothed in a most peculiar fashion. Brendan and his fellow monks

\[
\text{Merveillent lui e sun habit:} \\
\text{N’ad vestment fors de sun peil,} \\
\text{Dum est cuvert si cum de veil;} \\
\text{Reguard aveit angelïel,} \\
\text{Et tut le cors celesïel… (1534-1538)} \\
\]

[...marveled at him and his clothing. He was clad in nothing other than his hair, which covered him like a veil, and had the expression of an angel and a body redolent of Heaven. (98)]

Besides being naked and hairy, Paul shares another trait with Parc Fac’s residents. As he explains to Brendan,

\[
\text{Nunante anz ad qu’ai ci estét,} \\
\text{Beal tens I ad, tuzdis estét;} \\
\text{Ici atent le juïse,} \\
\text{De Deu en ai comandise;} \\
\text{Trestut I sui en carn e os,} \\
\text{Sanz mal que ai sui en repos.} \\
\text{Dunc a primes al jugement} \\
\text{Le spirit del cors frat seivrement… (1559-1566)} \\
\]

\(^{48}\) Bisclvret apparently retains his human reason even as a wolf, but Parc Fac’s women are not portrayed as acting like animals in any sense.

\(^{49}\) She refers to the sea-voyage taken by Cuer, Desir and Largesse.
[I have been here for ninety years; the climate is good and it is always summer. Here I await the Day of Judgment, as I have been commanded by God. I am here in flesh and bones; free from hardship, I have constant repose. Only at the Last Judgment will the spirit leave my body… (98)]

Anxious for neither food nor drink, clothing nor his life, Paul is immortal, death being forbidden from touching him till the end of time. Paul merits this gift due to the virtuous life he has led. As naked, hairy people go, he is more like the Parc Fac women than either Yvain or Bisclavret are. An allusion to this portion of Brendan’s voyage—to the saintly, naked, hairy hermit Paul—contributes to the overall impression of Parc Fac as a place of religious significance. Of course the women of Parc Fac, with their “round, firm breasts”, are manifestly neither sheep nor men, a modification made necessary by the function they serve illustrating the Livre du Cuer’s love problem. This will be discussed further below.

Parc Fac’s two gatekeepers Cuidence and Continuance reveal that Morgan, acting under Venus’s instructions, was the creator of the park, yet neither they nor the narrator explain what, if anything, that fact or the allusions to Niniene, the parc dou champ joli and the hermit might signify to Cuer and to his quest for Doulce Mercy. Nor do the gatekeepers or the narrator explain how these elements relate to one another. Would Park Fac be different, for example, if it were Zeus who commanded Achilles to create it rather than Venus commanding Morgan? They must connect somehow, as they all are related to Parc Fac, and they must relate to Cuer’s quest somehow, as Cuer
is physically present in the park. In some way not explicitly given by the text, Parc Fac is to be seen through the lenses of each of these juxtaposed intertexts simultaneously. If the text does not spell out how this is to be done, the task falls to the reader. The process by which a reader connects seemingly incongruous elements of a fictional text is spelled out by Wolfgang Iser and his theory of “blanks”.

As Iser describes it, a blank arises out of the indeterminacy of the text...[and] designates a vacancy in the overall system of the text, the filling of which brings about an interaction of textual patterns. In other words, the need for completion [required for a different idea of a ‘blank’ which Iser is discarding] is replaced here by the need for combination. It is only when the schemata of the text are related to one another that the imaginary object [or aesthetic object, the meaning of the text] can begin to be formed, and it is the blanks that get this connecting operation under way. They indicate that the different segments of the text are to be connected, even though the text itself does not say so. (182-83)

The blank in Parc Fac is that such discordant intertexts are all to be associated together: to include Morgan, Niniene, et al. is to invite the reader to find the proper combination that is the meaning of the text. In other words, if it seems odd to group these intertexts together—it is not, after all, intuitively obvious what Morgan has in common with the hermit Paul—then the oddness itself “indicate[s] that the different segments [here, the intertexts] of the text are to be connected...” It is one thing, however, to assert that the intertexts are to be connected; it is quite another to say how. For that, it is well to remember that the Livre du Cuer is an allegory.
As an allegory, the Livre du Cuer means what it says on the surface, but this surface is also an integument, signifying something other than what is said. No gloss is ever given—glossing in fact is what René in his letter to Jean says his reader is to do—, yet we know from this same letter that the allegorical significance has something to do with love, and specifically with a problem related to love. If Parc Fac is to contribute to the allegorical significance of the story of Cuer, the images and allusions evoked by means of these intertextual references ought to have something to do with love—if only the reader can establish a connection between them, or in Iser’s terminology, fill in the ‘blanks’. The intertexts do, in fact, have a meaning in relationship to love; the ‘problem’ will be revealed in the characters’ actions in the park.

While Morgan and Genius’s parc dou champ joli are complex figures and places, Niniene is less so—at least in so far as she is considered in her relation to Lancelot. As we have seen, she is unambiguously portrayed as a loving, maternal force concerned only with Lancelot’s welfare and upbringing. Even when Lancelot has become a knight, her interventions in the story are concerned with his well-being—as when she cures him of madness, or provides him with magical shields that enhance his strength. Because Niniene, Morgan and the parc dou champ joli are all associated with Parc Fac, the positive aspects of Niniene’s story suggest we look at the positive things about love the other intertexts might present, thereby filling in the blank their juxtaposition creates. Hence: Morgan signifies a warning against the destructive power of jealousy or,
considering that Lancelot breaks the spell over the valley, the power belonging to the perfect lover.

Genius’s *parc dou champ joli* is more complex. Scholars have noted the irony of Nature’s avatar preaching the imperative of procreation while garbed as Venus’s bishop (Economou 207-208), as well as the fact that Genius preaches his sermon of the greatly-to-be-desired *parc dou champ joli* while in the garden of Deduit (Kelly 125; Cherniss 233). Kelly in fact observes that the entire *parc dou champ joli* section is so outrageous as to be comic: “To imagine heaven as a reward for sexual activity is such blatant heresy that the promise of heavenly rewards in Genius’s sermon is nothing short of laughable, as in all likelihood was intended” (143). This complexity, however, is absent from Parc Fac: the park is not a promised reward for anyone of any particular religious comportment; it is simply another place on the island of the god of Love, another spot on Cuer’s itinerary that also includes the Ospital d’Amours, the cemetery, and the Manoir de Rebellion. The things mentioned above which make the *Rose’s parc dou champ joli* problematic are simply absent in the *Livre du Cuer*. Genius’s explanation of the way people gain access to the *parc dou champ joli* may be heretical, but if Kelly is correct in asserting that this heresy was so great as to be comic, then the park in and of itself must be a representation of the Christian idea of heaven. After all, had Genius said his park was Olympus or some other pagan equivalent of heaven, what would there have been for Christians to find heretical—or comic? In the *Livre du Cuer*,

permanent admission to Parc Fac (for anyone other than the immortal women) is not an
issue: so instead of reading the park against the background of Genius preaching
heretical views in the garden of Deduit, the parc dou champ joli allusion is to be read in
conjunction with the other intertextual references already mentioned, namely with
Morgan, Niniene and Lancelot. If the latter lead us to see Parc Fac as a place
representing maternal, pure and faithful love, then from Genius’s parc dou champ joli we
can add that Parc Fac also represents spiritual, possibly religious, love as well.

As we have argued, Parc Fac is a facet in the integument that is the dream in the
Livre du Cuer. The author-persona’s liminary letter alerts us to the fact that love is the
subject of the allegorical significance of the dream, and this in turn guided the “filling in
the blanks” required by the juxtaposition of such seemingly disparate intertexts in the
Parc Fac episode. But “love” in the abstract is not what René told Jean the dream would
be about, but rather a problem in love. The intertexts have set the stage, presenting
various types of love that Rose’s character Raison would likely agree were worthwhile.
Intertextuality reveals Parc Fac’s significance to love; the characters’ actions and the fact
that this is a digression (i.e. a momentary subversion of Cuer’s desire to reach Doulce
Mercy) point to a problem with love.

The Parc Fac visit occurs just after Cuer has paid homage to the god of Love, and
has received the god’s permission to rescue Doulce Mercy. Cuer’s behavior at this
point might fruitfully be compared to Lancelot’s in roughly similar situations. When
Lancelot learns of Guenièvre’s conviction for being the False Guenièvre, for example, he allows nothing to stop him from offering judicial combat to her accuser; he is consumed by the thought of being by her side and of being her champion. Not so with Cuer. Admittedly, he had been fairly single-minded up to this point, but here, after battles with unscrupulous adversaries, imprisonment and sea crossings; here, but two leagues from his beloved, almost within sight of his objective, he is diverted by . . . pretty trees. As has been demonstrated, these “pretty trees” do indeed have meaning to add to the allegory, but Cuer does not initially know this. He and his companions go out of their way to explore simply because Cuer finds the place aesthetically pleasing. This is no doubt a valid reason for leisurely investigation, but could anyone seriously imagine Lancelot idly probing the secrets of an oak while knowing Guenièvre to be in chains?

The abruptness with which Cuer decides to investigate the park, without knowing that it has any significance, and within such a short distance from the goal of his quest, highlights the digressive nature of the episode. As Kelly has pointed out, medieval authors could use digression to present additional material related to their topic (123). This “additional” material is nothing less than a reminder that love can be pure, maternal, spiritual and selfless. Cuer discovers this by chance, en route to meet the woman he loves. We are left wondering exactly what sentiment has been motivating the questing Cuer, a question answered by the action of his companion Desir.
By and large, Cuer and his band are passive actors in Parc Fac: they do nothing but talk, listen and look. Only one thing happens that could not have occurred had Cuer merely learned about Parc Fac through one of the tapestries in Love’s castle or read about it on one of the blazons in Love’s cemetery: Desir tries to seize one of the dancing women. Frightened when they first see the assembled company, the women are lured back to the fountain by the one of the park’s gatekeepers, who tells Cuer the women can be brought out of hiding by harp music. The women return, begin their graceful dancing, and

... la demourerent que la harpe sonna. Sy se leva Desir a coup et courut droit la ou elles estoient assemblees, pour en cuider unes d’elles happer, mais tropt plus vite que une bische ne court s’en retournèrent tant qu’en peu d’heure n’en peust plus veoir nesune. ... Lors les compagnons aux damoyselles demanderent se plus possible il seroit nullement de les reveoir, mais elles respondirent que non, car tropt affarouchees les avoit Desir. (§275, 99-103, 107-109)

... remained there as long as the harp played. Desire, thinking to seize one of them, then suddenly arose and ran straight to where they were assembled, but more quickly than a doe flees they fled so that in little time one could no longer see any of them. ... The companions asked the maids if it would still at all be possible to again see them, but they answered no, for Desire had too frightened them.]

We are not given a reason for Desir’s action; we can only surmise why a young man’s desire would cause him to try and capture a beautiful naked woman. But the women flee, and further entreaties on the part of Cuer for the guardians to continue playing their harp are fruitless: Parc Fac’s women are not, apparently, available for Cuer’s enjoyment. Despite the allusions to Morgan, Niniene, Brendan and to the maternal,
selfless, spiritual love they represent, there is one further aspect of Parc Fac that makes
the women’s flight peculiar: although Morgan constructed the park, she did so only at
the request of Venus. We recall that after Lancelot went off to be made a knight at
Arthur’s court, “Advint depuis que laditte dame [Morgan] vint vers Venus; par cy
passa, laquelle a la requeste de Venus par enchantement composa ce parc tel que le
voyez” (§275, 49-51). [This lady then came to Venus; she passed by here and at Venus’s
request made this park such as you see it by enchantment.]

In the Roman de la Rose, Venus personifies libidinal pleasure, specifically female
pleasure. It is she who convinces Bel Accueil to allow Amant his first kiss (3424-3454).
It is her candle that Genius throws to the ground at the conclusion of his sermon to
Love’s troops and whose smoke has such power that

N’est dame qui s’en puist deffandre,
tant la sot bien Venus esprendre,
et la cueilli si haut li vanz
que toutes les fames vivanz
leur cors, leur queurs et lor pansees
ont de ceste oudeur encensees. (20643-20648)

[There is no lady who might protect herself from it, so well does Venus
know how to spread it, and the wind caught it up so high that all living
women have their bodies, their hearts, and their thoughts permeated with
that odor. (338)]

And not just all women in general, but the object of Amant’s longing in particular, Rose:
it is Venus’s burning arrow that destroys her prison and routs Honte, Peur and her
other jailors as well (21221-21246).\textsuperscript{50} Venus’s role in the \textit{Rose} is thus essential in assuring Amant access to Rose, and of all the various types of love to be found in the different intertexts of the Parc Fac episode, the one which leads to the union of the lover and his lady ought to be of great importance. But the \textit{Livre du Cuer}'s Venus is a different creature from the \textit{Rose}'s altogether. She is, if anything, a warning against carnal love.

As in the \textit{Rose}, Venus is also the mother of the god of Love, yet she plays but a minor role in the \textit{Livre du Cuer}. The personification of Honneur, it would seem, is more important than she in Love’s court (§260, 23). Venus appears at Love’s assembly after Cuer has made his request to rescue Doulce Mercy, but only because “elle avoit acoustumé de venir veoir tousjours aprez disner et souper son filz le dieu d’Amours. . .” (§249, 22-23). [she was accustomed to having her son, the god of Love, always come see her after supper.] She is part of Love’s privy council, advising him how to respond to Cuer’s request, but she is only one advisor among many, including “Loyauté, Honneur, Bon Renon, Vaillance, Bel Accueil et pluseurs autres de son conseil. . .” (§249, 25-26). [Loyalty, Honor, Good Renown, Valor, Fair Welcome, and several other of his advisors. . .] Her only other active participation in the current

\textsuperscript{50} La Vieille, Nature and the narrator use Venus in their stories to illustrate various aspects of love, none of which seems particularly relevant to Parc Fac. The story of Venus and Adonis, however, does find an echo in the \textit{Livre du Cuer}: Venus advises Adonis to hunt only those animals who flee. An animal willing to defend itself would be too fierce (15667-15696). But like those of Cassandra, her warnings go unheeded: Adonis hunts a wild boar, a beast that does not run away, and he dies in the process. In a symmetrical situation, Desir does \textit{not} pursue his fleeing prey.
intrigue is to commend them all to God after Loyauté has received Cuer’s oath of hommage to the god of Love and before she retires to her chambers for supper. But as she takes her leave, the narrator describes eight tapestries associated with her. The first is accompanied by the following legend:

Plaisant Maintien et Gente Contenance
Prennent maints cuers au bray de Souvenir,
Ou languir font les pouvres en souffrance,
Ainçois qu’ilz aient aucune aligence:
Triste et pensifz les font fort devenir. (§265, 4-8)

[Pleasing Mien and Noble Countenance
Take up many poor hearts into Memory’s arms,
Where he causes them to languish in suffering
Such that they have no relief:
He causes them to become deeply sad and pensive.]

The next five tapestries are similar to the first, in that they depict the sadness that love can cause; Youth, Beauty, Gladness, Charming Disposition, Hope—all are personifications which ought to be of assistance to lovers, but instead are revealed on

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51 It is not clear from the text how the tapestries are associated with Venus—are they in her rooms? does she walk past them? is she perhaps wearing them?—they are simply said to be hers. While trying to describe Venus’s indescribable beauty, the narrator abruptly begins talking about the tapestries: “De ses habillemens ne vous vieulx-je parler pour cause de briefveté, et aussi mon engin n’est pas suffisant de les savoir divisier. Mais tant vous di-je bien qu’elle estoit belle et habille comme une deesse. La tapisserie estoit toute de satin cramoisy, brodee de fin or et de perles, a personnages telz que cy aprez s’ensuivent.” (§264, 14-19) [I do not wish to speak of her garments for reasons of concision, and because my craft does not suffice to speak of them as well. But I tell you she was lovely and arrayed like a goddess. The tapestry work was all of crimson satin, embroidered with fine gold and perls, bearing characters such as here follow:] The first description is preceeded with “Telle estoit la premiere piece de tapisserie de Venus. . .” (§265, 1) [Such was Venus’s first tapestry . . .] thus assuring the tapestry belongs to Venus. The other introductions omit Venus’s name, but continue with the ordinal numbering, “Telle estoit la seconde (la IIIe, la IIIIe, etc.) piece de tapisserie . . .”
the tapestries as traps for unsuspecting lovers, literally in some cases as the fourth

tapestry illustrates:

Chiere Amiable et Courtoise Maniere,
A la senestre de Semblant Atreable,
Au coing du boys ont tendu leur pantiere,
Et la attendent l’eure plus coustumiere
Que, par la, passe cuer volant, peu estable. (§268, 4-8)

[Charming Disposition and Courtly Manner,
Who stand on the left of Seductive Semblance,
At the corner of the woods have set their trap,
And there await the customary hour when
By that place passes the heart in flight, of little constancy.]

The Larousse Dictionnaire de l’ancien français defines “pantiere” as a “Filet pour
prendre les oiseaux,” or net for catching birds, hence an appropriate object for
ensnaring hearts in flight. Winged hearts appear elsewhere in the Livre du Cuer than
just in Venus’s tapestries: though Cuer’s helmet is described as “timbré tout de fleurs
d’amoureuses pensees” (§3, 27-28) [adorned with flowers of loving thoughts], the
manuscript illustrations reveal these flowers surrounding a winged heart.52 The god of
Love himself has as his motto nothing less than “a cueurs volages” (§235, 10) [Of
Winged Heart]. Not just the god of Love, but indeed all lovers bear this motto: “Et ceste
divise la porte chacun qui est loyal amant et serviteur d’Amours dessoubz la senestre
esselle, et a cela les congoist l’en, comme la je le sceu” (§235, 10-12). [All men who are

52 While René d’Anjou did not execute the illustrations himself, critics believe he personally supervised
their creation and intended that they aid the reader in visualizing his descriptions (Zink, “La Tristesse du
Cuer” 28; Poirion, “L’Allégorie” 56).
loyal lovers and servants of Love bear this device beneath their left breasts, and by this one recognizes them, as I have done here.] The sadness thus depicted on the tapestries is the fate of all lovers in general, and as the conclusion of the quest makes clear, of Cuer in particular.

The last two tapestries in Venus’s collection are different from the first six; they portray people, Rogier Bon Temps and le viellart (Roger Good Time and the Old Man), rather than treacherous personifications. Far from setting out to deceive lovers, Rogier is someone who has escaped from their sad fate:

Quant je regarde simples cuers ainsi prendre
Et mal baillir par leurs tresgrans folies,
Et nul n’est pris a mercy pour soy rendre,
J’en ay mon cuer repris, sans plus attendre,
Pour cy le mettre avecques les oublies. (§271, 3-7)

[When I watch simple hearts take and give / Sorrow by their great madness, / And none is granted mercy for having surrendered himself, / I take my heart from this, without further hesitation, / To place it here among the forgotten.]

Rogier has escaped from the lover’s lot—but only at the price of abandoning love entirely. Le viellart, presumably too old now for the “pleasures” of love, praises Rogier’s resolution while reminding readers of what awaits them if they do not imitate the younger man’s example:

Rogier Bon Temps, qui cy est, tiens a saige
Qu’a sceu retraire son cuer de si bonne heure

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53 The introductions are different, too. Rather than “Telle estoit la VIIe (la VIIIe, . . . ) tapisserie...”, they are instead, “Icy parle Rogier Bon Temps (le viellart) et dit ainsì”.
Que point il n’a, en l’amoureux boucage,
Esté croqué ne laissé du plumaige,
Comme maint aultere qu’atrapé y demeure. (§272, 3-7)

[Roger Good Time, who is here, I take for a wise man, / Who knew to withdraw his heart so early on / That in this Love’s wood was neither / Snatched nor left there any plumage, As many others who, trapped, yet dwell there.]

To say the least, these are peculiar tapestries for the goddess of Love!

What is of interest here is not the banal observation that love can lead to sadness—sadness as a theme of the allegory has already been treated by scholars, including Michel Zink, for whom “ce supplément de tristesse [in comparison with the Roman de la Rose] . . . lui donne son sens” (“La Tristesse” 24)—but that this sadness is associated specifically with Venus through her tapestries. Far from being the Rose’s Venus “. . .qui ne cessoit de rire / ne ne se poait tenir quaie, / tant par estoit jolive et gaie” (19454-19456) [. . .who was so delighted and gay that she could not stop laughing (321)], Cuer’s Venus seems to be a somewhat sinister figure through whom love leads ineluctably to deception and despair. This is the Venus who caused Parc Fac to be constructed.

The Livre du Cuer’s Parc Fac episode is “merely” a digression from Cuer’s quest to find and liberate Doulce Mercy. Cuer and the characters accompanying him go there initially to satisfy Cuer’s curiosity because Desir, who has in the past led many other hearts through Love’s domain, nevertheless knows nothing about the place. For any who have eyes to see and ears to hear, the wardens’ description of the park evokes
thoughts of maternal, selfless, spiritual love, while also warning against inconstancy and purely carnal desire. It is all for naught. Though he sees and hears, Cuer offers no evidence he has understood; Desir still tries to capture one of the dancing women—and not, one supposes, with selfless, spiritual intentions. To paraphrase and adapt Catherine M. Jones’ observation about Cuer’s response to the blazons and tombstones in the god of Love’s castle (197), Parc Fac engages the attentive reader in an interpretive enterprise largely disregarded by Cuer, an enterprise controlled rather by the intertextual consciousness of the *acteur*. Unable to learn anything from Parc Fac just as he was unable to learn from the blazons and tombstones, Cuer is forced to learn about love and its problems like everyone else: the hard way.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have looked at five different aspects of the Livre du Cuer: personifications, dreams, Love-Fortune-Destiny, Faulx/Fol/Loyaulx, and Parc Fac. As a conclusion, I would like to examine how these five interact and work to produce the aesthetic object generated by a reading of Cuer. 54

Parc Fac is physically subversive to Cuer’s quest because it is the one and only time Cuer chooses, of his own volition, to deviate from the most direct route (as he understands it) to Doulce Mercy. The kinds of love he finds there—religious, maternal, selfless—he finds purely by happenstance. After Desir’s single attempt to capture one of its denizens fails, Cuer loses interest in the place and resumes his march, never to think of the park again, nor, we presume, of the types of love it represents. If the allegory of Cuer’s quest is meant to represent some difficulty the author-persona has with love, the nature of that love is not that which is found in Parc Fac.

The personifications, dreams, purported alliance between Love and Fortune, even divine mirrors, are different from Parc Fac: they are all recognizable topoi from

54 By “aesthetic object” I mean the concept developed by Wolfgang Iser in his book The Act of Reading. For Iser, the aesthetic object is the idea, formed within a reader’s mind, of the ultimate meaning of a work (98). This concept, along with Iser’s ideas of “theme” and “horizon” play an integral role in this conclusion, and will be examined more closely below.
other medieval amorous tales, and in every single instance, from tales in which the male lover succeeds in obtaining or achieving what he desires. The Livre du Cuer, of course, modifies—or as I have been saying, subverts—these topoi from ways they have been portrayed in previous works: Esperance and Bel Acueil do not act in accord with the dictionary definitions of their names; meaningful dreams are not seen as significant; Love is materially associated with Tristesse and Fortune (rather than merely said to be so by a momentarily discouraged lover); divine mirrors are not sources of infallible knowledge. For what I am about to say, though, it is important to remember that these topoi, in their non-subverted forms, are parts of successful quests. To see how these subversions function together, it is helpful to return to the beginning of the Livre du Cuer, as though we were reading it for the very first time, and see what it is we learn of the love problem, in the order we learn of it, at the crux of the tale. 

First, we read that “je, René” has, by coincidence, encountered a beautiful lady, has fallen in love with her, and now cannot stop thinking about her. Through the story

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55 Evelyn Birge Vitz employs this technique in her essay “The Lais of Marie de France” as part of her project of exploring the ways texts become intelligible: “. . . is it not clear that different texts become ‘intelligible’ to us in different ways, at different points in our experience of them—and indeed that the very notion of ‘intelligibility’ can be conceived in different ways? In particular, some works (texts, but films, and so forth, as well) deliver themselves up to us as immediately intelligible. We see immediately exactly what the problem is, for whom this problem exists, and what sorts of solutions are possible. This is often true of popular narrative: television situation comedy, as well as pulp novels, and so forth: such works are often staggeringaly analyzable in Todorovian terms, even as we read (or watch) them. But this is not always the case, for other works may keep us mystified for almost the whole time we are reading, and perhaps only make themselves intelligible at the end. And in this sense the story we read is only intelligible retroactively, is only intelligible when we have read it” (151-152). I will not argue that the Cuer is mystifying, but I do contend (and hopefully demonstrate) that the subversive sequences, coming as they do after the opening letter, the man-in-bed frame, and the evocation of Arthurian knights at the start of the dream, are of interest to the question of the production of Cuer’s aesthetic object.
about to begin, the “parables”, Jean will better comprehend the author-persona’s state and be able to offer appropriate counsel. Let us reflect upon this for a moment: all we learn from the opening letter is that “je, René” is just like countless other male lovers—deeply in love, and suffering on account of it. Has he spoken with the woman, expressed his feelings? Is her sense of propriety or honor offended? As far as we can gather, the answer is no; in fact, it is not even said that the two have even met. All we know for certain is that she looked at him. “je, René” says he will ask for advice, but as he does not specify the nature of this advice, we might conceivably speculate that he will end up asking his younger nephew for a few good medieval pick-up lines. The point is, there is nothing in this opening letter that does not lead us to expect another boy meets-then-goes-through-hell-to-win girl story, doubtlessly abetted by the helpful advice yet to come. In fact, if I may jump ahead of myself by mentioning an intertextual source evoked later on in the Cuer, the author-persona, by writing to Jean, is doing exactly what we, first-time readers of this story, know the god of Love in the Rose says a tormented lover should do to ease his anguish and to advance his romantic cause:

Or te lo et ve il que tu quieres
un compaig sege et celant
a cui tu dies ton talant
et descuevres tot ton corage.
Cil te fera grant avantage ;
quant ti mal t’angoisseront fort,
tu iras a li par confort
et parleroiz endui ensemble
de la bele qui ton cuer emble.
Tot ton estre li conteras
et conseil li demanderas
coment tu poras chose fere
qui a t’amie puise pleire. (2672-2684)

[Now I want you to seek out a wise and discreet companion, one to whom you can tell all your desires and reveal your whole heart. He will be a great help to you. When your troubles wring you with anguish, you will go to him for comfort, and the two of you will talk together about the beautiful lady who, with her beauty, her appearance, with her mere countenance, is stealing your heart. You will tell him your whole situation and will ask his advice on how you can do something which might be pleasing to your sweetheart. (67)]

The affective state of the man who then has the dream of Cuer does nothing to arouse any suspicion that things are likely to go awry. While suffering himself on account of love, his specific complaint is that

. . . pitié met tant a venir
Ou cueir ma dame petit pas
Que en ma puissance n’est pas,
Ce croi-ge vraiment, d’avoir
A soustenir tel faiz pouoir,
Doresenavant ma povre vie . . . ($2, 26$-31)

[. . . Pity takes such tiny steps / In coming to my lady’s heart / It is not in my power, / So I truly believe, to have the force / To henceforth sustain such torment / In my impoverished life . . .]

For my purposes, this common complaint is important precisely because it is common: it, along with the introductory letter, are leading us along to believe (or rather are doing nothing to discourage us from believing) that we will have some version of a Happy Ending, however we might imagine that for the author-persona.
As this man begins his vision of Cuer, we are left with an impression that he and the author-persona share a similar predicament, experiencing in their flesh that oxymoronic definition of love found in the *Rose* and repeated by the man himself:

La inimitté amiable,
Doulce guerre, mal savoureux,
Plaisant ennuy, bien deseureux,
Et repos qui ahanne tant,
Lequel, sans coups, va combatant
Et blessant fort, sans playe ouverte,
Mon cœur, en appert soubz couverte. (§2, 18-24)

[Loving enmity, / Sweet battle, delectable misery, / Pleasing sorrow, unhappy good, / Repose which so labors / And, without blows, battling and sorely / Wounding my heart goes forth, without open wounds, / Both openly and hidden from sight.]

Many medieval lovers often find themselves in similar anguish, but the only remedy they usually seek (like the lover of the *Rose*, or of the *Hospital d’Amours*) is another kiss, another tête-à-tête, more, in fact, of the very thing that propelled them into their unhappy state in the first place.

When the dream itself begins, the reader is immediately reminded of the fictional A-list of Arthurian knights and of all the fabulous exploits they have accomplished. They are, of course, mentioned in connection with the story of Cuer, but as first-time readers we are likely to believe there is some connection back to the author-persona. Since all that he has clearly told us is that he cannot stop thinking about a beautiful woman who once looked at him, we do not know at this point whether he already has performed feats of gallantry, courage and honor, just like those accomplished by the
Arthurian peers. Or, not yet having specified the sort of advice he wants from Jean, perhaps he will end up asking for precisely the right kind of heroic gesture that will capture his lady’s affections, in much the same way that Desir claims Cuer can win Doulce Mercy:

Si Doulce Mercy nullement
Desires de pouoir avoir,
Il fault que tu faces devoir
Par force d’armes l’acquerir,
Sicque tu puisses conquerir
Discort, lequel garde le fort
Contre touz amans, a grant tort,
Ou Doulce Mercy est liens
Prise en deux paires de lyens,
Que la tiennent Honte et Cremeur.
Vien o moy si avras honneur . . . (§2, 44-54)

[If Sweet Mercy you at all / Desire to receive, / You must make a duty / To win her by force of arms; / So may you conquer / Discord, who against all lovers / Very wrongly guards the fortress / Wherein Sweet Mercy abides / Bound by two fetters, / For Shame and Fear hold her. / Come with me and you shall win honor . . .]

In sum, as the dream begins, we know the author-persona is in need of advice, but though we do not know the precise details of either his problem or the advice he seeks, there is absolutely no hint of Cuer’s ultimate defeat. On the contrary, his troubles, while only sketchily described, seem so commonplace that we do not doubt what they might be, and with the catalog of great iconic men who almost invariably get what they desire that begins the dream sequence, readers have no reason to suspect they may not be embarked on yet another adventure in the same vein. To use Wolfgang Iser’s
terminology, this seemingly benign set-up is the “theme” while we are reading it, but then becomes the “horizon” when we accompany Cuer on his quest; as Iser explains, whatever the reader is involved with at any one particular moment is what constitutes for him the ‘theme’. This, however, always stands before the ‘horizon’ of the other perspective segments in which he had previously been situated. “The horizon is that which includes and embraces everything that is visible from one point.”56 Now the horizon is not a purely optional one; it is made up of all those segments which had supplied the themes of previous phases of reading. For instance, if the reader is at present concerned with the conduct of the hero—which is therefore the theme of the moment—his attitude will be conditioned by the horizon of past attitudes toward the hero, from the point of view of the narrator, of the other characters, the plot, the hero himself, etc. (97)

Thanks to the evocation of successful quests and redoubtable knights, the horizon expands to include specific cases of lovers getting at least some version of what they want. With this condition now the horizon, the subversive elements I have examined in this study reveal their importance.

To begin with, consider a simple thought-experiment: what would Cuer’s story be like if these subversive elements were not present, or better yet, if they were present in the same ways they were portrayed in the intertextual sources I have cited in the course of this study: that is, if Esperance really were hopeful, if Love were not materially allied with Fortune, if the dreams were seen as significant, etc.? Far from being a pointless exercise, this experiment yields concrete, verifiable results, because

such stories have already been written, and go by the names of Remede de Fortune, Roman de la Rose, La Queste del Saint Graal, etc. For Cuer to fail with solely these tales on the reader’s horizon would be tantamount to a diabolus-ex-machina.

Continuing on with our reading, we encounter the subversive elements, each one becoming in turn the theme that modifies and is modified by previous themes, which are now the horizon; as Iser explains,

\[ \ldots \text{the structure of theme and horizon transforms every perspective segment of the text into a two-way glass, in the sense that each segment appears against the others and is therefore not only itself but also a reflection and an illuminator of those others. Each individual position is thus expanded and changed by its relation to the others, for we view it from all the perspectives that constitute the horizon. In this respect the literary text avails itself of a mechanism that regulates perception in general, for what is observed changes when it is observed—in accordance with the particular expectations of the observer. In the case of the reader, these expectations are conditioned by the preceding perspective segments of the text. The individual segments take on their significance only through interaction with other segments, and if we bear in mind the fact that all the perspectives (narrator, hero, etc.) represent something determinate and that these determinate elements are transformed by their interplay, it is obvious that the ultimate meaning of the text—or the aesthetic object—transcends all the determinate elements. Furthermore, every position incorporated into the text becomes an object of observation, and as such is inevitably changeable; and if these positions represent selections from the social or literary world outside the text, it follows that the reader, as he produces the aesthetic object, may react to the ‘world’ incorporated into the text—in other words, he may see the selected norms in a new light. (97-98) } \]

Reader expectations play a crucial role in Iser’s theory, and while there may well be as many different possible expectations as there are readers, the one thing no one would
likely expect who has read only the introductory letter with the man-in-bed frame as horizon is that Cuer would, in the end, concede defeat.

Throughout this study I have examined how the *Livre du Cuer* modifies characters, objects or places from other medieval works of fiction—works in which the hero ultimately gets what he wants (with the important exception of the *Belle dame sans mercy*, to be discussed below). As these modified elements become the theme for the reader, they “illuminate” and “change” the themes that have come before. Indeed, as Iser states, the significance of these modifications becomes apparent only during their interplay with the horizon, which for the Cuer leaves the reader with the expectation that Cuer will be another lover like the one in the *Roman de la Rose* or the *Remede*, or like Lancelot, or that he will achieve the goal of his quest like Galaad; or at the very least, that Cuer’s quest will end in such a fashion that the author-persona could return to ask Jean how he might proceed and become like these famous men. But as the reader comes across Esperance, Bel Acueil, the dreams, Love’s and Tristesse’s castles, or the Hospital d’Amours, their subversiveness reacts to the horizon in such a way that the reader “may see the selected norms in a new light”. The selected norm is the literary convention we *believe* applies to the author-persona before the subversive elements become themes: that a man who loves a woman sufficiently enough is bound to win her love in return—even if he needs Faux Semblant’s help to raze Jalousie’s castle, or enlists the aid of Esperance, or prays for divine intervention from the god of Love. And the
revelation that a valiant man—full of hope, experiencing propitious dreams, believing
Fortune to be on his side—might just as easily be rejected by his lady as accepted by her
(and thus that hope, propitious dreams, etc. are not the markers of eventual success that
medieval literature up to this point would have us believe) is the Livre du Cuer’s
aesthetic object.

We can now begin to understand why Alain Chartier was singled out for special
attention among the other famous authors in the cemetery, for the Livre du Cuer and
the Belle dame share similar characteristics. The lady of Chartier’s poem explains to her
love-struck suitor that the usual courtly conventions employed to persuade a woman to
accept a lover are, in fact, just so much rubbish—if, for example, a man complains that
he will die on account of his love, she replies,

    Si gracieuse maladie
    Ne met gaires de gens a mort,
    Mais il chiet bien que l’en le die
    Pour plus tost attaire confort. (XXXIV, 265-268)57

    [So gracious a sickness hardly kills people, but they have to say it in order
to acquire comfort more quickly.]

Or if he insists that her loving eyes have sought him out, she employs common sense
and says, “Les yeulz sont fais pour regarder. / Je n’y prens point autrement garde / Qui
y sent mal s’en doit garder” (XXX, 238-240). [Eyes are made for seeing. I do not pay

57 References to La Belle dame sans mercy are from Arthur Piaget’s edition. Paragraph numbers (in
Roman numerals) and line numbers (in Arabic) are given. Translations are my own.
attention to anything else. Let he who feels otherwise take care.] When she talks about that supreme comforter of disconsolate lovers, hope, she observes,

    Quant a espoir vous attendrez  
    Vous en trouverez abestis,  
    Et en la fin vous trouverez  
    Qu’esperance paist les chetis. (LXXXII, 653-656)

    [As for the hope you will strive for, you will find yourself an idiot, and in the end you will find that hope nourishes the weak.]

The Belle dame is full of these pithy remarks about conventions that, in previous literary works, are taken quite seriously. The Livre du Cuer, however, goes further than the Belle dame; it is, as it were, the practice for which Chartier’s work is the theory. The Belle dame talks about courtly, literary conventions—during the entire narrative, she and her amorous interlocutor remain seated in a garden. While the Belle dame is content to simply declare courtly conventions a sham, the Livre du Cuer incorporates the sham directly into the tapestry of its narrative.

    In the end, Doulce Mercy is sans mercy, and Cuer retires from the world to the Hospital d’Amours. But if readers are shocked by this, as I suggested in my section on the Hospital, or bewildered by the clay feet of courtly conventions, they are not left feeling as though the world had come to an end. The bleak ending of Cuer’s quest is not the ending of the Livre du Cuer, for we have yet to learn what, precisely, the author-persona wants of Jean. After Cuer cloisters himself in the Hospital, the man
who dreamt his story wakes up with a start; his servant, lying nearby, asks if he needs anything. The man replies,

... “oÿ bien!”
Et en souspirant, ainsi dis:
“Haa, tressoulx Dieu de paradis,
J’ay paours qu’Amours n’ait desrobé
Mon cuer et o luy emporté,
Car o la main mon costé sens,
Mais de mon cuer, ce croy, suis sans.
Sentir ne le puis nullement
De batre, voir aucunement,
Et si me doubte d’autre part
Qu’Amours mon costé, o son dart,
N’ait percé, pour prendre mon cuer.
D’angoesse en suis en tressueur.” (§314, 10-22)

[... “Listen well!” / And sighing, I said: / “O most gentle God of Heaven, / I fear Love stole away / My heart, and carried it off with him, / For with my hand I feel my side, / But, I believe, / my heart no longer remains. / I can no longer feel it at all / Beating, truly not at all; / I so greatly dread moreover / That Love, with his dart, has pierced / My side to steal away my heart. / From anguish I am in great distress.”]

This, in an extremely abbreviated form, is his dream, and consequently the servant is the first audience for the story’s reception; but unlike other readers’ reactions, including Jean’s, his is given in the text:

Lors se leva et apporta
De la chandelle et regarda,
Sans ce que plus fust delaïé,
Mon costé, s’il estoit plaié,
Et vit que ce n’estoit nyant.
Si me dist tout en souriant
Que je dormisse seurement,
Et que n’avoye nullement
Pour ce mal garde de mourir. (§314, 23-31)
[He then rose up, brought a Candle, and with no delay at all / Examined my side / To see if it was wounded, / And saw there was nothing. / Smiling he told me that / I should sleep securely, / And should in no way from this upset / Be fearful of dying.]

The servant is thus giving advice under precisely the same conditions as Jean is supposed to do: after having heard the story of Cuer, and to a man in clear distress.

The smiling indulgence and “ce n’estoit nyant” are answers the author-persona gives to the very solicitation for advice he makes to Jean!

In claiming that this is the sort of advice the author-persona is asking for, I am getting slightly ahead of the story, for I have already said that in his opening letter, he never says what the nature of this advice is to be. After Cuer’s ignominious defeat, one might expect a desire to flee from love entirely. But that smile and “ce n’estoit nyant” are indications that overreactions to unhopeful hope, meaningless dreams or inaccurate destinies are as much to be avoided as blind faith in the same, for in his closing letter to Jean, the author-persona clearly states what benefit he hopes to gain from his kinsman’s advice:

\[\ldots\, ce\, qu’affaire\, doresenavant\, avray\, pour\, singulier\, remede\, et\, couvenant\, regime,\, sicque\, si\, fort\, ne\, souvant\, je\, ne\, puisse\, estre\, tempté\, ne\, ainsi\, tourmenté\, de\, ce\, subtil\, esperit\, au\, vouloir\, impossible\, nommé\, le\, dieu\, d’Amours,\, qui\, embrase\, les\, cuers\, de\, tresimportun\, desir,\, lequel\, fait\, gens\, tant\, amer\, qu’ilz\, en\, meurent,\, ou\, si\, treffort\, languissent\, qu’ilz\, n’ont\, ung\, seul\, bon\, jour.\, (§315, 7-12, emphasis added)\]

[\ldots\, so\, of\, this\, affair\, I\, will\, henceforth\, have\, a\, singular\, remedy\, and\, fitting\, diet,\, such\, that\, I\, may\, not\, be\, so\, strongly\, nor\, so\, often\, tempted\, and\, thus\, tormented\, by\, this\, subtle\, spirit\, of\, impossible\, desire\, named\, the\, god\, of]
Love, who enflames hearts with the most inopportune desire, and makes people so love they die of it, or languish from it so greatly they live not a single good day.\textsuperscript{58}

He reiterates the suffering caused by love, but significantly, he asks not that he be cured, but that he not be tormented \textit{as often or as strongly}. As often or as strongly as what, we do not know, privy as we are to but one of the author-persona’s infatuations. But it is surely significant that his disillusionment with courtly literary conventions (i.e. their subversion detailed in this study) results not in a cynical rejection of love, but in a desire for the diminution of its intensity and frequency. Gibbs and Karczewska, in their introductory essay to their edition of the \textit{Livre du Cuer}, are surely mistaken when they write, “The ‘idealized notion of love’ allegorized by the Heart’s quest is not challenged by its unhappy ending—such passion is, quite simply, tragic” (xxxviii). His quest, insofar as it includes the subversive elements, is indeed tied to the “unhappy ending”, but the quest and its ending are far from tragic: if they were, only a masochist would want them, or wish for more in the future—which is what the “sicque si fort ne souvent” implies, merely fewer than there were in the past. It is perhaps going too far to think of “je, René” as Albert Camus’s Sisyphus—“Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux”, as Camus reminds us in his essay \textit{Le Mythe de Sisyphe} (198)—in his struggles with that “subtil esperit au vouloir impossible nommé le dieu d’Amours”, but then, perhaps not.

\textsuperscript{58} This translation corrects a slight error in Gibbs and Karczewska’s edition, who associate the “si fort” with “covenant regime”: “. . . so of this affair I will henceforth have a singular remedy and fitting diet so potent I may not be so often tempted and thus tormented. . . .”
Maybe we merely need to imagine Sisyphus happy, just not rolling his rock up the hill quite so often.
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