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Caroline Jewers

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Fabric and Fabrication: Lyric and Narrative in Jean Renart's *Roman de la Rose*

By Caroline Jewers

The much-commented prologue of Jean Renart's *Roman de la Rose* is a rich source for literary speculation, and it is unlikely that successive generations of critics will ever exhaust its many interpretive possibilities. Jean himself, active in the first two decades of the thirteenth century, remains an enigmatic figure: critical agreement makes him the author of three works, the *Lai de l'Ombre,* in which he names himself (l. 953); the *Roman de l'Escoufle,* attributed to him on account of allusions to the first work and stylistic similarities; and, lastly, what is now most commonly called the *Roman de la Rose.*[1] Jean emerges playfully from within the lines of his works: humor and ingenuity appear as his trademarks, and are more revealing of his character than the one extant reference to his name. The following analysis explores but one small aspect of Jean's creativity and narrative *engin.* Beginning with a reading of the prologue, and a consideration of the status of lyric insertions in the romance, I will contend that the amount of clothing exchanged in the *Roman de la Rose* and the extraordinary concentration on it render this work highly unusual and that it has potential as a metaphor for the intricate textual exchange inherent in the circulation of poetry. In short, a matrix of imagery concerned with fabric and clothing highlights the status of lyric insertions in the text. The argument will be that the exchange of clothing in the romance echoes the circulation of song: robes, mantels, and tunics are the material correlatives of the various kinds of song that adorn the text aurally as the clothes do visually. While it might seem improbable at first, Jean's prologue plants the idea with his analogy of textual composition to cloth production.

Like the prologue to Marie de France's *Lais* and Chrétien de Troyes's romances, Jean's prologue invites speculation about the formulation of theories of composition and sets out possible strategies of interpretation destined for the work's reader/listener. Jean's opening publicizes itself as a reevaluation of the *roman courtois* as a genre with a view to valorizing his contribution:

> Cil qui mist cest conte en romans,
> ou il a fet noter biaus chans
> por ramenbrance des chançons,
> veut que ses pris et ses renons

I would like to acknowledge the support of a Graduate Research Fund Grant from the University of Kansas in the completion of this project and thank John W. Baldwin of the Johns Hopkins University for his generous time and comments when this project was in its infancy.

[1] For an *état présent* of views on the composition and authorship of this romance, see Regina Psaki's recent edition and translation (New York, 1995).

voist en Raincïen en Champaigne
et que li biaus Miles l'apregne
de Nantuel, uns des preus del regne;
car aussi com l'en met la graine
es dras por avoir los et pris,
einsi a il chans et sons mis
en cestui Romans de la Rose,
qui est une novele chose
et s'est des autres si divers
et brodez, par lieus, de biaus vers
que vilains nel porroit savoir.

(Ll. 1–15)[2]

The one who put this tale into Romance
and had beautiful lyrics written in it
for remembrance of those songs
wants his praise and renown
to go to Reims in Champagne,
and for the fair Milon de Nanteuil,
one of the nobles of the realm, to learn of it.
For just as people put scarlet dye
into cloth to earn praise and fame,
so has this author put lyrics and music
into this *Romance of the Rose,*
which is something quite new
and altogether different from the others,
embroidered in places with fair verses
that an uncultivated man would not recognize.[3]

(P. 3)

Jean Renart, with no pretense of modesty, dedicates this exordial *captatio benevolentiae* to Milon and to his own regional celebrity and stresses the preservation of the songs he includes as a vital accompaniment to his courtly narrative. As many have noted, he distinguishes his output from that of his predecessors by signaling the *novele* and thoughtful weaving of lyric and narrative he has conjoined. He expresses his self-proclaimed originality in the rhetorical comparison (*comparatio*) he draws between dyeing cloth and lyric insertion. At the same time he suggests a form of *amplificatio;* his elaborate image implies that adding red dye to cloth increases its beauty and economic worth. The full illustration of the process will be apparent in the unfolding *narratio* of his hybrid tale. Jean's project is not only novel, but the allusion to the art of dyeing is topical and regional since northern France accrued so much of its wealth from the prosperous wool trade and the cloth it produced. Moreover, both poetic novelty and expensive cloth evoke contemporary fashion and clothes, linking literary and sartorial modes. The statement that the songs will be embroidery as well as dye reinforces the connec-

[2] *Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole,* ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris, 1962), p. 1. All references to the text are drawn from this edition.

[3] All translations are taken from Regina Psaki's edition and translation.

tion between lyric and fabric. As if already anticipating a modern predilection among critics for puns involving text, texture, and textiles, Jean adds that in addition to the warp and weft of his story, the work will be "brodez . . . de biaus vers" (l. 14), and thus embellished with lyric ornament.

The fecundity and novelty of Jean's *graine* as red dye recall Chrétien's famous *semence* in the opening lines of *Perceval,* and the two words are semantically linked. *Graine,* as the standard Old French and Anglo-Norman dictionaries attest, means both "seed" and "red dye."[4] Chrétien's analogy of simple, honest cultivation finds an allied and even more refined counterpart in Jean's evocation of red dye embellishing cloth. This *graine* as color rather than seed is just as fertile a way to express artistic conception as Chrétien's. The textual layering in this case is not the sowing of seed but the dyeing of cloth, and then the sewing of embroidery, suggesting the fertile impregnation of dye and narrative thread on waiting fabric. Seed is to ground as dye is to fabric, and this second artisanal metaphor has an urban, speculative, and mercantile, rather than rural, stamp to it, but its implications as an interactive *ars poetica* are not dissimilar:

> Ki petit semme petit quelt,
> Et qui auques requeillir velt,
> En tel liu sa semence espande
> Que fruit a .c. doubles li rande;
> Car en terre qui riens ne valt
> Bone semence seche et faut.
> Crestïens semme et fait semence
> D'un romans que il encomence. . . .
>
> (Ll. 1–8)[5]

The receptive literary ground to which Chrétien refers includes his aristocratic audience and patron, but it also refers to the fertile narrative *terre* in which he plants his story. It is a doubling metaphor literally related to the groundwork necessary for the cultivation of narrative, with the agency of the author described in appropriate agricultural terms. The furrow in the soil can be read as the move-

[4] The *Altfranzözisches Wörterbuch* (Wiesbaden, 1957), edited by Adolf Tobler and Ernst Lommatzsch, fasc. 34, pp. 519–23, has many examples of the two. Godefroy's *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française* (Paris, 1885; repr. Nendeln, Liechtenstein, 1969) has a section devoted to *graine* as color, while the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary,* edited by Louise Stone, William Rothwell, and B. W. Reid (London, 1983), fasc. 3, p. 339, shows the double meaning.

[5] *Le roman de Perceval ou le conte du Graal,* ed. Keith Busby (Tübingen, 1993), p. 3. David Staines's translation (Bloomington, Ind., 1990) renders the lines thus: "The man who sows little, reaps little, and the man who wants a good harvest should scatter his seed where it will yield him a hundredfold, for good seed withers and dies in poor soil. Christian sows and plants the seed of a romance he is beginning. . . ." It would be redundant to reproduce the excellent rhetorical analyses made of Chrétien's prologue, among them Tony Hunt, "The Prologue to Chrestien's *Li Contes del Graal,*" *Romania* 92 (1971), 359–79, and "Tradition and Originality in the Prologues of Chrestien de Troyes," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 8 (1972), 320–44. Hunt undertakes a similar exercise in "Glossing Marie de France," *Romanische Forschungen* 86 (1974), 396–418. See also Douglas Kelly, "The Logic of the Imagination in Chrétien de Troyes," in *The Sower and the Seed: Essays on Chrétien de Troyes* (Lexington, Ky., 1983), pp. 9–30. Kelly discusses in detail the working of rhetoric in *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison, Wis., 1978), and in *Internal Difference and Meaning in the Roman de la Rose* (Madison, Wis., 1995).

ment of pen on receptive parchment, and thus as emblematic of the act of creation and textual inscription.[6]

Central to Chrétien's image of sowing seed is the vital layering of one element on another in the balanced creation of a successful story, the harmonious conjunction of art and circumstance, *sens* and *matiere*. Taking the metaphor a stage further, Chrétien is the first to acknowledge the *roman courtois* as a literary *champ experimental,* an uncharted and unrestricted narrative terrain where the potential for artistic growth appears unlimited, a fact that Jean Renart was evidently quick to understand.

Jean underlines the sophistication and exclusivity of his "novele chose" and stresses the importance of its performative aspect with the highlighted verbs *chanter, lire,* and *conter,* suggesting that the combination of different performative modes brings about renewal with each reading:

> Ja nuls n'iert de l'oïr lassez,
> car, s'en vieult, l'en i chante et lit,
> et s'est fez par si grant delit
> que tuit cil s'en esjoïront
> qui chanter et lire l'orront,
> qu'il lor sera nouviaus toz jors.
>
> (Ll. 18–23)

> No one will ever tire of hearing it,
> for, if you want, you can sing and read it:
> and it is so delightfully composed
> that all who hear it sung and read
> will take pleasure in it,
> for it will always be new to them.
>
> (P. 3)

Chanter is an obvious doubling of *conter,* prolonging, amplifying, and diversifying the life of the text. Moreover, the complementarity of narrative and lyric will be such, says the narrator, that it will create the illusion that he himself has composed both kinds of poetry. The claim that the transitions will be seamless, and that the partially anthologized works will appear his own, is somewhat at odds with the initial intention to include the lyrics *por remenbrance,* one assumes, of the songs as a whole in their extradiegetic form: their authors are often effaced (although some names survive) in the process, along with the stanzas Jean chooses not to include in their entirety. Jean dyes, cuts, and sews his lyric cloth to fit a narrative pattern that aims at more than the preservation of songs: he tailors his romance,

[6] The juxtaposition of the low culture of rural cultivation with the high art of literature and cultural refinement is a common one to those familiar with manuscript illumination: a fine example is found in the thirteenth-century Luttrell Psalter, which contains so many representations of medieval daily life. A prominent theme in the *bas-de-page* decoration is the production of food for the lord's table, and in a series of illustrations (fols. 170v–173v) there are depictions of sowing, harrowing, breaking up ground, weeding, reaping, and making sheaves, as if the hard labor at ground level is somehow an organic part of the flowering of the text above, and thus symbolic of the existence of a symbiosis between nurture, nature, culture, and cultivation within the parameters of the page (British Library, Add. MS 42130, reproduced in Janet Backhouse's *The Luttrell Psalter* [New York, 1990]).

using the most fashionable material. As well as being a master dyer, he is also a narrative *haute couturier:* if Chrétien portrays himself, albeit with some irony, as the humble cultivator of the romance, Jean Renart is the modish fashioner of it. Between the prologue and the conclusion, when the heroine dons a much-commented *mise-en-abyme* wedding dress that relates the story of Helen of Troy (ll. 5324–57), there is no doubt that in a truncated and recontextualized form the forty-six lyrics fulfill a variety of subtle and strategic functions and that they are the outward signs of the inner complexity of the narrative.

While the anthologizing of poetry in the text has some serious implications, it also embraces more light-hearted ones that tend toward the comic and parodic.[7] It would be imprudent to argue that Jean's *Roman de la Rose* is a wholly parodic work, but the lyric anthology contained in this elegant romance has some crucial stylistic aspects that are relevant to a more general thesis regarding the importance of parody as a regenerative force in the development of the *roman* as a literary form. Just as the radical disjunction between lyric poetry and prose opens up a space for comedy in *Aucassin et Nicolette,* so the lyric insertions of Jean's *Roman de la Rose* lead to an awareness of changing modes of discourse, making the text a much more complicated work than it would first appear and allowing it to transcend its proclaimed status as a vehicle for saving songs from being forgotten: the play of lyric and narrative provides the backcloth for poetic experimentation, creating something new out of a form that was a relatively recent innovation to begin with.

While the lyrics arguably bring about a rapprochement between the realm of the poetic and the world of the listener's experience, another potential interpretation perhaps indicates an opposite side effect. The author tries, with varying success, to incorporate the works more or less naturalistically, as if bursting into song at poignant moments were consistently a part of everyday life. At the same time he can be seen to reinforce our sense of the very artificiality of the narrative.

[7] To summarize the variety of critical debate on the subject of lyric insertions, Gaston Paris's addition (pp. lxxxix–cxxi) to Servois's 1893 edition and Félix Lecoy's introduction to his 1962 edition catalogue the number and nature of the intercalcated songs and encoded poems in the text. Paris conjectures that song and speaker in the text are often an imperfect match. Lecoy leaves the question open, while Rita Lejeune, in *L'œuvre de Jean Renard: Contribution à l'étude du genre romanesque au moyen-âge* (Paris, 1935), pp. 144–70, finds that the author is largely skillful in matching lyric and circumstance. The question is also discussed by Maureen Barry McCann Boulton in *The Song in the Story: Lyric Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200–1400* (Philadelphia, 1993), esp. pp. 9–16 and 24–35. Emmanuèle Baumgartner ("Les citations lyriques dans *Le Roman de la Rose* de Jean Renart," *Romance Philology* 35/1 [1981], 260–66) demonstrates that particularly in the case of Conrad and Lïenor, the respective lyricism of the *chanson courtoise* and *chanson de toile* suits the personae and gender of the protagonists. Baumgartner analyzes issues concerning the placement and displacement of lyrics in the *Roman de la Rose* and concludes that they serve "comme double et métaphore" (p. 265) in the text even if the anthologized body of lyrics proves less than homogeneous on occasion. As well as establishing a network of internal resonances and creating a source of momentum from within, the form of the romance changes the dynamics of the relationship between text and potential audience, as Sylvia Huot, in *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987), states: "The lyric pieces indeed contribute significantly to blurring the distinction between the poetic world and that of the audience" (p. 132). Thus the carefully orchestrated slippage caused by the presence of lyrics has many potential implications. They add polyphony and instantaneity to the narrative and a multilayered perspective that has a further potential dimension in performance.

In short, the harmoniousness of Jean Renart's subtle weaving of plot and poetic accompaniment cloaks a more discordant rupture of sound and sense, and what ties his narrative together simultaneously decenters it and lends it an essential ambiguity. The twin modes of discourse create their own textual dialogism, a metadialogism that finds a secondary counterpart in the relationship of text to text, and text to embedded context, as Maureen Boulton shows in her recent exhaustive and perceptive study of lyric insertion. She rightly claims Jean Renart as the originator of the technique, the creator of "a new category of rhetorical figure" (p. 13), and demonstrates how he uses his discovery to innovative effect in the unfolding of the narrative.

As well as assessing the general impact of embedding poems in narrative as a compositional strategy, studying individual lyrics can reveal possible hidden irony in the distance between the submerged text and recycled verse; and even on the narrative surface the contrast in poetic modes leads to a lively play of form and register. The diversity of critical assessments concerning the status of the lyrics reflects the protean nature of the text. Playing one lyric genre dialogically against another, throwing items into relief by examining the immediate context of unfolding events, and measuring their harmony or discord with speakers reveal the experimental character of the deep structure of this work. More than close reading of the poems themselves, it is also appropriate to focus on the more general and superficial aspects of lyric insertion that are nevertheless significantly revealing and manifest elsewhere in the narrative. Most particularly, the lyrics perform a doubling function that finds its counterpart in the circulation of clothing between characters.[8] The borrowing and lending of objects mirror the textual slippage and recontextualizing to which the songs are prone.

A simple enumeration of the inevitable consequences of the inclusion of the lyrics reveals, first, that whatever their thematic continuity and artful placement, they constitute a rupture within the narrative as well as musical continuity and ornament. Second, if a lyric can be defined as a short, intense unity containing an intricate internal logic, then integrity of form, energy, and essence are lost within the new context. There is, in effect, an exchange of valency between poem and narrative, with loss and gain on both sides of the equation. In addition, most poems are represented by stanzas rather than a whole work, their full meaning glossed over or submerged, which has serious implications in terms of the performability of the text. Some authors are named, and some are not. Perhaps the audience or jongleur was intended to supplement the omissions or knew the texts by heart, or perhaps Jean Renart cuts and pastes his borrowings together for a different reason that could add another layer of interpretation transcending or complementing the theory of the dramatized anthology.

Beyond their truncation and submersion, the poetic impact of the original lyrics is also arguably lost because so many of the inserts share a similar theme or allied imagery, making them collectively more banal than memorable, whatever their

[8] The notion of finding a doubling of voices in lyric poetry is a popular one, as scholars explore the resonances and dissonances of individual poets and texts. Jean-Charles Huchet uses the concept to mark the function and originality of the woman's voice in Occitan lyric in "Les femmes troubadours ou la voix critique," *Littérature* 51 (1984), 59–90.

individual brilliance.[9] There can be little doubt that the lyrics reflect contemporary taste and display the gamut of popular genres, so we must imagine a receptive audience for a work such as this: there are, after all, texts like *Flamenca* and the *Roman de la Violette* that share a similar form. However, the case of *Flamenca* adds weight to the argument that there is a more subversive strategy afoot in Jean's work, since the embedded lyrics in the Occitan romance are clearly not intended to be an anthology but serve an even more integrated and parodic purpose. Perhaps contemporary listeners would not have considered the lyrics of Jean's *Roman de la Rose* as banal, and there is always the possibility of the existence of fuller lyric texts in manuscripts now lost. However, we know little about the reception of Jean's text, and we have but one version (Vatican Library, MS Reg. lat. 1725, late thirteenth century) and that one inserts the lyrics in a way open to literary speculation, leaving the potential performative aspect unclear. Thus, although time may account for the form of the manuscript, it is hard to imagine that later scribes made subtle decisions about retruncating lyrics in a different way, long after the instantaneous appeal of the popular song had faded.

For all the generic diversity of the songs, their repetitive quality and, especially, their compression in an intense and somewhat disjunctive and dissonant space permit critical speculation that they could have been "read" otherwise. It is not as if the author inserts the beginnings of the songs as an aide-mémoire for the eventual performer. Some are missing the beginning, others the end, and some both, all of which is suggestive of careful editing on behalf of the narrative poet, or otherwise a very bad memory. For the purposes of argument, it is entertaining to hypothesize that there are at least two ways of reading the *Roman de la Rose,* the first as a straight anthology, and the second as a more subversive literary experiment. Jean hints at support for this in the significant split he indicates between *chans et sons* (l. 10), hinting that the *chançons* (l. 3) he seeks to preserve can have another double life.[10]

In short, although posterity validates it as an anthology, the *Roman de la Rose* can be viewed as less than successful on that score: surely there is more to lyric insertion as a strategy than meets the eye. What remains of the original texts is a shorthand, evocative lyricism that stands out against the more mundane and realistic discourse of a more everyday world, albeit a mostly courtly one, where a rose is not a rose but a birthmark, and where the suggestion of deflowering is not mitigated by the invention of an elaborate garden. The lyrics may be exemplary, but they are no longer purely exempla that fit the mood of the scene or harmonize with the development of the plot: they evoke a nostalgic and poetic setting from which they occasionally seem untimely wrenched. It is no surprise that Conrad,

[9] The inclusion of some lyrics raises fascinating and problematic issues, as William D. Paden demonstrates in "Old Occitan as a Lyric Language: The Insertions from Occitan in Three Thirteenth-Century French Romances," *Speculum* 68 (1993), 36–53.

[10] Beyond the courtly chansons, many of which evoke repetitious, stylized descriptions of spring consonant with, or in opposition to, the speaker's feelings, the large group of *rondets de carole* express a simple and somewhat clichéd vision of amorous renewal in the great outdoors. In addition, the cluster of songs dedicated to Bele Aeliz and the *chansons de toile* also establish a limited and conventional horizon of expectation.

who symbolically rejects modern technological progress in military matters in favor of the traditional arms of more chivalrous knighthood, should try—not always successfully—to stave off the inexorable advance of the modern world by retreating into an archaic courtly fantasy expressed in the evocative language of poetry. However, even with a healthy dose of courtly nostalgia, there is no stopping the insidious presence of the less lyric aspects of aristocratic life, since in terms of narrative typology the fantasy adventure-quest that seems to announce itself at the outset soon gives way to the social and political traumas of feudalism, the importance of maintaining aristocratic status, and the perils and pitfalls of arranged marriages.

Essentially, the lyrics exist in an implied textual economy of exchange that mirrors that of an increasingly realistic society where chivalry is appearance and image and the real social fabric relies on the economy in a broader political sense. Gone are the *merveilleux* and any attempt to create an allegorical plane for the action: the magical and miraculous are replaced by dazzling set pieces and transactions involving money and wealth. Ironically, as Roberta Krueger reminds us, Jean's text forms part of the *cycle de la gageure,* and yet the customary wager is all but forgotten, a fact that has subtle consequences for potential interpretations of the romance.[11] While it is true that the wager dissolves into a complex lyric and narrative exchange, one could argue that it is equally eclipsed by the sheer number of references to money, price, and cost. Buying and selling are the visual counterparts to erotic desire in the text, and they constitute a language of their own: money is as much a quest as love.[12]

Here is where clothing comes into its own in the romance. After all, Guillaume (whose mother has an aversion to dirty clothing, "n'ama onques chainse sale," l. 3262) has to attend the court and tournament in finery financed by bourgeois moneylenders, and at one point he sends three hundred pounds to his mother to help with the upkeep of the house and to sow the flax fields for linen, a vital source of income. No one knows how hard this is, says the narrator, unless he tries it (l. 1941).

How suitable, in this last instance, that we are reminded of the link between material and materialism, and the capital importance of cloth. Economic reality usually stands diametrically opposed to the ethos of lyric poetry and that of the courtly, feudal world, where combat and seduction are the way to material gain. If fabric stands for the rise of the speculative bourgeoisie and the advent of economic realism, then the patent fabrication and artificiality of the lyric and courtly romance emblematize the other. And yet clothing will come to stand as an emblem

[11] "Double Jeopardy: The Appropriation of Women in Four Romances from the *Cycle de la gageure,*" chap. 5 in *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge, Eng., 1993), p. 144.

[12] In essence, there is a language of economics as much as there is a language of love, and the two cannot always be disassociated. As such, it might be possible to identify yet another discourse of material desire to add to the illustration of those five elucidated by John W. Baldwin in "Five Discourses on Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Northern France around 1200," *Speculum* 66 (1991), 797–819, and in *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago, 1994).

for the status of poetry in the narrative of Jean's *Roman de la Rose.*[13] Here lies the matrix of imagery that adds polish to the glossy surface of Jean Renart's romance: his text is full of almost fetishistic descriptions of various garments, to the materials that make them, and to the details of their appearance and construction. As much as his romance is a lyric anthology, it presents itself as a costume drama in which costume plays a vital role, and it is tempting to see in the references to clothing a visual counterpart of the status of lyrics within the narrative, and thus the reflection of Jean's economy of poetic opportunism.

If lexical items like *conter* and *chanter* strike the reader, so do frequently recurring verbs like *vestir* and *acesmer.* So absurdly distracted are the characters by fashion and decoration that at one point Jouglet exclaims about a tunic that it is just perfect for summer, an odd comment even in the context of a romance where an inordinate amount of time is devoted to the look and feel of the props. Allusion to what characters are wearing is a commonplace of the *roman courtois* and familiar to readers of courtly literature from Chrétien to Guillaume de Lorris, but the tone and style of such descriptions in Jean Renart's work have a novelty and exaggeration to them. Even if courtly narrators pay attention to the decorative form and function of clothing, it is rare that the characters themselves reflect on it with the eagerness that Jean's do. Shortly after Guillaume's mother has prepared the house for the guests' arrival (in the aforementioned reference to the undesirability of dirty clothing), she throws on "un grant mantel gris a porfil, / dont l'atache n'est pas de fil, / mes l'escarlate en est en paine" (ll. 3281–83, ". . . a great cloak edged in fur; / its ties were not made of plain threads, / and it was lined with scarlet," p. 151). Not only are the clothes in this text remarkable, they are also for the most part new, and they are rendered down to the fastenings. Elegant costume is a natural part of the courtly fantasies of Chrétien, but in the *Roman de la Rose* the reader is more aware of the effort and cost required to produce them and of their status as sought-after or hardwon luxury goods. They are still the outward signs of rank and wealth, but often, as in the case of the hero, the appearance created by them is more an illusion, or a means of courtly disguise that exceeds real rank and puts on a show of status: it is reasonable to argue a link on several grounds between new, exchanged clothing and the status of poetry in Jean Renart's *novele chose.*

Clothing is frequently given as gifts by both Conrad and Guillaume. Once again, this is nothing new set in the context of medieval romances, and there can be little doubt that clothing exchange was a welcome and commonplace part of gift giving

[13] Marie de France brings the two similar poles together in *Lanval,* a lai also founded on different kinds of desire and ambition, sexual and monetary/material. She astutely combines the height of fantasy in the form of Lanval's otherworld rescuer, who personifies fortune and success in both domains, with a more grubby form of realism in Guinevere and the covetousness of the court and judicial system. Marie crafts her tale so skillfully that the audience is left with an ambiguous ending. As Lanval rides off to fairyland with his mistress, he conforms to the typical pattern of wish-fulfillment narratives, and yet his world and the Arthurian court are left demystified and somewhat debunked, its artifices inevitably tarnished by sexual and pecuniary lust. In Marie's tale a fantasy of rarefied consumerism finds itself inextricably linked with eroticism. Guinevere's sexual rapaciousness is matched only by Lanval's acquisitive desires, personified in a shapely aesthetic form. Memorable are the voyeuristic descriptions of Lanval's mistress, with her carefully described and revealingly laced gowns.

in medieval society. Early on in the narrative, Jouglet's courtly fable and description of Lïenor earn him a *mantel gris* (l. 723). Then something extremely important happens. Returning to court, the duly inspired Conrad sets in motion his plan to woo Lïenor by writing letters:

> Par Jouglet, cui il ot partie
> sa robe as chans, fist apeler
> un clerc, si li fist aporter
> encre, parchemin et l'afere
> quë il covient a letres fere.
> Tuit troi vont en la garde robe. . . .
>
> (Ll. 868–73)

> He had Jouglet, to whom he had given
> his cloak for the tale, call
> for a clerk, and he had ink
> and parchment brought, and everything
> necessary to write a letter.
> All three went into his dressing room. . . .
>
> (Pp. 41, 43)

The essence of the scene creates a curious alliance between clothes and writing: firstly, Jouglet earns an outfit and fetches the clerk; then all three meet in the private chamber that serves not just as an office, but as a place where clothes are stored (in addition to providing a place for that other more bodily function). The result of this unusual and quite literal privy council is that Jouglet earns the matching tunic. In most romances of chivalry the horizon of expectation leads the reader to anticipate more about tournaments and *armoiries* than *armoires*. But here, in a circular movement, clothing, writing, and lyric/romantic ambition seem closely bound.

Another significant example is the passage in which Guillaume gives a newly made tunic lined with fur "qui fleroit la graine" (l. 1816) to Boidin the chamberlain and a similar cloak, "qui la graine encore flerot" (l. 1827), to the landlord of his lodging. The *graine* of the prologue recurs in many places, as it does at this juncture—here the fresh smell of the dye recalls the *novele chose* that is the work as a whole, and a subliminal link seems apparent between clothes, newness, dye, and poetry.

In the same passage Jouglet earns another cloak, this time of ermine, the landlady a fine expensive brooch, and the daughter a silver belt. The scene concludes with Jouglet's appropriate rendition of a dance song in which a female protagonist called Perronele meditates on her new love while she washes clothes (ll. 1846–51).

Guillaume's largesse creates a good image at court and in a practical way advances his sister's suit. Indeed, the recipients of his generosity recognize that what he has given will return to him eventually in the form of even greater rewards:

> —Mout nos a moustré bele chiere,
> fet ses hostes, en son venir.
> Bien porra encor avenir
> que bien li ert guerredonee

ceste chape de vair fourree
et ciz sables noirs come meure.

(Ll. 1854–59)

"He has given us good cheer
with his coming," said the host.
"He may yet be rewarded
for giving these gifts,
this cloak lined with fur
and these sables dark as blackberries."

(P. 87)

The attention to description is almost fetishistic: the scent of dye, the opulent color, and the softness of fur are typical of the sensual evocation reserved for matters sartorial. When Boidin arrives before the emperor arrayed in his new finery, Conrad asks who gave it to him, to which the chamberlain replies: "—Cil, fet il, qui n'a / talent de prester a usure. / Onqes si gentil creature, / ce sachiez, ne fu ne si large" (ll. 1872–75, ". . . it was one / who has no taste for usury! / Never was there such a noble / or generous creature, believe me," p. 87), suggesting that there were plenty of examples of usury in common business practice and that looking the part was half the battle in establishing one's credibility at court or in business. Even such small references remind us of the kind of monetary reality rarely portrayed in medieval romances and communicate in a scaled-down model an awareness of the circularity of coin and goods, and with it the very modern complexity of the system that bankrolled feudal society. Jean's text is so full of references to how much things are worth, and how much they cost, that it is as if the romance were destined for an audience obsessed with material goods and the means of attaining them. When details of this nature arise in other works, as during the much-commented *Château de Pesme Aventure* episode in Chrétien's *Yvain,* as the narrator describes the appalling working conditions and pay endured by the three hundred maidens (who will turn out to be princesses) set to work in the bowels of the castle, careful attention is rightly given to them; such economically suggestive instances abound in the *Roman de la Rose.* Conrad warns against excessive generosity in gift giving but agrees with his chamberlain about the importance of distributing presents, particularly to those bourgeois from whom one has borrowed money. As Boidin indicates, there is an instant return on investment:

. . . N'aiez garde,
sire, qu'il en avra assez:
mout est as borjois bel et sez
quant il vient emprunter le lor,
qu'il lor done et fet grant honor,
et si sont bien a point paié.
—Bien a le surcot emploié,
fet l'empereres; si oi bien,
si est rois qui puet doner rien.

(Ll. 1882–90)

. . . "Never fear,
lord, for he will have enough:
when he needs to borrow from the bourgeois

they are satisfied and content,
for he gives them gifts and shows them honor,
and also they are well repaid."
"Then he used the tunic well,"
said the emperor; "I've always heard that
a man is a king if he can give something."

(P. 89)

Conrad and Boidin acknowledge that one gives in order to receive, and they reveal the extent to which the aristocracy has come to depend on the merchant class in order to survive in a system based on the eternal triangle of credit and commercial intercourse. This speculation is not without irony: Guillaume makes presents of clothing that will attract the kind of money that will allow him to live up to the image he has created, and then to purchase more. What, after all, does investment mean? Drawn from the Latin *investire,* it simply means "to clothe in," as any dictionary will attest. Guillaume's investment in attire stands as an emblem of the medieval money supply and brings him fine gifts in return, in the form of five hundred pounds, two warhorses, and two fine goblets. "Mout vaut un biaus dons sanz promesse" (l. 1906, "[a] fair gift without a promise is worth much," p. 89) states the narrator, a sentiment echoed in yet another ironic context when the *sénéchal* later tricks Lïenor's mother into revealing the heroine's compromising secret: "[u]ns beaus dons a mout grant mecine" (l. 3358, "[a] handsome gift works wonders," p. 155). The price of the valuable jewel makes a man, buys a woman, and leads to the literal devaluation of the heroine, whose worth will only be restored when a similarly double-edged gift draws out the true nature of the *sénéchal* and gives him a taste of that same medicine that costs him dear in return.[14] Even Lïenor, as many have commented, has a name that integrates material wealth in the form of gold: she embodies a form of lyric gold standard for Conrad, even if the *sénéchal* seeks to debase her currency through the suggestion of unmaidenly circulation and causes us to reflect on the recurring twin themes of price and worth.[15]

On receiving the presents that Conrad sends, Guillaume thanks him by saying "[b]ien avez hui paié vostre ense" (l. 1908, "Today you have made a great gift," p. 89), the last word an unusual item linked to *hanse,* standing not only for a corporation of merchants but, as in this instance, for an official or contractual gift. Clothes and *acesmements* may literally be accessories after the fact, but they simultaneously symbolize the economic exchange of goods and the circularity of

[14] As so much has been written on the economy of gender in *Guillaume de Dole,* with all its iniquities in respect to the feminine, I simply allude to the many sound discussions of Jean's text that have appeared, chief among them Helen Solterer's "At the Bottom of Mirage, a Woman's Body: *Le Roman de la Rose* of Jean Renart," in Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury's *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 213–33. Here Solterer astutely links embroidery with the heroine and how she communicates: text and textile find a further dimension in her feminist analysis of the female body and its sexual politicization in this romance. See also Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley, Calif., 1995).

[15] Nancy Vine Durling explores Lïenor's association with gold and the link between the rose and Conrad's seal in "The Seal and the Rose: Erotic Exchanges in *Guillaume de Dole,*" *Neophilologus* 77 (1993), 31–39.

the narrative, and ultimately they emblematize the circular nature of the lyric and its motifs. It is easy in the case of Jean's *Roman de la Rose* to apply the kind of arguments made by Eugene Vance regarding the sociology of medieval narrative.[16] And yet beyond the sociohistorical implications of the narrative, it is the relationship of that kind of economy with its textual, lyric double that seems so apparent in Jean Renart's romance.

Clothing, like the lyric inserts, appears at regular intervals to decorate the text, adding a dimension of color and intensity and forming an integral part of the characters' self-expression. Understanding them in this material way is important, and an even more subtle expression of this idea is embedded in the descriptions made of individual garments. Beyond the luxuriant description lavished on all kinds of clothes, the unusual attention devoted to describing the fabric used as lining is a particularly remarkable aspect of this sartorial analysis. The word *pene* denoting such *doublure* occurs frequently in accounts of the characters' attire, as here: "D'escarlate noir come meure / ot robe fresche a pene hermine; / mout soëf flerant et mout fine / la vesti lués q'en ot mangié" (ll. 1530–33, "Guillaume had a new cloak / of a cloth as dark as blackberry, / lined with ermine, very sweet-smelling and fine, / which he put on as soon as they had eaten," pp. 71, 73), referring to an exquisite ermine lining.[17] Jouglet, ever enthusiastic when it comes to fashion, exclaims on seeing it: "Dex! or voi gié / robe de la taille de France!" (ll. 1534–35, "God! Now I see / a cloak cut in the French style," p. 73). There are at least eight places where similar formulations concerning lining are found. Guillaume's companions wear noticeably new ". . . penes vaires / a sables noires soëf flairanz" (ll. 1538–39, ". . . cloaks / lined with squirrel and sweet-smelling black sables," p. 73), as do various knights, Guillaume's mother, the emperor, and Lïenor. The reader is also struck by Jean's use of the olfactory sense, since the fresh furs always seem to exude a seductive *soëf* scent. In the author's obsession with lining we discover a novel aspect of his treatment of the clothing motif so common to medieval romances: he is almost fixated on the decadent richness of the parts on the partially concealed underside. Thus it is with the embedded lyrics, submerged to varying degrees, and visible only to a limited extent in spite of their narrative wealth and showiness. These constitute the rich lining of the romance and an understated expression of its immense wealth and intense color: what the audience cannot see is as important as the part that remains visible. The lining is a doubling metaphor for the second and all-important lyric discourse of the text, and perhaps also for the other doublings inherent in it: the twin performatives of

[16] The kind of analysis I envisage is strongly influenced by the analytical approaches used by Eugene Vance in *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1986), particularly the chapters entitled "Chrétien's *Yvain* and the Ideologies of Change and Exchange," pp. 111–51, and "*Aucassin et Nicolette* and the Poetics of Discourse," pp. 152–83. Judith Kellogg, in *Medieval Artistry and Exchange: Economic Institutions, Society and Literary Form in Old French Narrative* (New York, 1989), analyzes the interrelation of narrative and economics, focusing on selected chansons de geste, Chrétien's romances, and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose.* Howard Bloch also frequently explores the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and literature, as, for example, in "Money, Metaphor, and Mediation of Social Differences in Old French Romance," *Symposium* 35 (1981), 18–33.

[17] As, for example, lines 237, 1538, 4183, 4352, 5178, and 5352.

chanter and *conter,* or even the double narrative perspectives that compete in the text in the form of masculine (Guillaume, Conrad, and Jouglet) and feminine (Lïenor as the *chastelaine de Dijon,* l. 4298).

The word *pene* derives from Latin *pinna,* meaning "feather, wing," probably conflated with a form *penna,* meaning "feather, wing, arrow" and "quill," and also by extension "bird" or even "flight of birds."[18] In Old French it signifies "feather, bird, plumage, the top band on a shield, quill, pelt," and "lining." The importance of the association between feather, fur, and quill will shortly become apparent in the context of Jean's romance. *Pene* denoting fur appears to derive from its contact with, and contamination by, the contemporary German *feder,* referring to both fur and feather, and the same range of meanings occurs in a Occitan form *pena.*[19] The examples given by Godefroy attest to *pene*'s being commonly used to describe fur, feather, and fabric. Although it can refer on rare occasion to the outer side of a garment, its prime sartorial use is as a word for fur lining, as it is clearly in the *Roman de la Rose.* Most often it denotes pelts of various kinds or rich, velvetlike fabric. For example, when Lïenor's outfit appears, the narrator is driven to paroxysms of narrative ecstasy: resplendent in a blue cloak lined with ermine, a white dress embroidered with flowers and a green silk tunic lined with fur, she is the very image of opulent courtly chasteness (ll. 4350–88), with every accessory sensually described from head to foot. There is nothing new, of course, in clothes being lined, or in the occasional descriptions made of them. But in a text where even the yellow silk underside of the heroine's horse's saddlecloth (l. 4490) merits attention, the strategy seems somehow deliberately overdone. So excessive is this last account that the narrator feigns amusement with himself, remarking that one could have made done with slightly uglier accoutrements and wondering why he is going on about all this in the first place:

> Sor un harnois un poi plus let
> puet l'en bien monter au besoig.
> Je ne sai pas por coi j'aloig
> l'afere, ainz dirai plus briement
> q'ainz q'ele fust au parlement,
> l'esgarderent plus de .C. genz.
>
> (Ll. 4495–4500)

> With rather humbler trappings
> one can also ride, at need!
> I don't know why I'm dragging this out,
> so I'll just say more succinctly

[18] *A Latin Dictionary,* ed. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (1879; repr. Oxford, 1987).

[19] *Trésor de la langue française* (Paris, 1988), p. 864, under the forms *panne* and *penne.* Under *panne* we find: "Du lat. *pĭnna* 'plume; *aile*', prob. var. de *pĕnna* '*id.*', . . . *cf.* F. Sommer, *Handbuch der Lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre,* § 53, p. 58, att. en gallo-rom. au sens de 'fourrure' (*cf. FEW* t. 8, p. 533b) qui aurait pu être influencé par le germ. (*cf.* m. h. all. *vëder,* 'plume' et 'fourrure' . . ." (p. 864). Godefroy (pp. 721–22) gives a range of examples and applications, as does the Tobler-Lommatzsch *Alfranzösisches Wörterbuch,* 7/1:629–37. Eunice Rathbone Goddard also devotes a short section to the use of linings in *Women's Costume in French Texts of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Baltimore, 1927), pp. 185–87. Emil Levy, *Petit dictionnaire Provençal-Français* (1909; repr. Raphèle-lès-Arles, 1980), p. 287, confirms the fur/feather range of meaning.

that before she had reached the assembly
more than a hundred people had stared at her.

(P. 207)

To draw attention to his own digression accentuates the description even more and playfully calls attention to it. The density of examples suggests this is no idle detail but part of a more subtle way of embroidering the narrative for more complex reasons.

The account of Lïenor's wedding dress casts this marvel into the shade, with every scene from the Trojan war recounted in embroidery. The dress is the only item to truly belong to the *merveilleux:* worked by a queen in Puglia, its completion is reported as having taken seven or eight years, the whole executed on fabric "quë une fee ouvra" (l. 5324). Needless to say, it is expensively lined:

La pene n'iert grise ne vaire,
ainz ert soëf fleranz et fine,
de noirs sebelins et d'ermine,
tot ondoiant de l'un en l'autre.
Mout se pot bien consirrer d'autre
robe vestir, qui celë ot.

(Ll. 5352–57)

The lining was neither squirrel nor miniver,
but of black sable and ermine,
sweet-scented and fine,
alternating with one another.
Anyone could easily give up wearing
any other robe if he had this one.

(P. 247)

But perhaps the most remarkable and interesting example from a theoretical perspective is the last detailed account of Guillaume, who quickly recovers the good looks lost when, sick with worry about Lïenor's honor, he at last succeeds in bringing about the imperial match. Of his costume, we find the following:

Ele fu fete a grant solas,
onques n'avoit vestue esté.
Mout fu legiere por esté,
que la pene en estoit d'oiseaus.

(Ll. 5175–78)

The robe was beautifully made,
and had never yet been worn;
it was very light, for summer,
and was lined with feathers.

(P. 239)

We thus learn that it was fashioned for pleasure, and had never been worn, made for summer from costly light materials, with a lining composed of feathers, and it is here that fur lining and feather combine, leading us on inexorably to the topic of quills and writing. On a literal level, one might wonder about the practicality or feasibility of feathers as lining, in summer or any season. As a decorative

whimsy the image anticipates the inclusion of the famous bird drawn from the reinscribed stanzas of Bernart de Ventadorn's *Can vei la lauzeta mover* inserted shortly afterwards, and it links Guillaume with the image of the nightingale he hears in the garden just before. In the opening lines of the *canso,* the narrator presents himself as like a lark in the summer sky, using the bird as an analogy for his rising and falling emotions and his amorous isolation. Birds (particularly the nightingale, but also the lark as here) are the poetic counterpart of the poet, and the reflection of the ethos of courtly love. Guillaume, too, shares this symbolic quality, and the final vision of the hero adds luster and a poetic beauty that fuses his earthly ambition with the realization of Conrad's even more lyric and romantic aspirations. However, more than tying together disparate ornithological themes in the romance, Jean evokes the other meanings of *pene* with the reference to the lining of Guillaume's cloak, and he returns to the notion of the feather that is also a quill. Whether his subliminal associations are intentional we cannot know, but the complex network of imagery he establishes is certainly intriguing and highly suggestive.

All of which brings back the strategies behind Jean Renart's lyric insertions and the importance of lining. Why such great interest in this regard? Because the attention to lining is an indication of the added richness that lies partially concealed in a text where appearances are deceptive, where red dye adds worth, a red birthmark risks devaluing the heroine, and a red ruby can buy a priceless secret.[20] To borrow the kind of terminology that Huchet uses in a different context when writing about women's-voice lyrics, lining is quite literally an important *doublure* within the text and as such provides a perfect metaphor for the *dédoublement* of the lyric voice set against that of the narrative, reflecting the red dye that colors the cloth of the prologue. Lining is to clothing as red dye is to cloth, and in the circular exchange of poetry and garments in the text the reader comes to associate one with the other through the clear signposting of the poet's exordium, where fashionable embellishment and novelty prove to be key words. As a small verbal echo in the text, the image of lining is the finishing touch, inviting the audience to look beneath the woven surface to an interpretive layer beneath.[21]

What is implied about the status of lyric in the text? It has already been suggested that in the textual exchange in which they are involved, the inserted lyrics have lost their original value, whatever is gained through their addition. Their renovated context undoubtedly holds worth. After all, with new life comes new circulation and the renewal of each act of reading and performance. However, set against the comparative realism of the way in which events unfold, there is something illusory and faintly archaic about the inserted lyrics. After all, some genres, like the *chanson de toile* are presented by characters within the text as already

[20] The themes associated with redness and roses are comprehensively analyzed by Michel Zink in *Roman rose et rose rouge: Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole de Jean Renart* (Paris, 1979).

[21] So multifaceted is Jean Renart's treatment of text and textile that other interpretive strategies are instantly suggested, as Helen Solterer's gender-studies analysis shows. I hope to be forgiven for staying on the narratological surface of the romance—but even here the play of meaning is subtle and ingenious.

old-fashioned. To this we must add the courtly lyricism of Conrad, who indeed resembles the speaker of the troubadour *canso,* one whose inflated expectations are at odds with reality and the unfolding of events in the text. These genres and the various dance songs become part of a well-costumed production financed by the emperor with the help of various merchants. Being borrowed to begin with, like the clothing donated or purchased with mercantile credit, they are doubly fabricated set pieces, just as the new clothing worn by the protagonists has a faint air of theatrical costume about it in addition to its fresh scent. The imagery of clothing is the metaphorical reflection of a strategy of narrative distancing and play set up between discourses in the text, one that results in an affectionately ironic treatment of the ethos of courtly love in its very picturesque depiction of it. Marc-René Jung argues that they form "une sorte de sous-conversation ou discours parallèle."[22] More than decorative trimmings, the songs appear as a form of appliquéd set pieces. Joining them together occasionally reveals seams, and requires substantial alteration, but the lyrics retain a recognizable form and add complexity to the accommodating narrative.

Having advanced thus far in sartorial and poetic speculation, and on the lyric investment made by Jean Renart, I conclude by returning to the crucial scene in the *garde-robe* where the digression began. Of vital interest is the point where Conrad sends Jouglet for "encre, parchemin et l'afere / quë il covient a letres fere" (ll. 871–72). *Encre* and *parchemin* are two necessary elements normally found together with a third—the *pene* referred to obliquely as part of *l'afere.* Precedents for the combination exist in the *Chanson de Saint Alexis,* Beroul's *Tristan,* and elsewhere. Here it is not a question of lining, but of that kind of lyric *pene* that proves mightier than the sword of romance in Jean Renart's text, and one conspicuous by its absence in the scene in question. In the early part of the romance Jean declares that his story will treat arms and love, "d'armes et d'amors" (l. 24), although there is relatively little combat, and most of it formulaic. The real dramatic cut and thrust is verbal and poetic. It is perhaps pushing the bounds of interpretation, but it seems that the unnamed *pene* is hidden throughout the text—that there is a playful displacement from one *pene* to another culminating in the feather lining of Guillaume's cloak, an object slyly revealing of an authorial form of hide-and-seek. In a subtle movement the reader passes from fur, to feather, to quill, and to the issue of the fabrication of text, and to the author who warns his audience that his matching of discourses will be such that it will all seem his own invention. Summing up his thoughts on the *Roman de la Rose,* Norris Lacy declares: "In conclusion, it is entirely incorrect to suggest that the text of the *Guillaume de Dole* is merely a pretext (pre-text) for the preservation of songs. Rather, it is a text seen *as* text, literature about literature, perhaps a romance in its purest sense: a story of characters who, instead of experiencing the traditional events of romance, create them."[23] Taking Lacy's comments a stage further, in order to illustrate the thinking behind his composition, Jean presents text as textile, attempting to fashion a fresh form at a crucial historical moment that, as Boulton

[22] "L'Empereur Conrad, chanteur de poésie lyrique," *Romania* 101 (1980), 35–50, at pp. 39–40.

[23] " 'Amer par oïr dire': *Guillaume de Dole* and the Drama of Language," *French Review* 54 (1981), 779–87, at pp. 786–87.

states, "coincided with the beginning of a period of intense formal experimentation in French literature" (p. 281).

From the outset of the prologue, the narrator makes us aware of a sophisticated and self-conscious approach to composition and mindful of the very plasticity of the romance form with which he experiments. The result is an elegant and parodic reconfiguration of lyric and romance motifs, and it is just possible that with the recurring image of lining he demonstrates one more way in which he achieves the impossible by pulling the wool over our eyes, or as the medieval French expression has it, *traire la panne devant l'œil.*

Caroline Jewers is Assistant Professor in the Department of French and Italian at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-2120 (e-mail: cjewers@falcon.cc.ukans.edu).

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[23] **"Amer par oïr dire": Guillaume de Dole and the Drama of Language**
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