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Rethinking Self-Reflexivity and Genre in Medieval French Romance

By

Jenny Tan

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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in

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and in

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor David F. Hult, Chair

Professor Niklaus Largier

Professor Ignacio Navarrete

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Abstract

Rethinking Self-Reflexivity and Genre in Medieval French Romance

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Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

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Professor David Hult, Chair

This dissertation argues that gestures of literary self-consciousness, especially those articulated through rhetorical play and ironic voicing on the part of the first-person narrator, become a conventional feature of medieval French romance tradition in the wake of Chrétien de Troyes.

The highly developed self-reflexivity of a number of canonical twelfth-century French romances has been the focus of much scholarly attention over the last few decades, but critics have tended to treat them as the unique hallmarks of a handful of exceptional canonical texts, ascribing the innovation of literary self-consciousness to the individual master authors. Thus, much criticism of French romance beyond a few canonical masterworks has taken as its primary goal to prove that a romance text exhibits literary self-consciousness of its own forms and conventions; self-reflexivity is taken as the end of analysis, and its presence indicates that a text is unique and worthy of critical interest.

The dissertation looks at explicitly intertextual French romances of the late twelfth century (Renaut de Beaujeu's *Le Bel Inconnu*, chapter 1) and the thirteenth century (Heldris de Cornuailles's *Le Roman de Silence* and the anonymous *Amadas et Ydoine*, chapter 2), as well as a thirteenth-century German adaptation (Hartmann von Aue's *Iwein*, chapter 3), in order to show how readers, adaptors, and translators of a canonical generation of twelfth-century romance recognized and responded to the techniques of self-reflexive literary play that pervade Chrétien and the French *Tristan* tradition. The romancers that followed in Chrétien's footsteps did not fail to recognize the irony, ambiguity, and play within his *oeuvre*; nor did they simply offer derivative or lesser imitations of his famous scenes and passages. Rather, they relied on readers' previous knowledge and expectations formed by an earlier generation of romance in order not only to reproduce but to build and comment upon by-now familiar gestures of self-reflexivity, often pushing romance to its formal and logical limits. Or, in the case of *Iwein*, written for German readers largely without access to or detailed knowledge of the French source corpus or subsequent tradition, Hartmann manages to adapt and translate the poetic concerns of his French source and his French contemporaries for a different audience.

Attentiveness to gestures of self-reflexivity not as the indicator of individual authorial ability (something that distinguishes good and interesting authors from derivative and uninteresting ones) but as forms that can and do become familiar and conventional, and that can be and are innovated upon, satirized, and subverted help us to understand the later romance tradition and its relation to its predecessors in a new, more productive way.

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Introduction

If I were forced to formulate a single goal for this study of twelfth-century romance fictions, I might express it as a desire to prevent modern readers from assuming that the Middle Ages produced only, or even most characteristically, closed texts. [...] Hence my desire to demonstrate here the sophistication of romance fictions, which may demand an equal sophistication from its public, whether we judge its complexities in literary or intellectual, cultural, or philosophical terms.¹

If this statement, from Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner's *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions*, aptly describes and guides Bruckner's study of the interpretive complexity of a number of the greatest hits of medieval French romance, she does not appear to be alone in her aims. The same goal of proving the interest of medieval texts to modern readers and scholars seems to implicitly undergird a great deal of romance criticism before and since Bruckner's seminal book. Peter Haidu, for instance, says of Renaut de Beaujeu's *Le Bel Inconnu* that "the games the romance plays with the very notion of literature [...] reflect a far-reaching doubt about 'the way things are' or even 'the way they seem to be' that resembles, partially but surprisingly, the aesthetic organization of some contemporary novels."² Similarly, Simon Gaunt, observing that "linguistic play abounds in the text as if to highlight the indeterminacy of signifiers," concludes that "Heldris de Cornouaille's *Roman de Silence* appears to engage deliberately with problems that interest modern theorists," while R. Howard Bloch says of the same romance that "if *Silence* constitutes a guide to the understanding of medieval culture and poetics, it also reads uncannily like a programme for the interpretation of modernism."³

What is interesting in these remarks by Haidu, Gaunt, and Bloch is not just the desire to assert the modernity of medieval texts, but also the particular characteristics of these texts to which the special quality of modernity is ascribed: playing with the notion of literature, linguistic play and indeterminacy, an interest in its own poetics—in other words, literary self-consciousness and self-reflexivity. Although the highly developed self-reflexivity of a number of canonical twelfth-century French romances (in particular, the *oeuvre* of Chrétien de Troyes and the texts in the *Tristan* tradition) has been the focus of much scholarly attention over the last few decades, critics have tended to treat the self-reflexive gestures evident in these texts as the unique hallmarks of a handful of exceptional exemplars, ascribing the innovation of literary self-consciousness to the individual master authors—those with the gift of being "modern" *avant la lettre*, displaying a sophistication and literary consciousness that is before their time.

¹ Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p. 11.

² Peter Haidu, "Realism, Convention, Fictionality and the Theory of Genres in *Le Bel Inconnu*," *L'Esprit créateur* 12 (1972): pp. 37-60, here, p. 60.

³ Simon Gaunt, "The significance of Silence," *Paragraph* 13 (1990): pp. 202-16, here, p. 202; R. Howard Bloch, "Silence and Holes: The *Roman de Silence* and the Art of the Trouvère," *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): pp. 81-89, here, pp. 81-82.

Thus, much criticism of French romance beyond these few canonical masterworks has taken as its primary goal to prove that a romance text exhibits literary self-consciousness of its own forms and conventions; self-reflexivity is taken as the end of analysis, and its presence indicates that a text is unique and worthy of critical interest. This focus on demonstrating the self-reflexivity of a particular text makes sense in a disciplinary environment where medievalists perceive themselves as under pressure to justify the interest and value of their studies and their objects of study to modernist colleagues. But the problem with such an approach is that it falls into the trap of doing exactly what so many medievalists take modernists to task for—creating an account of the “modern” that relies on a flattening and distortion of the medieval.

We see what it means for criticism to take self-reflexivity as the endpoint of analysis in the following example:

While saying one thing and showing another, and constantly playing on reality and appearance, the poem emphasizes the importance of the audience's process of interpretation. [...] [A]udiences are invited to use the gap [between the story and the narrator's commentary about it] for a particular kind of critical thinking: that is, to apply the very lessons that the romance teaches. [...] The text encourages its audiences to practice the lessons it teaches, and to take part in an always incomplete process of making meaning from its complex juxtaposition of what is said and what is shown, what is stated and what is kept silent.⁴

These comments happen to be about the *Roman de Silence*, but if they sound like they could also describe any number of medieval texts, it is because this argument has indeed been made, repeatedly and apparently independently, about a great many texts. But surely if these narrative and interpretive questions are as pervasive as criticism indicates they are, they cannot be novel and unexpected in every case in which we encounter them. And if they are not novel and unexpected but rather familiar, as they must eventually become, to readers and romancers (who are, of course, themselves readers and interpreters of the textual tradition that precedes them), then surely the self-reflexivity of the medieval text, and the medieval romance, does something other than to re-teach the same lessons again and again. If audiences learn the importance of their own processes of interpretation and critical thinking to a text's meaning-making, what meanings emerge when audiences apply the lessons they have learned to the text?

I propose, instead, to take self-reflexivity as a point of departure, rather than an endpoint, for the analysis of medieval French romance. This dissertation argues that gestures of literary self-consciousness, especially those articulated through rhetorical play and ironic voicing on the part of the first-person narrator, become a conventional feature of medieval French romance tradition in the wake of Chrétien de Troyes. I examine a handful of explicitly intertextual French romances of the late twelfth century (*Le Bel Inconnu*, chapter 1) and the thirteenth century (*Le Roman de Silence* and the anonymous *Amadas et Ydoine*, chapter 2), as well as a thirteenth-century German adaptation (Hartmann von Aue's *Iwein*, chapter 3), in order to show how readers, adapters, and translators of a canonical generation of twelfth-century romance

⁴ Suzanne Kocher, “Narrative Structure of the *Roman de Silence*: Lessons in Interpretation,” *Romance Notes* 42 (2002): pp. 349-58, here, p. 357.

recognized and responded to the techniques of self-reflexive literary play that pervade Chrétien and the French *Tristan* tradition. The romancers that followed in Chrétien's footsteps did not fail to recognize the irony, ambiguity, and rhetorical play within his *oeuvre*; nor did they simply offer derivative or lesser imitations of his famous scenes and passages. Rather, they relied on readers' previous knowledge and expectations formed by an earlier generation of romance in order not only to reproduce but to build and comment upon by-now familiar gestures of self-reflexivity, often pushing romance to its formal and logical limits. Or, in the case of *Iwein*, written for German readers largely without access to or detailed knowledge of the French source corpus or subsequent tradition, Hartmann manages to adapt and translate the poetic concerns of his French source and his French contemporaries for a different audience.

Attentiveness to gestures of self-reflexivity not as the indicator of individual authorial ability (something that distinguishes good and interesting authors from derivative and uninteresting ones) but as forms that can and do become familiar and conventional, and that can be and are innovated upon, satirized, and subverted, help us to understand the later romance tradition and its relation to its predecessors in a new, more productive way. Readers of French romance were surely not blind to what modern critics have spotted in Chrétien's *oeuvre* and spilled so much ink over: irony and ambiguity; the subversion of topoi and conventions; episodes that undermine courtly logic or that thematize the use and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal signs; the productive disjunctions between what the text says and what it does, and what the author-narrator says and what he shows, and the new meanings that reveal themselves in the text when one reads against the grain, through the lens of these disjunctions. Reading in the wake of Chrétien, medieval readers could surely come to expect and learn to anticipate the tricks of Chrétien re-played: in the sparrowhawk episode of *Le Bel Inconnu*, borrowed from *Erec et Enide*; in the ironic *laudatio temporis acti* of *Yvain* imitated in both *Le Bel Inconnu* and *Silence*, etc. Why should medieval romancers not have expected an audience already familiar with the tradition of romance? In fact, the anonymous *Amadas et Ydoine* is even addressed to: "Vous qui avés oï d'Amours, / Selonc le conte des auctours / Et en latin et en roumans / Des les tans as premiers amans" [You who have heard about Love according to the story of authors both in Latin and in romance/*roman* from the times of the first lovers] (vv. 5-8).

Rather than approaching every romance text with a clean slate and discovering old gestures of self-reflexivity anew, or else consigning lesser-known texts to obscurity because they don't replicate exactly what we have come to expect from a handful of canonical masterworks, let us consider that medieval romancers and readers may have been just as clever as modern critics. If we do, we will see that romancers continue to find new and unexpected ways to push the boundaries of the genre for canny readers who have already learned to expect romances that can't be taken at face value, that can say one thing and show another, that are rife with ironic and ambiguity, and that place new and ever-increasing stakes on their own interpretation.

A Theory of Self-Reflexivity: Intertextuality, Dialogism, Genre

What is self-reflexivity? What I mean, loosely, is the way in which a text talks *to* and *about* itself—how it demonstrates its consciousness of itself as a text, and how it comments on its own workings: its language, its forms, its use of conventions, its artifice, its fictionality. Part of how a

text talks about itself, I propose, is also how it talks *to* and *about* other texts. With regards to medieval romance, in particular, Bruckner has suggested that the simultaneity of intertextuality and narratorial self-reflexivity is not coincidental, but rather, that the interrelation between these two phenomena is of defining importance to the genre.⁵ In a way, the self-reflexive nature of an explicitly intertextual text is self-evident – when texts talk about other texts, they wink at their own fictional or literary status. I propose that the converse holds true for romance as well – that the self-reflexivity of romance is way to respond to and comment upon other romances as well as on the genre as a whole, and in fact can only be more fully understood in the context of these intertextual conversations. This proposal makes sense especially if we consider that romance as a genre had its beginnings as a transformative impulse enacted upon other texts and traditions. The genealogy of the word *romanz*, used to describe a text rendered into the vernacular from Latin, itself attests to this history. The transition from oral to written literary culture also left traces on romance’s early formation; in the prologue of *Erec et Enide*, for example, Chrétien de Troyes draws a firm distinction between himself and his predecessors, the *jongleurs*, to whom he claims superiority. As the romance tradition develops and evolves, naturally, the models to which it is reacting change as new texts continue to be produced. Consequently, the issues at stake in intertextual conversation and in the kinds of self-reflexivity exercised by romance texts must necessarily change and develop as well. This is especially important to recognize since self-reflexive impulses in romance are frequently considered in relative isolation, as the product or characteristic of individual texts and authors; in the French context, this is most often Chrétien, in the German, Wolfram von Eschenbach – not coincidentally, the “master authors” of their respective language traditions.

To consider *self-reflexivity* and *intertextuality*, how a text talks about itself and how it talks about other texts, as conceptually separate is to draw an artificial distinction that potentially limits our understanding of the rich and complex ways in which texts interact with one another. In fact, it is in one of the theoretical progenitors of the current concept of intertextuality that we find one of the most powerful articulations of how texts stage conversations between different discourses, languages, genres, and time periods, in ways which are not analytically separable from one another, as part of a unified phenomenon: Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism. Bakhtin’s theorization of dialogic discourse as both a characteristic and a mechanism of generic development (of the novel, specifically, but also of the romance as part of the pre-history of the novel) ties together the ways in which a text is in dialogue with itself, with other texts, and with the forms and conventions of a genre—along with the way in which this dialogic activity continually challenges the boundaries of a genre while at the same new renewing and reconstituting boundaries of genres.

An especially illustrative example of the power of Bakhtin’s conceptual apparatus to illuminate how even small passages of texts can take on multiple levels of meaning, can participate in and even themselves stage conversations between different voices or discourses, is found in his reading of *Evgenii Onegin*. Bakhtin’s analysis of two different passages describing the characters of Lensky and Onegin shows us two different ways in which the language that

⁵ Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “Intertextuality,” in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, eds. Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly, and Keith Busby (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 1:231.

comprises a dialogic narrative can become the object of representation within that narrative.⁶ In the text's description of Lensky's poetry, although Lensky's language is not represented in direct discourse but rather through the mediation of the narration, nevertheless, "it is Lensky's song itself, his voice, his poetic style that sounds, but it is permeated with the parodic and ironic accents of the author."⁷ The text does not need to signal this critical distance of Lensky's represented language within its own narrative through any grammatical means; rather, the reader understands the discourse of Lensky's poetic language to be marked in "intonational quotation marks" within the narrative. Thus:

The poetic metaphors in these lines... in no way function here as the *primary means of representation* (as they would function in a direct, 'serious' song written by Lensky himself); rather they themselves have her become the object of representation, or more precisely of a representation that is parodied and stylized.⁸

The language that the narrative uses to depict Lensky's poetic production "functions merely as an *object of representation* (almost as a material thing); the author himself is almost completely outside Lensky's language (it is only his parodic and ironic accents that penetrate this 'language of another')."⁹ The embedding of this representation of Lensky's language in the text produces a "double-voiced" narrative: the poetic images and symbols of Lensky's language have one valence for Lensky, played straight, as it were, and yet take on different poetic and symbolic functions as part of Pushkin's literary representation of another's word, of a particular kind of literary discourse.¹⁰

Bakhtin contrasts this with the poem's depiction of Onegin's language; unlike Lensky's poetry, which is contemplated from a distance, Onegin's language occupies a more complex status and function within the narrative, from which it is less easily demarcated:

All the images in this excerpt become in turn the object of representation: they are represented as Onegin's style, Onegin's world view. In this respect they are similar to the images in Lensky's song. But unlike Lensky's song these images, being the object of representation, at the same time represent themselves, or more precisely they express the thought of the author, since the author agrees with this maxim to a certain extent, while nevertheless seeing [its] limitations and insufficiency....[H]e not only represents this "language" but to a considerable himself he himself speaks in this "language."¹¹

⁶ M. M. Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. and trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin, TX, University of Texas Press: 1981), 43-49.

⁷ Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," 44.

⁸ Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," 44; emphasis belongs to the original.

⁹ Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," 44.

¹⁰ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 328-29.

¹¹ Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," 45.

This novelistic language that is “simultaneously represented *and* representing,” that “illuminate[s] the world and [is itself] illuminated,” thus opens up a “zone of dialogic contact” in which author and character are in conversation with one another, speak back to each other.¹² If the narrative represents Lensky’s language from a critical distance, the dialogic, double-voiced language of *Onegin* takes on the capacity for self-critique and self-examination.

It is this self-reflexive capacity of discourse that “not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation” that ties Bakhtin’s reading of Pushkin to his theorization of genre, and the relation between narrative innovation and generic development.¹³ This dialogic activity of “novelistic” language is what enables the novel to create and recreate itself as a genre: to build itself through the use of conventional forms, to enter into conversation with those forms and enable them to examine and criticize themselves, and in the process to create new forms and new conventions. We should note that recognizing this dialogic activity relies on a way of reading that requires a particular focus on both the part and the whole, differentiating the part while never losing sight of the relation to the whole: the difference in how *Evgenii Onegin* represents Lensky’s language versus how it represents Onegin’s is only legible if the reader recognizes Lensky’s poetry as a particular kind of literary language that is part of its own system, that is different from both Onegin’s language, and that is different from the poem’s own literary language or primary means of representation; and this, of course, requires that the reader have some kind of interpretive understanding of what the stance of the poem is, gleaned by parsing through the narrative and its double-voiced representations. Thus, the conversations the text stages with itself, its distancing from Lensky’s language and its contact with Onegin’s, are also comments on other discourses, forms, and texts, and also other kinds of discourse and kinds of text.

And so we see that the relation between self-reflexivity, intertextuality, and genre is at the core of dialogism. Julia Kristeva has explored the intellectual alignment between genre studies and intertextual theory in their shared debt to Bakhtin’s work on novelistic discourse and his theory of the dialogic.¹⁴ The connection persists beyond Bakhtin; Debora Schwartz points out some fundamental similarities between Michael Riffaterre’s later development of the concept of intertextuality in the 1970s and 80s and Hans Robert Jauss’s work on genre, synthesizing the semiotic conception of intertextual systems of text with Jauss’s interest in *Rezeptionsästhetik* and his famous concept of *Erwartungshorizont* (horizon of expectations).¹⁵ Jauss’s theory of genre, with its especial focus on medieval literature, offers a useful complement to Bakhtin’s focus on the novel.¹⁶ Jauss famously argued that an audience’s response to a work is determined by their

¹² Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” 45.

¹³ Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” 49.

¹⁴ See Julia Kristeva, “Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue, et le roman,” *Critique* 239 (1967): 438-65.

¹⁵ Debora B. Schwartz, “The Horseman Before the Cart: Intertextual Theory and the *Chevalier de la Charrette*,” in “Chrétien’s *Knight of the Cart* and Critical Theory,” ed. Robert S. Sturges, special issue, *Arthuriana* 6 (1996): 13-15.

¹⁶ Hans Robert Jauss, “Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature,” in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 76-109; see also “Literary History as Challenge to Literary Theory,” in Bahti, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 3-45.

pre-existing expectations, formed by the exposure to previous works. Genre is diachronically constituted by the continuous process of the establishing and surpassing of this *horizon of expectations*, which shifts as audiences encounter the innovations of new texts and as those innovations are taken up by texts – unexpected and therefore exceeding or surpassing the horizon of expectations in the first occurrence, and later familiar and expected in repetition and reuse, re-establishing and reforming the horizon.

Thus, generic change and development occurs through the “continual founding and altering of horizons” by literary texts.¹⁷ For Jauss, as for Bakhtin, the notion of genre hinges on the interpretation of literary texts’ orientation toward their predecessors, and on the relation between the specific and the general, in the capacity of the individual text to participate in and evoke the assumptions of a collective system, while differentiating itself from that system through innovation, by which readers’ preconceptions of the forms and conventions of the genre are continually renewed.

Bakhtin’s description of romance seems to suggest a close historical relationship between the history of the novelistic dialogism and medieval romance’s generic development and the evolution of its techniques of invention:

Translation, reworking, re-conceptualizing, re-accenting—manifold degrees of mutual inter-orientation with alien discourse, alien intentions—these were the activities shaping the literary consciousness that created the chivalric romance. The individual consciousness of a given creator of chivalric romances need not exploit all stages in this interaction with alien discourses, but it was nevertheless the case that this process was fully worked out in the literary-language consciousness of the era, and determined the creative activity of separate individuals.¹⁸

Bakhtin has sometimes been accused of giving medieval romance short shrift in his haste to award special status for the genre of the novel.¹⁹ Yet it is medievalists themselves, I contend, who have often given short shrift to both romance and Bakhtin’s account of it, by failing to take seriously Bakhtin’s propositions about both the romance and the novel, and the theory of narrative and genre underlying them. Medievalists’ accounts of romance have frequently revolved around truisms that are not so much wrong as they are insufficiently specific to be useful, often in insolation from the kind of meticulous analysis and close reading of specific texts of which Bakhtin made such brilliant and productive use. For example, Bruckner describes romance as “as a genre [that] characteristically plays with and across the borders of what is and is not romance,” while Simon Gaunt, in an essay on romance’s relation with other genres, remarks:

If romance is not the dominant narrative form of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is perhaps its proclivity for absorbing paradigms from other genres to enable ideological

¹⁷ Jauss, “Theory of Genres,” 88.

¹⁸ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 377.

¹⁹ See, for example, Cesare Segre, “What Bakhtin Did Not Say: The Medieval Origins of the Novel.” *Russian Literature* 41 (1997): 385-410.

debate within its own highly flexible generic parameters that leads to its undoubted triumph over rival genres such as the *chansons de geste* in the later Middle Ages.... But romance in the earlier period is all the richer for its contact with other genres. Indeed, I would argue that it owes much of its success to this contact.²⁰

These are essentially the same claims that Bakhtin, writing earlier and with much more elaboration, makes on behalf of the novel, which he argues is unique among genres in its capability to challenge its generic boundaries by absorbing and putting to use the forms of other genres, and by constantly turning its critical scrutiny upon its own forms and conventions as it does so. Aspects of Bakhtin's theorization of the novel and the place he gives romance within that theorization also echo in another of Bruckner's attempts to describe romance as a genre:

From its inception, romance is an art of reshaping through rewriting. The term designates first an act of linguistic and cultural transposition: the translations of Latin epics into French (*romanz*), made between 1150 and 1165 to give lay audiences access to the matter of Antiquity. But *romanz* soon represents a particular kind of writing in the vernacular, as Chretien de Troyes and his contemporaries locate their works within a network of shared forms and storymatter [sic]. Their romances call for a public of connoisseurs able to recognize the interplay of repetition and transformation. Any given romance appears simultaneously as a whole or a fragment with respect to that larger intertextual dialogue.²¹

In a sense, one could say that any literary text appears both as a whole in itself and as part of an intertextual dialogue, since that is effectively what *genre* is. Yet, Bruckner does put her finger on a number of crucially important elements that characterize the medieval romance and have not been applied with sufficient seriousness to the analysis of individual examples of the genre, especially those that remain in the shadow of more famous masterworks. A clearer picture of what romance *is* as a genre at different points in its development can only emerge when we examine how individual texts employ, respond to, and sometimes subvert what they conceive of as the generic norms of their predecessors, and in the process of doing so, create new forms and conventions that come to characterize their genre.

Bruckner has said that she is suspicious of attempts to make interpretive claims about individual works if generic form and convention have not been taken into account in advance.²² I think that this is a fair point, but that it is also true that the genre and the conventions of medieval romance can only be determined through analysis of the individual examples of texts whose characteristics have led us to classify them as belonging to a shared category. As Jauss puts it: "Where there is no initially posited and described generic norm, the establishing of a generic structure must be gained from the perception [*Anschauung*] of individual texts, in a continually

²⁰ Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, 9; Simon Gaunt, "Romance and Other Genres," in Krueger, *Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, 57.

²¹ Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, "The Shape of Romance in Medieval France," in Krueger, *Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, 13-14.

²² Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Narrative Invention in Twelfth-Century French Romance: The Convention of Hospitality (1160-1200)* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1980), 192-96.

renewed pre-conceiving [*Vorgriff*] of an expectable whole or regulative system for the series of texts.”²³ My dissertation is not an attempt to theorize romance as a genre (a move that would be beyond the scope of this project, and, I would argue, premature), but rather to illustrate the specifics of what this “continually renewed pre-conceiving” entails in medieval French romance—that is, the process of the *working out* of dialogic interactions through the authors and texts examined in the dissertation, and how they rework, re-conceptualize, re-accent, and translate what came before them.

The Medieval Author-Narrator, Narrative Theory, and Some Notes on Method

In my dissertation, I pay especial attention to episodes of narratorial intervention and authorial self-presentation. My project, however, does not so much concern the figure of the author (or the phenomenon of medieval authorship) and its literary traces, as much as the narratorial function of the first-person author-narrator who purports to have written the very text in which he appears, a position that is, in a way, inherently self-reflexive. Thus, the readings around which the arguments of the dissertation and of the individual chapters hinge center on the figure of the romance author-narrator and the author-narrator’s first-person utterances—prologues, epilogues, and especially extradiegetic narratorial interventions that often interrupt the action of the romance with seeming nonsequiturs. It is through these first-person utterances that the double-voicing, the intonational quotation marks, the processes of reworking and translation, the dialogic zones of contact of romance narrative reveal themselves most clearly.

What do I mean by *author-narrator*? One of the foundational distinctions of modern narrative theory is that between the author, the real person responsible for the composition of a text, and the narrator, the agent of storytelling within the text, the enunciator of the words that comprise the narrative. Mieke Bal opens her classic introduction to narratology with the sentiment that “[i]t hardly needs mentioning that this agent [the narrator] is not the (biographical) author of the narrative,” noting that the details of Jane Austen’s life, for example, are irrelevant to the narratological study of the narratives she authored.²⁴ When I use the term author-narrator, I do not mean to disregard or collapse this theoretical distinction. Neither do I mean what Gérard Genette does when he calls M. de Renoncourt in *Manon Lescaut* and Robinson Crusoe author-narrators: fictive persons who, in the world of the fiction, author a narrative in which they themselves often enter as characters.²⁵

The situation of the first-person narrating voice in medieval narrative – a voice that purports to be that of the text’s author and often speaks explicitly about the process of the text’s composition – is markedly different from the modern examples that have largely informed the development of narrative theory, among which those that Genette cites. It is a noteworthy, distinguishing feature of Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* that the narrator is

²³ Jauss, “Theory of Genres,” 93-94.

²⁴ Mieke Bal, *Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 15.

²⁵ For Genette’s discussion of extradiegesis and the situation of the extradiegetic “author-narrator,” see *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 238ff.

called Marcel and bears signs of influence by the biographical details of the real author's life. This is different from the case of medieval romance, and of course medieval texts generally. Many, indeed, have taken for granted that the first-person narrator in these texts represents the voice of the historical person of the real-life author; those who want to argue differently find themselves in position of having to explain or defend that stance. We know next to nothing about the biographical details of most medieval authors, but we refer to the real person that is the author, mostly without question, by the name by which the first-person narrator in the text identifies him or herself—often with little or no external evidence. Thus, the author of the *Roman de Silence* is Heldris de Cornuailles—but so is the narrator. To make a case for anything different requires some justification—for example, David Hult's carefully argued hypothesis, supported by close readings of the text, that Godefroi of Leigni, who names himself at the conclusion of the *Charrette* as the one who completed the text on Chrétien's behalf, is not a real person but rather an invention of Chrétien's.²⁶

If medievalists, then, have been slow to sever the author from the narrator in the texts that they study, it is not because (or solely because) of a lack of critical sophistication, an ignorance of or disinterest in modern theory, but rather, because the stakes of the distinction between author and narrator are not always apparent. Thus, Haidu, for example, says that “the exact territorial divide between the two is hard to trace in a culture where an author is likely to have read his text out loud to an audience.”²⁷ In my view, this gets at the right idea, but is not exactly on the mark. The precise reason why such a culture would blur the boundary between author and narrator is worth clarifying, even if it may seem self-evident at first glance. It is not to be assumed that the medieval public was so credulous that the mere fact of hearing a text read out loud would render them unable to differentiate between the cognitive state of the person reading and the words of the text being read. And, in a sense, we still do live in a culture where authors do often read their fictional texts out loud to audiences, presumably without any resulting confusion. The hazy “territorial divide” that Haidu gestures to is, more precisely, the result of a tradition in which unique “texts” are produced on the spot through oral performance, with the effect that the literary and narrative instances, to use Genette's terminology, cannot be usefully distinguished from one another. Even once this tradition gradually gives way to a culture of written literary production that introduces a temporal and conceptual distance between real and extradiegetic narration, it leaves behind itself the *convention* by which the first-person voice in a text is understood to represent that of the real author directly addressing audiences or readers. Even if the voice of this first person is decidedly *not* that of the real, historical author (as we may suspect of, for example, the first-person voice of Godefroi de Leigni at the conclusion of the *Charrette*), it nevertheless *purports* to be. From a New Critical sort of standpoint, this may seem to be scarcely more than a quibble: the first-person narrator who names himself Chrétien is not any more to be conflated with a real person than Robinson Crusoe is to be conflated with Daniel Defoe. Furthermore, just because something within a text is meant to be a representation of something real outside of the text does not preclude it from occupying the same narrative level as

²⁶ David Hult, “Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chrétien's *Charrete*,” in *Discourse of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New Hampshire, 1989), pp. 76-96.

²⁷ Peter Haidu, “Problematizing Identity: *Silence*,” in *The Subject Medieval/Modern: Text and Governance in the Middle Ages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 261.

it would if it were completely fictive, just as the real city of Paris and the fictional city of Balbec exist at the same narrative level in the *Recherche*, as Genette reminds us.

Yet, the particular alignment of medieval narrator and real author is fundamentally important to medieval romance. The author-narrator of a medieval romance putatively, conventionally represents a real author employing the first-person voice to narrate a story that, whether allegedly historical or fictional, is separate and distant from the author-narrator's own sphere of existence. This convention is central to the functioning of medieval romance's first-person voice, even in—perhaps especially in—its subversion, in those texts that take it and turn it on its head. Without the recognition and consciousness of such a convention, the famous narrative trick played by Jean de Meun in his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* – in which the God of Love prophesies to the first-person dreamer that Jean will, at a future time, take over authorship of the *Rose* from the deceased Guillaume de Lorris, all in the interrupted voice of the same speaking subject – would be unlikely. While this example is particularly unusual – owing to its ingenuity, its blatant logical violation of the possibilities of temporality and causality, and the unique circumstances of the *Rose*'s authorship – the potential for such a narrative paradox lies dormant in every instance of the first-person voice that declares its own authorship of the text in which it appears. This is due to the aforementioned temporal and conceptual divide caused by the transition between oral and written literary cultures: the delayed temporality of written discourse, where the narrating instance unfolds subsequent to the already-completed literary instance, superimposed over the temporality of oral literary production. What Genette calls the “narrating instance” (the text-internal circumstances in which the utterances that comprise the narrative are being enunciated by the narrator) and the “literary instance” (the real-life production of the narrative for its real-life audience) occur simultaneously, enabling and reinforcing the illusion that they are the same.

Thus, in my analysis in the dissertation, I use the term author-narrator--often interchangeably with the name that is conventionally granted to both the real person who authored a narrative and the first-person subjects who speaks within the narrative to tell the story—to represent this conceptual entanglement. While the real person of the author cannot be *a priori* conflated with the first-person narrator, neither can the complete separation of their voices be taken for granted as a given of narrative structure in medieval – the degree of distance between the two must be determined in any given text, and often must be teased out through careful textual analysis. Bakhtin's analysis of *Evgenii Onegin*, discussed above, illuminates the importance of this work of teasing out, and also provides some method and terminology for proceeding with it. Just as collapsing the author-narrator distinction closes us off from the complex interplay of meanings beyond the surface level of the text, to sever the connection completely by referring separately to “the author” and “the narrator” equally entails an *a priori* assumption that curtails interpretive possibilities. Is the narrator's language merely the object of representation in the text, set off with intonational quotation marks through the permeation of parodic and ironic accents? Is the author (or perhaps, rather, implied author) completely outside the language of the narrator, and is the narrator essentially a character depicted by the text? Or, does the voice of the author-narrator constitute a zone of dialogic contact, through language that is simultaneously represented and representing, illuminating and self-critiquing? One of the most productive self-reflexive gestures of medieval romance, this dissertation will show, is to play with the manifold possibilities that the figure of the author-narrator figure offers. Medieval

romance continually challenges and subverts expectations for the positionality of the author-narrator's voice and the degree of distance between author and narrator, forming new conventions and expectations that in their turn undergo this process, as the interpretation of the first-person narrating voice takes on new stakes as the genre develops.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one takes Renaut de Beaujeu's *Le Bel Inconnu*, one of a generation of romances that followed closely on Chrétien's heels and that blatantly foregrounds and thematizes its intertextual connections with Chrétien, as a case study to think through what it means to read French medieval romance after Chrétien. I argue that *BI* adopts a set of self-reflexive problematics inherited from an earlier model, *Lancelot*, and explores its narrative implications by pushing them to their logical limits; *BI*'s adaptation of and response to a familiar narrative ploy allows Renaut to explore its stakes to the point where the conceit starts to break down. *BI*'s poetics of self-reflexivity ask us to question what work is done, what undercurrents are concealed, by the way in which this and other romances represent love. Borrowing and building upon self-reflexive strategies found in Chrétien, *BI* calls into question the surface level claims and representations of Renaut's narration, with repercussions not only for our understanding of the narrator's interventions or the events of the fictional story, but on the entirety of Renaut's narrative enterprise – the conceit of courtship and composition that constitutes *BI*, but also the very act of romance-making itself. This chapter shows how by taking Renaut seriously as both romancer and as reader of romance, we can begin to reconstruct a context for, and a genealogy of, the development of self-reflexive narrative strategies in romance.

The next chapter shifts our chronological focus forward to a slightly later group of French romance texts from the early- to mid-thirteenth-century, Heldris de Cornuailles' *Roman de Silence* and the anonymous *Amadas et Ydoine*, showing how they respond to the self-reflexive strategies of their more widely studied twelfth-century predecessors in way that pushes the boundaries of romance in unexpected, often rhetorically and interpretively challenging, sometimes absurd-seeming ways. Building on the work of chapter one, where we saw how *BI*'s response to episodes from Chrétien builds upon Chrétien's self-reflexivity and irony and offers richer interpretive possibilities to the reader already familiar with the intertext, the second chapter explores how romances such as *Silence* and *Amadas*, in their turn, offer response to and commentary on this tradition of self-reflexive, ironizing narrative gestures—what it means to employ and interpret them, and particularly, what it means to do so once such gestures are expected and conventionalized. By interpreting *Silence* and *Amadas* under the assumption that both romances and their readers are familiar with the rhetorical strategies of the previous generation of romance—the use of avowals of love as sites to thematize interpretation, the ironic employment of the first-person voice and the irony of the author-narrator person, the use of the narratorial intervention as a metanarrative counterpoint to the story—familiar interpretive questions are given new stakes. The self-reflexive focus on interpretation is also, I show, a way for the lesser-known thirteenth-century romances examined in this chapter to thematize their own difference from an earlier generation, as texts like *Silence* and *Amadas* foreground the importance of their own interpretation as well as how they interpret and respond to their literary predecessors.

The last chapter expands the scope of our study of romance beyond a single language tradition, opening into a comparative examination of two key examples of French and German romance respectively: Chrétien's *Yvain* and Hartmann von Aue's translation or adaptation into Middle High German, *Iwein*. Hartmann's *Iwein* illustrates the importance of reading difference between languages and traditions, without allowing that difference to pre-determine conclusions about individual texts or to suppress recognition and analysis of rhetorical and narrative complexities in adapted or translated texts. Direct imitation is not the only way in which one text can translate another. Hartmann's adaptation of Chrétien's text shows what happens when Hartmann runs up against the narrative conventions of French romance and Chrétien's own particular style of rhetorical play. Hartmann reworks ironic and self-reflexive episodes from Chrétien in a way that might make their effects more readily accessible to an uninitiated audience, one that isn't already primed to expect them; or else, and perhaps even at the same time, Hartmann's techniques of adaptation draw attention to these episodes in Chrétien through their strategic and conspicuous undoing and omission—a kind of compensation for translation loss, and evidence for a genre's conventions, forms, and readerly expectations beyond that of the texts of that genre itself. The way in which Hartmann plays with polysemy and multi-referentiality across different narrative levels might remind us of some of the techniques that the French texts from the previous chapter use to respond to the generic conventions of a previous generation of romance: the personification allegory in the first-person interventions of *Silence*, or the metanarrative of covering and uncovering in *Amadas*. We see that in spite of significant differences between Hartmann's Middle High German adaptation and Chrétien's original, and between *Iwein* and the work of the French romancers who followed in Chrétien's footsteps, Hartmann employs many of the same strategies that his French counterparts use—or else, manages to find a different way of achieving similar thematic or rhetorical effects.

Chapter One

I. Introduction

What does it mean to read medieval romance after Chrétien de Troyes? I mean this in two senses—reading the romances that came after and have often been overshadowed by the *oeuvre* of Chrétien; and reading these romances after having read Chrétien, that is to say, as a reader with a certain knowledge of and familiarity with the techniques of romance self-reflexivity and complexity at their best. Taking Renaut de Beaujeu's *Le Bel Inconnu* as a case study, this chapter proposes to begin to answer this question by looking at a text that followed closely on Chrétien's heels, and that blatantly foregrounds and thematizes its intertextual connections with Chrétien.¹ I propose that by taking Renaut seriously as both romancer and as reader of romance, we can begin to reconstruct a context for, and a kind of genealogy of, the evolution of self-reflexive narrative strategies in romance.

Le Bel Inconnu (henceforth *BI*), dated to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, recounts the story of an unknown knight who, over the course of many adventures, is eventually revealed to be Guinglain, son of the famed Gawain.² Guinglain sets out to ride to the aid of the Princess of Wales, Blonde Esmerée, who is under attack by an enchanter, Mabon. Along the way, he meets and falls in love the Pucele aux Blanches Mains after rescuing her from an unwanted suitor. The two consummate their love and plan to marry. However, Guinglain breaks his promise to the Pucelle when he leaves her behind to fulfill his obligation to Blonde Esmerée, who is now Queen; and then, again, when he abandons her for good to accept an invitation to participate in an Arthurian tournament. Guinglain ends up making an advantageous marriage to Blonde Esmerée. The romance text, which began with the first-person author-narrator's declaration to the lady he loves that he is composing the romance and telling the story for her, concludes with the author-narrator again, now entreating his lady to return his love: if she does, he promises, he will continue the story and reunite Guinglain with his true love, the Dame (no longer Pucele) aux Blanches Mains. Otherwise, if she refuses him, Renaut will say no more, and Guinglain will languish alone forever.

This chapter responds to and intersects two broad categories that have shaped criticism on *BI*: scholarship on *BI*'s self-reflexivity, which tends to focus solely on *BI* and not the romance texts it is responding to and borrowing from, and intertextual scholarship that focuses on tracing connections between *BI* and other texts, without considering the literary self-consciousness with which these other texts are being invoked. Scholarship has already amply demonstrated the quality of “self-conscious literariness” that *BI* exhibits. Critics such as Alice Colby-Hall and Penny Simons, for example, have examined how *BI* productively manipulates romance

¹ *Le Bel Inconnu* is one of a number of romances often referred to as epigonal romances, written in the wake of Chrétien; others these include, for example, *L'atre périlleux*, *La vengeance Raguidel*, *Meraugis de Portlesguez*, *Fergus*, *Yder*, *Hunbaut*, and *Le chevalier à l'épée*.

² For the dating of the text, see Renaut de Beaujeu, *Le Bel Inconnu*, ed. G. Perrie Williams (Paris: Champion, 1967), vii-viii.

conventions and subverts the reader's horizon of expectations.³ *BI*'s self-conscious deployment of the conventions and norms of its genre to cross-purposes leads Peter Haidu and Laurence de Looze, among others, to argue that *BI* self-reflexively challenges the boundaries of fiction and language.⁴ It is true, of course, that *BI* self-consciously employs and subverts the topoi and conventions of romance in a way that challenges generic boundaries. But what makes Renaut different? How do we distinguish *BI*'s self-reflexivity from that of other texts, and especially the romances of Chrétien de Troyes? In an examination of how a text engages with the norms of its genre, it seems like an oversight not to look more closely at other exemplars of the genre, and how they have also carried out such engagements. Much of the language used to describe *BI*'s self-reflexive techniques could apply—and has been applied—to a great deal of other medieval texts and romance texts. On the other hand, an abundance of work on *BI*'s relationship to these other works, and especially the romances of Chrétien, has demonstrated the presence of intertextual allusions and connections throughout *BI*.⁵ In particular, critics have made much of what seem like clear intertextual connections between Renaut and Chrétien, seeking to explore and explain Renaut's response to Chrétien in terms that go beyond simply parody or epigone.⁶ Yet, scholars who have gone the furthest in exploring and interpreting *BI*'s intertextuality, by recognizing the self-reflexive nature of *BI*'s intertextual engagements, have often missed the mark in other ways: in the main, by oversimplifying or reducing the complexity of Chrétien's work. Ricarda Bauschke, for example, argues that Renaut plays with the generic expectation of the happy romance ending by exposing its failure when its fictional base is pulled out from under it; thus, Renaut, in dialogue with Chrétien, rejects Chrétien's overly idealized conception of

³ Alice Colby-Hall, "Frustration and Fulfillment: the Double-Ending of the *Bel Inconnu*," *Yale French Studies* 67 (1984): 120-34; Penny Simons, "The 'Bel Sanblant': Reading *Le Bel Inconnu*," *French Studies* 50 (1996): 257-74.

⁴ Peter Haidu, "Realism, Convention, Fictionality and the Theory of Genres in *Le Bel Inconnu*," *L'Esprit Créateur* 12 (1972): 37-60; Laurence de Looze, "Generic Clash, Reader Response, and the Poetics of the Non-Ending in *Le Bel Inconnu*," in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context: Proceedings of the 5th triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, Dalfsen, The Netherlands, 9-16 Aug. 1986*, eds. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1990), 113-33.

⁵ On *BI*'s references to and borrowings from Chrétien: Madeleine Tyssens, "Les Sources de Renaut de Beaujeu," in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier* (Geneva: Droz, 1970), 2:1043-55; Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, "Intertextuality," in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, eds. Norris J. Lacy et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 1: 224-66.

⁶ For instance, Douglas Maddox, "Inventing the Unknown: Rewriting in *Le Bel Inconnu*," in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting, and Transmission in the French Tradition*, ed. Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 101-23 explores *BI*'s rewriting and appropriation of customs in Chrétien. Debora B. Schwartz, "Guinglain and Lancelot: the nightmares in *Le Bel Inconnu*," *Arthuriana* 12.2 (2002): 3-31 reads Renaut's relationship with Chrétien through the lens of Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence." Arianna Punzi, "Ripensando a Chrétien de Troyes: Il caso del *Bel Inconnu* di Renaut de Beaujeu," in *Chrétien de Troyes et la tradition du roman arthurien en vers*, ed. Annie Combes et al. (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013), 107-28 examines similarities between *BI* and the oeuvre of Chrétien, suggesting that while some are the result of direct influence, others are part of a *koiné* shared by the romance genre.

love.⁷ This reading overlooks the many ways in which Chrétien, far from having a simplistic view of love, himself challenges, undermines, and even challenges literary ideals and topoi of love in his romances. Simon sees *BI*'s borrowings from Chrétien as part of Renaut's deliberate, self-reflexive response to "known romance tradition"—but by making Chrétien stand in for "known romance tradition," she elides the ways in which Chrétien, in some respects much more than Renaut, is unique amongst romancers and reacting to the known, the conventional, and the expected in his own highly sophisticated, literary, self-reflexive way.⁸ Thus, we double back around to the same problem—that *BI* needs to be firmly situated in relation to other texts, while at the same time, something more remains to be said about *BI*'s self-reflexivity that distinguishes it from other texts.

I propose that *BI*'s self-reflexivity can only be fully understood in the context of the ways in which it is in conversation with its intertexts, and conversely, that its conversations with its intertexts can only be fully understood through self-reflexive readings of both *BI* and intertexts that *BI* draws from. Taking as a given the self-reflexivity of *both* texts and the intertextual relationship between them, rather than seeking to demonstrate these in my own analysis, I will use *BI* and Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrette* as a point of departure to think about *BI*'s self-reflexive narrative strategies and the generic and literary historical stakes of those strategies. Scholarship on each of *BI* and the *Charrette* and both taken together has revealed a similar convergence of narrative problematics in the two romances: the suggested identification of narrator/protagonist (and their respective ladies), the issue of the text's closure or lack thereof (double-pronged "endings"), and the tensions produced by the interaction of these phenomena (e.g., the possible association of a particular female figure with each "ending" and the disappearance of Guinevere/the Dame aux Blanches Mains from the narrator; the driving of a wedge between the roles of "author" and "narrator").

There are, of course, significant differences—and in fact, ways in which the two texts appear to achieve opposite ends. The *Charrette* suffers from a seeming excess of authors (Chrétien and the supposed Godefroi de Leigny), whose coterminous presence introduces a retroactive fissure into the romance's narrative structure.⁹ In *BI*, by contrast, the author-narrator in the epilogue insists upon the incompleteness of the narrative, whose proper "ending" is held hostage to his lady's reciprocation of his love. If the authorial voice of the *Charrette* epilogue pretends to a degree of unity and closure that is belied by the text itself (and indeed, by the very fact of "Godefroi"'s presence and claiming of the first-person voice for himself), *BI*'s loud protestation of incompleteness is disrupted by the question of whether or not the text actually "wants" to be completed by the reunion of Guinglain and the Dame aux Blanches Mains, or whether the fact that neither the love story nor the author-narrator's literary endeavor can be brought to fulfillment is precisely the point. But rather than seeking to establish these points of

⁷ Ricarda Bauschke, "Auflösung des Artusromans und Defiktionalisierung im *Bel Inconnu*: Renauts de Beaujeu Auseinandersetzung mit Chrétien de Troyes," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 102 (1992): 42-63.

⁸ Simon, "The 'Bel Sanblant'," 263-66.

⁹ David Hult, "Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chrétien's *Charrete*," in *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989), 91.

potential influence between *BI* and the *Charrette*, or even to describe the particular transformative mechanisms that *BI* works upon certain episodes or narrative structures found in its possible source material, I instead pose the question of *how* and *to what end* *BI* “speaks to” the narrative ambiguities found in Chrétien, taking up the problematics related to the thematization of writing and composition, literary and linguistic production.

Accordingly, in going beyond self-reflexivity as the endpoint of analysis to examine more closely the stakes of *BI*’s narrative play in the wake of Chrétien, this chapter will explore and interpret *BI*’s treatment of a phenomenon already observed in the *Charrette* and other romances, namely, how *BI* stages the intersection of love and of poetic and linguistic production. Focusing primarily on the voice of the first-person author-narrator—in the prologue and epilogue, but especially in key narratorial interventions that pepper the telling of the romance story at strategic moments—I argue that *BI* adopts a set of self-reflexive problematics inherited from an earlier model, the *Charrette*, and explores its narrative implications by pushing them to their logical limits; *BI*’s adaptation of and response to a familiar narrative ploy allows Renaut to explore its stakes to the point where the conceit starts to break down.

Claude Roussel describes the enterprise of *BI* as being at once an act of love and courtship as well as an act of writing; but more than that, the real work of the romance is the extent to which it makes love and writing coextensive, intertwined with and inextricable from one another.¹⁰ This intersection in *BI* has especially consequential implications: that of the potential failure of both constitutive enterprises, love and writing. If, as Colby-Hall suggests, the ending (or non-ending) of *BI* serves to furnish the reader the “pleasure of imagined fulfillment,” a reader whose imagination is attentive to the narrative logics of *BI*’s structure and its narrator’s interventions may well conclude that such fulfillment is not possible according to the romance’s own terms.¹¹ Fulfillment is unimaginable precisely because it is the interaction between love and language in *BI* that causes both love and language to fail. Within the romance’s fictional world, Guinglain loses the Dame aux Blanches Mains first because of his prior commitment to another quest, and then because, seduced by the lure of an upcoming tournament, he chooses to leave her again, not knowing he will be unable to return to her. Extradiegetically, however, regardless of the justifiability of his actions, the protagonist’s separation from his lady is necessitated by *BI*’s narrative conceit—Guinglain cannot win back the Dame by the end of the romance because the author-narrator has not yet won *his* lady.

The success of love as represented within the fiction of the text is subordinated to and made to depend upon the success of the author-narrator’s *métier*—yet it is the very terms of the conceit itself that undermine the possibility of its fulfillment. *BI* not only reproduces the *Charrette*’s rhetorical gesture of tying the production of the narrative to the will of a lady who serves as an extradiegetic parallel to the protagonist’s love interest, but also proceeds to play a similar narrative trick by having the love interest unceremoniously disappear from the story

¹⁰ Claude Roussel, “Point final et points de suspension: la fin incertaine du *Bel Inconnu*,” in *Le point final: Actes du Colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand*, ed. Alain Montandon (Clermont-Ferrand: Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de l’Université de Clermont-Ferrand II, 1984), 32-33.

¹¹ Colby-Hall, “Frustration and Fulfillment,” 134.

before its conclusion—literally so, in the case of the *BI*, and by magic. This disappearance not only frustrates our generic expectations, but also turns the neat constellation of extradiegetic narrator-intradiegetic lover, extradiegetic lady-intradiegetic beloved inside out. I will begin the chapter by examining this narrative twist, suggesting that we have been primed for this frustrating non-ending all along by a first-person author-narrator who explicitly problematizes his own output, both story and narrative. The way in which this suspicious author-narrator talks about love (his protagonist's and his own) and about language (the poetic production of a text about love and the rhetorical production of language expressing and soliciting love) troubles each of these as well as the relationship between the two, culminating in a romance where both love and language fail.

Though this failure reveals itself most spectacularly in the romance's epilogue, the inability of *BI*'s narrative conceit to support Renaut's ambitions as narrator-cum-lover has visible repercussions throughout the romance. After thinking about the narrative problems posed by the romance's non-ending in relation to the author-narrator's other metapoetic and metalinguistic statements on the language and rhetoric of love, I will extend my examination to look at other moments of self-reflexivity in the romance's first-person narratorial interventions. I show how it is in such moments, which have sometimes been overlooked as trivial or dismissed as the performance or evocation of a generic persona, that *BI* performs some of its most compelling and startling self-reflexive gestures, especially in how the romances reproduces and speaks back to the self-reflexive narrative strategies of Chrétien's romances. Doubling back to think about the romance's conclusion again, this time in relation to Renaut's narration of Guinglain and the Pucele's consummation of their love, I argue that the way in which Renaut constellates the relationship between language and love—in his narration of the romance story, his interventions to talk about love and his own love affair, his metalinguistic discussions of his own usage, his use of the ploy of the withheld and contingent ending—calls into question not only Renaut's own literary and amorous undertakings, but the very conceit of romance and other genres of love literature to represent love as constructed through literary and discursive means.

II. The Impossible Ending of Renaut, Narrator and Lover

I will begin at the end, by considering the *BI*'s conclusion, or lack thereof, and the retrospective light that this non-ending sheds on the Renaut's telling of the story and on the figure of the author-narrator himself. *BI*'s non-ending, in a way, imitates and responds to the narrative problematics of the *Charrette*, and more generally speaking, the narrative problematics of romance self-reflexivity: the way in which the text's self-consciousness of its generic conventions and its play with the structures of extradiegetic narrative erode the illusion of a preexisting, integral story that can be contemplated and analyzed apart from its contingency on the circumstances of its narrative construction. This dynamic is foregrounded in the *Charrette*, in which Chrétien's famous claim that Marie de Champagne gave him *matiere* and *sens*, and that Chrétien has only applied his *atancion* after the fact, is complicated by Godefroi de Leigni's takeover as author-narrator. We retroactively discover, in Godefroi's epilogue, that Chrétien stops composing the poem at the same moment in the story in which Lancelot's service to Guinevere, to which Chrétien's service to Marie had been implicitly compared, ends, with Guinevere dropping out of the story and Méléagant's sister becoming the prominent female

figure.¹² What, then, of Marie’s *matiere* and *sens*—especially as Godefroi claims to be carrying out the completion of the romance exactly as Chrétien would have, while in the same breath serving as an blatant reminder that it is not Chrétien who is now narrating the poem?¹³ But while other romances often conceal this dynamic, allowing it to trouble and disrupt but not dismantle their narrative surfaces, *BI* lays bare the fragile contingency of the romance story as fixed or fixable “truth”—explicitly so, in the epilogue where the author-narrator tells us that the continuation of the romance depends on the success of his own amorous pursuit, and also implicitly, in the very conceit of the enterprise of literary production as the undertaking of the pursuit of love, and the attendant parallel between extradiegetic persons and intradiegetic romance characters. Readers of both *BI* and the *Charrette* have noted how these romances create a parallel between the romance narrator and romance protagonist, and the narrator’s relation to his lady and the protagonist’s relation to his beloved.¹⁴ Schwartz, in particular, posits a connection between the two texts, observing how *BI*’s prologue takes up a metapoetic language that “seems calculated to signal Renaut’s indebtedness” to Chrétien and that “reproduces the narrative situation of the poet in the *Charrette* prologue.”¹⁵ For instance, Renaut’s opening lines—

Cele qui m’a en sa baillie,
 Cui ja d’amors sans trece rie
 M’a doné sens de cançon faire,
 Por li veul un roumant estraire
 D’un molt biel conte d’aventure.
 Por celi c’aim outre mesure
 Vos vel l’istiore comencier ;
 En poi d’eure puet Dius aidier :
 Por cho n’en prenc trop grant esmai,
 mais mostrer vel que faire sai. (vv. 1-10)

—echo the language Chrétien uses to describe being in Marie’s power, and his attribution of the *sens* of the narrative to her, emphasizing his own role as a sort of craftsman whose output is being directed by his lady (in Chrétien’s case, his patroness, and in Renaut’s, the lady he loves and is trying to court.)

In light of how *BI*, from the outset, positions itself as an adaptation of and response to the *Charrette*’s narrative problematics, we recognize how both romances use the narrative set-ups of their prologues as a point of departure from which to explore the repercussions of the link between extra- and intradiegetic, culminating in the problems of closure that characterize the end of each romance. In both *BI* and the *Charrette*, this problem is intimately bound up with the narrative ploy that connects the romance author-narrator’s practice of poetic and linguistic

¹² Wendy Knepper, “Theme and Thesis in *Le Chevalier de la Charette*,” *Arthuriana* 6.2 (1996): 62-63.

¹³ Hult, “Author/Narrator/Speaker,” 91.

¹⁴ Knepper, “Theme and Thesis,” 62-63; Simon, “The ‘Bel Sanblant’,” 257; de Looze, “Generic Clash,” 113.

¹⁵ Schwartz, “Guinglain and Lancelot,” 4-5.

production with the romance protagonist's practice of love. In *BI*, however, the epilogue may fulfill a similar function to that of the *Charrette* in frustrating closure, but it does so in a markedly different way. As much as *BI*'s prologue seems to deliberately recall that of the *Charrette*, so does *BI*'s epilogue seem determined to achieve exactly the opposite end from the *Charrette*'s (at least ostensibly, on the surface), declaring its lack and need of completion as loudly as the *Charrette* declares that its narrative is already complete and can continue not a step further. And while the *Charrette*'s Godefroi appeals to the authority of Chrétien's intention in his attempt at fabricating closure, *BI* places the onus for the fictional story's outcome on the response and interpretation of the reader. In this way, *BI*'s ending pushes the logic of this connection of extra- and intradiegetic to its limits, not only challenging but dispensing altogether with the premise that the fictional story has an integral existence that precedes the narrative that generates it.

And, though the *BI*'s ending is left structurally open, contingent upon the extradiegetic circumstances of the lady's response to Renaut's suit (and thus, her interpretation as a reader of Renaut's narrative), I will argue in this section and the next that both pursuits that *BI* claims to undertake in its prologue and epilogue, love and poesis, ultimately fail in Renaut's romance. Like the *Charrette*, *BI* makes a paradoxical conundrum out of the concept of narrative closure: the author-narrator's demand for closure in the romance is the very thing that prevents such fulfillment from occurring. *BI*'s epilogue declares to us that the text is still in need of continuation and ending—yet the conceit by which it does so not only builds into the text the impossibility of such an ending, but the outright rejection of it. The withheld ending is not just impossible in the sense that it does not exist and the text already has a conclusion that, from the perspective both of narrative and of plot, does not seem to leave open any clear avenues for its un-doing or continuation (a marriage and an epilogue). It is impossible because, if we buy into the premise that Renaut has written the romance text in an attempt to persuade his lady to requite his love, the lady ought to reject Renaut, if she has been reading his text carefully.

In fact, the narrative conceit that would tie the fate of extradiegetic figures (Renaut and his lady) to that of intradiegetic characters (Guinglain and the Dame aux Blanches Mains) might already have rendered us suspicious of Renaut as lover, if not yet as narrator. Given Guinglain's betrayal of the Dame aux Blanches Mains and his marriage to another woman, we might ask what aspersions the identification between the author-narrator and Guinglain (suggested by the author-narrator himself) casts upon Renaut's own suit. Is the correspondence between the author-narrator and his romance protagonist close enough that Guinglain's failure indicates a similar potential flaw on the part of Renaut? Perhaps, perhaps not. But we might also wonder at the *conte* that Renaut chooses to tell his lady, who "d'amors sans trecerie / M'a doné sens de cançon faire" (vv. 2-3), in a narrative ultimately meant to persuade her to return his love.¹⁶ For the story of Guinglain and the Dame aux Blanches Mains, of course, is not one of such a faithful love. It is certainly not a story that seems like it might inspire a woman (especially a woman identified with the twice-betrayed Dame aux Blanches Mains) to take a chance on her intrepid suitor.

In the light of such suspicions, exclamations made by the author-narrator, such as the following—

¹⁶ All citations of *Le Bel Inconnu* refer to the edition of G. Perrie Williams.

Or m'escoutés, voir vos dirai;
 Ja, mon veul, mon mal n'i querrai;
 Qui que s'oublit, je nel puis faire.
 Celi dont ne me puis retraire
 Ne vel je mie ore oublier.
 Mais Dius me gart de li fauser. (vv. 1237-42)

—acquire a different valence: what may have seemed, at first glance, like a declaration of superlative fidelity (or at least, of superlative faithful intent) now sounds more like an attempt to ward off an eventuality to which the speaker believes himself susceptible—one serious and threatening enough that Renaut must appeal to the protection of God to keep it from occurring. The mentions of will and forgetfulness, in light of the nature Guinglain's offense, reinforce the impression that the good intentions Renaut may have (or at least profess) do not secure him from faithlessness. He may not willingly seek his *mal*, he may not want to forget his lady—but he must still ask God to keep him from proving false. This entreaty is followed by a warning against deceiving women:

Ce dient cil qui vont treçant,
 Li uns le va l'autre contant:
 « Peciés n'est de feme traïr »;
 Mais laidement sevent mentir:
 Ains molt grans peciés est, par m'ame!
 Or vos penerois d'une dame
 Qui n'avera talent d'amer;
 Vos li irés tant sermonner
 Que serra souprisse d'amor.
 Tant li prierés cascun jor,
 Bien li porés son cuer enbler.
 De ço nos viene Dius garder! (vv. 1243-54)

From a generalized *cil*, who enact their lies and deception in an aphoristic present tense, Renaut moves into a more definite language of futurity, speaking of—and to—an increasingly specified second-person interlocutor who *will* do such-and-such things with such-and-such results. The appeal to God that follows here echoes the one Renaut made concerning himself just a few lines earlier; the proximity of the two exhortations suggests two men—Renaut's *je* and the second-person *vous*—teetering on the brink of betrayal and falsity. Furthermore, it is striking that what Renaut, in his censure of the deceivers of women, asks God to guard against here is the use of language to persuade a woman to requite one's love—that is, precisely the thing that Renaut himself is ostensibly undertaking through his narration, the supposed reason for the romance's composition to begin with. What is *BI*, seen through the framing of the prologue and epilogue, but an attempt to *sermonner* and *prier* in hopes of stoking love in the heart of Renaut's lady? The author-narrator in this intervention not only condemns his own enterprise, but also, through his exhortation, seems to be actively trying to impede its successful outcome. The *ço* that God ought to prevent encompasses not just the verbal means of persuasion, but also their intended effect: “son cuer enbler.”

The rhetorical act of courtship, then, by the logic of these lines as well as those that immediately follow, is firmly associated with the inevitable deception and betrayal of the woman courted. In curiously definite and concrete detail, Renaut warns against such a courtship's consequences:

Por vos tos ses amis perdra
Et son mari qui l'amera.
Quant en arés tot vo voloir,
Adont le vaurés decevoir.
Mal ait qui si acostuma
Et qui jamais jor le fera! (vv. 1255-60)

The subjunctive interjection here seems to follow into the general pattern of the previous exhortations; Renaut's insistence on hitting this same note over and over again serves to foreground the need for readerly attention to this theme and the discourse surrounding it. But this exclamation also raises another possibility. With the benefit of our hindsight as readers already cognizant of how Renaut's narrative will unfold, the oddly specific futurity of this passage acquires a ring almost of prophecy: for Guinglain, too, is one "qui jamais jor le fera," one who will betray the Dame aux Blanches Mains once he has had what he wants from her. Guinglain and the Dame may not be the specific or unique referents of the narrator's admonishment (the details about losing friends and a husband clearly don't apply), but the romance's protagonist evidently falls under the umbrella of the narrator's denunciation, allowing us to see this moment in retrospect as a kind of ominous foreshadowing of the unhappy end of the Dame's love for Guinglain. What's more, the exhortative force of the interjection expresses the author-narrator's condemnation not merely as a matter of personal opinion or aphoristic wisdom, but by actively wishing ill on a category of person that logically must include Guinglain. The language of the narrative, then, explicitly pits itself against the object of its narration.

In this way, the narratorial intervention that may have seemed like an ornamental, if lengthy, gesture of typical romance aphorizing becomes instead a self-reflexive commentary on the romance story, and by extension, on the romance narrative—for, as we have seen, these are purposefully made to depend on one another by the conceit of the epilogue. Our initial suspicions—over the romance narrator-cum-suitor's choice of story and the doubts such a story casts on Renaut's romantic and poetic intentions alike—are confirmed here by no less an authority than the narrator himself. The same Renaut who has declared he will compose a romance for the lady he loves and will later try to ransom the romance story's proper ending at the price of her love tells us here that men who use language to win women's love aren't to be trusted, that such an enterprise inevitably ends in betrayal and deception. Men shouldn't seek to persuade women to love them, because a man who wins a woman's heart will then love her and leave her. Both parts of this scenario—success in courtship and the betrayal of women—are outcomes that the narrator explicitly works to prevent, the former because it results in the latter; we see this admonishment borne out by no less than the hero of the story that Renaut has decided to tell in the romance he composes.

How, then, are we to understand Renaut's concluding plea for his love's requital in *BI*'s epilogue—especially as, in making this move, he ties his own success in love to that of his

already tarnished romance hero? It is impossible to conclude that Renaut's courtship should be successful. If we take him at his own word, he has already told us that such rhetorical gestures are untrustworthy and have negative consequences for the women who are taken in by them. If we regard the narrator's language with doubt and suspicion, reading against the grain of what the text seems to be saying on its surface, we note that the very means by which Renaut seeks to make his case for love—withholding the story's happy ending—is what throws that case into disrepute. By implicitly placing his lady in the role of the betrayed Dame aux Blanchés Mains, Renaut gives her more reason to say no than yes to his suit. And by condemning Renaut's suit to failure, the text equally consigns its supposedly happy ending to the realm of impossibility: Guinglain and the Dame are never, ever getting back together. What we are told we ought to want from the romance narrative, implicitly through the suggestive force of generic convention and more explicitly by the narrator's remarks in the epilogue, is not only withheld from us, but actively disavowed and repudiated. In declaring itself in want of continuation and in need of conclusion, the romance concludes definitely and forecloses the possibility of any such continuation in perpetuity.

III. The Narrative Convergence of Love and Writing, of the Intra- and Extradiegetic

This paradox of impossible closure is produced by the way in which *BI*, and especially the epilogue, combines and ultimately conflates the romantic with the poetic. Claude Roussel describes the narrative enterprise of *BI* as at once an act of love and courtship as well as an act of writing.¹⁷ But more than that, the real formal innovation of the romance is the degree to which love and writing become coextensive, intertwined with and inextricable from one another, over the course of *BI*'s narrative workings. It is the conflation of *BI*'s two constitutive acts—the composition of a complete romance and the winning of the lady—that causes the failure of both.

Renaut doesn't stumble across this problematic out of nowhere. This thematic intersection of love and writing comes about from the way in which the romance genre puts the intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrative levels into contact with one another, through the voice of the first-person author-narrator. By such a means, the question of how lovers talk about love becomes tied to that of how romances write about love and write about their own writing. We find a succinct but compelling gesture to this phenomenon in the *Charrette*'s linking of Chrétien's extradiegetic service to Marie to Lancelot's intradiegetic service to Guinevere, discussed above. This link is even more striking in that, unlike in *BI*, the extradiegetic lady for whom the author-narrator composes his poem is not his beloved, but rather his patroness. It is significant that, even without the conceit of poetic production as courtship, the romance uses the same language to describe the circumstances and process of its own narration as it does to describe the motivating conditions of its protagonist's acts of love that constitute the romance's plot.¹⁸

¹⁷ Roussel, "Point final," pp. 32-33.

¹⁸ The metapoetic language of the prologue, in which Chrétien says he will undertake composing a romance for Marie "Come cil qui est suens antiers" (v. 4), resurfaces later in the romance's description of Lancelot's relation to Guinevere using the same phrase verbatim (v. 5656); all citations of the *Charrette* refer to the edition of Charles Méla (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992).

But *BI* does more than just suggest parallels or even causal links between love, the writing of love, and the writing of romance; rather, Renaut's narratorial intervention enables and enacts the slippages from one to the next that ultimately allow for the conflation of all three. Renaut doesn't just thematize writing; he rhetorically performs the processes of transformation that turn romance narrative into metanarrative. Having just roundly condemned the men who have betrayed and will betray women (vv. 1243-60), Renaut proclaims: "Cil qui se font sage d'amor, / Cil en sont faus et traïtor" (vv. 1261-62). The context of these lines, following the previous passages concerning the verbal deception of women, suggests that this quality of being *sage d'amor* refers primarily to rhetorical ability in love. And the notable length of the continuous narratorial intervention constituted by all these passages ought to signal to us, by occupying our attention for such an extensive space of time in the narration of the romance, the importance of the themes being articulated here, and the importance of their interrelation. It is telling that the aspersions cast on the rhetorical practice of courtship and the condemnation of skill in speaking about love segue into a reflection on the narrator's own language:

Por ço mius vel faire folie
 Que ne soie loiaus m'amie.
 Ço qu'ele n'est l'ai apielee;
 Que dirai dont? La molt amee?
 S'ensi l'apiel, voir en dirai;
 S'amie di, lors mentirai,
 Car moi ne fait ele sanblant.
 Las! Por li muir, et por li cant;
 Tos jors serai en sa merchi. (vv. 1263-71)

That question of loyalty is posed here in a somewhat perplexing way: as an opposition between *faire folie* and being disloyal. What's more, this coupling of folly and loyalty is presented as the reasoned consequence of the earlier criticism of the *sage d'amor*: skill in love—in speaking love—equals falsity and betrayal, therefore loyalty is preferable even at the price of folly. Does *folie*, then, mean to err in use of the language of love? Perhaps so, for what immediately follows this valorization of loyalty is the author-narrator's equivocation over the appropriate language to describe his lady—recalling a similar moment in Chrétien's *Cligès*, in which a lovelorn Soredamors anguishes over whether she dares to call Alexandre, with whom she is in love but whose feelings for her she is not certain of, her *ami*, and whether she would be lying if she did (vv. 1372-89).¹⁹

¹⁹ Another possibility is that the quality of being *sage d'amor* here refers not to language but rather to conduct in love. This would give a contradictory, or at least deeply counterintuitive, sense to these lines: those who are good at love are false to it, and it's better to make mistakes in love than to be disloyal. Is this an act of strategic self-justification, an errant lover's way of putting a spin on his transgression by proposing that *folie* be constellated with loyalty? In other words, does the logic of these statements attempt to offer a "way out" of the problem of proposing that Guinglain and the Dame aux Blanches Mains should be reunited even after he has betrayed her, and that Renaut's lady ought to accept a suitor whose trustworthiness is correspondingly suspicious?

Renaut expresses his consternation over the use of the word *amie* in a reflexive act of naratorial self-commentary, questioning the validity of the proposition he has just pronounced. In this way, just as the question of linguistic fidelity follows closely on the heels of the question of romantic fidelity, Renaut's explicitly self-reflexive gesture reframes the problem of his love life as the problem of his poetic composition. The reappearance of the categories of truth and lie in these lines gives an extra charge to the author-narrator's insistence on verbal precision. Renaut's earlier declaration of fidelity to his lady and his exhortation against falsity are prefaced by a stated intent to speak the truth: "voir vos dirai" (v. 1237), a promise made not in the capacity of an honest lover, but rather that of a faithful narrator. Immediately after, Renaut tells us that the deceivers of women are outrageous liars—not because they lie to women (though we can probably assume that they do that too), but because they misnarrate and misrepresent the facts of what they do. The suggested correlation between truthfulness in language and faithfulness in love in these passages concretizes in the narrator's ruminations on the word *amie*—and then again in *BI*'s impossible ending, when, perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, our suspicions over Renaut the narrator's truthfulness and Renaut the lover's faithfulness become one and the same.

Renaut's protracted reflection on the accuracy of his word choice is resolved through a gesture of lyric suspension that leaves us stuck in an unfinished process of death and poesis, one whose future outcome is entirely dependent on the will—on the mercy—of Renaut's beloved lady. Thus, the amendment of the perfective *amie* in favor of the imperfective *molt amee* not only self-consciously calls attention to the general problem of *BI*'s poetics, but also imitates the poetics of *BI*'s epilogue—the gesture towards completeness that doubles back on itself to underscore an enduring incompleteness. As if in anticipation of the romance's final act, Renaut concludes his naratorial intervention by yoking the problem of not-yet-requited love to the problem of continuing poetic production in an act of closure that isn't one, that suspends itself in perpetuity. In fact, the entirety of the 35-line intervention, beginning with Renaut's declaration of faithful intent and ending in the appeal to his lady's mercy, loosely mimics the structure of the romance of the whole, and serves as a microcosmic distillation of the romance's narrative problematics.

The narrative problematics of closure, then, are not just local to the epilogue, or a retrospective lens through which the epilogue reframes what comes before it. Rather, these problematics are inscribed deeply in the poetics of *BI* through the workings of the first-person naratorial voice. Of the conceit of the ending held hostage that provides the epilogue with its concluding gesture, Haidu says: "The *persona*'s contrasting relationship to the narrative, and the narrative's dependence on the *persona*'s good fortune, playfully raise the question of the limits of literature: where does fiction end, where does reality begin?"²⁰ But this question, if not posed as strikingly or incisively as in the conclusion of *BI*, is already implicit much earlier, not only in *BI*'s narrative set-up from the start, but also even before the *BI* itself, if perhaps less overly so, in the *Charrette* and in other texts that play between extradiegetic and diegetic narrative levels through rhetorical manipulation of the voice of the first-person author-narrator. We might ask, too, if "reality" is the most useful category of analysis, as one might easily conclude that both the romance story and the extradiegetic situation of Renaut's authorship and courtship are

²⁰ Haidu, "Realism," p. 51.

unequivocally fictions, without needing to posit any sort of problematic relationship between the two.

What is new in *BI* is the extreme degree to which the romance subordinates the intradiegetic to the extradiegetic (and vice versa), in a way that effaces the distinction between the two and makes it no longer tenable. Other texts—the *Charrette*, notably—also trouble this boundary between intra- and extradiegetic narrative levels. But in *BI*, this is not just a narrative strategy, but the very action in which the romance culminates. The conundrum of Renaut’s entreaty for the lady to resolve Guinglain’s love story by her positive response to Renaut’s suit is effectively a request for the recipient of Renaut’s text, his language, his words, to actively partake in the puncturing of illusory narrative boundaries and the dismantling of the conventional narrative categories of romance that posit a story’s integral preexistence of narrative. The interpretive problem posed by the epilogue—a literary problem for us as readers and critics, and a provocation for a response from Renaut’s lady based on her own reception and interpretation of Renaut’s language—is the romance’s acknowledgment not that Renaut has transformed romance narrative into metanarrative, but that the two have been one and the same all along.

IV. Self-reflexive Intertextuality, between the Extra- and Intradiegetic

Thus, as we have seen, the repercussions of Renaut’s yoking of his fate and Guinglain’s, and of our suspicious reading of his narratorial intervention in light of this narrative conceit, extend throughout the romance. Our suspicious, skeptical reading of the first-person voice, which seeks to link our understanding of the romance story with our interpretation of the extradiegetic narrator as being himself an object of literary representation, also casts doubt on other key moments of Renaut’s narration that we will examine more closely here: specifically, moments in *BI* that contain clear intertextual references to or borrowings from Chrétien. This section will demonstrate the importance of recognizing and acknowledging self-reflexive gestures in Chrétien when seeking to read and interpret how Renaut is in conversation with Chrétien. Rather than simply demonstrating that an intertextual connection exists or positing that Renaut is adding a self-conscious metapoetic dimension to something that is conventional in Chrétien, this section shows how *BI*’s strategies for problematizing the voice of its own author-narrator and its own generic conventions depend upon, respond to, and build upon similar strategies in *BI*’s intertexts in Chrétien.

A compelling example of this self-reflexive intertextuality—and intertextual self-reflexivity—develops through *BI*’s use of a familiar literary commonplace. Renaut’s warning of the deceitfulness of men, discussed above, seems to echo a similar sentiment expressed by the author-narrator a couple hundred lines earlier, when, describing the courteousness of Guinglain’s three opponents to attack him one at a time rather than all at once, Renaut laments the lost honor of yesteryear:

Or va li tans afebloiant
Et cis usages decaant
Que vint et cinc enprendent un;
Cis affaires est si comun
Qui tuit le tienent de or mes.

La force paist le pré adiés:
Tos est mués en autre guise;
Mais dont estoit fois et francisse,
Pitiés, proece et cortoisie,
Et largece sans vilonnie;
Or fait cascuns tot son pooir,
Tot entendent au decevoir. (vv. 1071-82)

The nostalgic lamentation for the good old days is in its own right a rhetorical gesture that a canny reader of romance might understandably look upon with suspicion. The occurrence of this topos of *laudatio temporis acti*, praise of times gone by, in Chrétien's *Yvain* makes a compelling case for this suspicion. The author-narrator bemoans the loss of sincerity in the degraded present, complaining that those who talk about love do not understand it, and therefore are telling lies—unlike in the more virtuous past, when people knew love and knights told love stories at Arthur's court. But this valorization and idealization of Arthur is immediately called into question by the scene of disjunction at Arthur's court and the tale of Calogrenant's failure. And Chrétien's claims for the integrity of love and love language are further undermined by Yvain's failure with Laudine. The topos of *laudatio temporis acti*, then, is not meant to be taken seriously, but signals to the reader the need to scrutinize the author-narrator's language rather than taking it at face value—in other words, signaling to the reader that the author-narrator's language is not only means, but also object of representation.

Renaut's *BI* builds upon the narrative dynamics of this complaint in *Yvain* in an interesting way. Renaut, too, is preoccupied with the idea of sincerity, and particularly the sincerity of the use of the language of love—which, as we noted earlier, is a problem that concerns not only the would-be lover's rhetorical courtship of his lady, but also his accounting of his own actions, the metalanguage he uses to narrate his own activities. And though the occasion for Renaut's own lamentation about the lost mores of the past and the degraded values of the present is triggered by Guinglain's engagement in combat rather than in love, Renaut's complaint about the deceitfulness of the present, especially in the light of its subsequent amplification in the condemnation of the mendacity of men who court women, seems not only to echo the concerns of the author-narrator of *Yvain*, but to present their consequences: the problem with people saying things they don't mean is the use of language to deceive. Schwartz, who points out the presence of this same topos in both *Yvain* and *BI*, posits the influence of the former on the latter. Schwartz sees these romances' use of the topos as an intertextual strategy to situate themselves within a genealogical literary tradition. Chrétien, according to Schwartz, plays it straight, serving as a mediator between the glory of the past and the realization of that glory in the present, in the form of the narrative inheritance of the *translatio* tradition.²¹ Thus, Chrétien

²¹ Debora B. Schwartz, "'Those Were the Days': The *Ubi Sunt* Topos in *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, *Yvain*, and *Le Bel Inconnu*," *Rocky Mountain Review* 49 (1995): 27-47. I prefer the term *laudatio temporis acti*, the praise of times gone by, to Schwartz's identification of the topos in question as *ubi sunt*, a reflection of the transitory nature of the present moment; see Tony Hunt, "The Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 6 (1970): 12-13.

“recapture[s] the Arthurian past for his contemporary audience.”²² Meanwhile Renaut troubles the topos’s distinction between past and present—“demonstrat[ing],” Schwartz argues, “his own connection with certain values perceived as ‘Arthurian,’ thereby establishing himself as a successor worthy of his predecessors, an island of the ‘past’ in the twelfth-century ‘present.’”²³ In other words, Schwartz claims that Renaut’s reworking of the motif found in Chrétien “in effect den[ies] that the past is truly gone.”²⁴ But what Schwartz’s reading misses is that in Chrétien, not only has the distinction between past and present already been problematized, but it is clear that this distinction can’t be maintained because the past isn’t what it’s been cracked up to be. What Renaut borrows from Chrétien, if anything, is not a wholesale, uncritical endorsement of the idea of a utopic past, but rather, the tongue-in-cheek use of a rhetorical convention in order to poke fun at the questionable value of such a gesture (how many successive generations since the beginning of time have been echoing this same complaint, already the subject of lampooning in Horace’s *Ars poetica*, whose *laudator temporis acti* gives the topos its name?), and also to tease apart the flimsy rhetorical construction of the image of an idealized romance world by conventional language and topoi, the artifice of which is exposed by the scrutiny of the careful reader.²⁵

In fact, just as we have seen the logic of the *laudatio* controverted in *Yvain*, an ironic signal of the text’s self-reflexivity that calls the reader’s attention to the narratorial inconsistencies and thus to the work of idealization and distortion performed by the romance genre’s conventional language, so in *BI* do we see Renaut’s take on this topos fail to hold up under scrutiny. Renaut’s lavish praise of the loyalty, nobility, and courtliness of the idyllic past is already undercut by our prior observation concerning Guinglain’s eventual betrayal of the Dame aux Blanches Mains—a betrayal which, we will see later, is portrayed as something more nefarious than merely an accidental lapse of judgment or an unfortunate but unavoidable conflict of obligations. Furthermore, the strict consignment of virtue to the past and the harsh condemnation of the self-interested deceit of the present are called into question by our previous suspicions about Renaut’s own trustworthiness: not only do we have cause to doubt Renaut’s authority in making such a judgment, given his own potentially deceptive language, but also, the suggested identification between Guinglain and Renaut (and between Guinglain’s unfaithfulness and Renaut’s) troubles the sharp dichotomy of past and present on which the topos of *laudatio temporis acti* depends.

If this is not enough, the narrator’s valorization of the past as a time when nobler virtues reigned and might did not make right—unlike the degraded present, where “La force paist le pré”—is belied by the reader’s general knowledge of romance’s conventions and stock situations (how many judgments decided by combat?), but also, by the narrative of the *BI* itself, by the very scenes in which *BI* most conspicuously signals its story-telling debts, its invocation of intertexts that themselves present compelling challenges to Renaut’s dichotomy of idyllic past and degraded present. In *Erec et Enide*, for instance, flying in the face of what Renaut asserts, there is a scene where Erec finds himself beset by exactly the problem of multiple assailants, as three

²² Schwartz, “Those Were the Days,” 36.

²³ Schwartz, “Those Were the Days,” 38.

²⁴ Schwartz, “Those Were the Days,” 46.

²⁵ Horace, *Ars poetica*, 173.

robbers attack him at once. And it is from *Erec* that *BI* borrows the episode that most emphatically and brazenly points its finger at how, in the days gone by of Arthurian romance, might does in fact make right: the contest for the sparrowhawk. Chrétien's telling of this episode underscores how even while all the characters seem to buy into the fiction that the woman who obtains the sparrowhawk (or rather, has a knight obtain it on her behalf through combat) is the fairest one of all, there are disruptions to the logic of the sparrowhawk challenge that call its premise into question, tell-tale clues that suggest that we ought to read this episode against, rather than along, the grain: for one, the fact that Yder has previous been winning the sparrowhawk by default, for lack of challengers; for another, that the sparrowhawk will be awarded to him in perpetuity if no one wins it off him this year; lastly, and most tellingly, that Erec's participation in the sparrowhawk challenge seems primarily motivated by his desire to avenge himself on Yder for an earlier insult. It is in response to Erec's inquiry of Yder's whereabouts that the vavasour, Enide's father, tells him of the sparrowhawk contest; whereupon Erec replies:

“Cest chevalier ne aing je pas!
 Sachiez, se je armes avoie,
 L'esprevier li chalongeroie.” (vv. 602-04)²⁶

His primary concern is to obtain the means to enter combat with his nemesis; he proceeds to inquire at length about how he might get hold of the necessary arms, having left his own behind before setting out. Eventually, though, he realizes that there is another requisite element for participation in the challenge: the girl. At last revealing his rank—and his wealth—to his host, he promises to marry Enide and make her his queen—

“Mais je vos promet et outroi,
 Se vos d'armes m'aparoilliez
 Et vostre fille me bailliez
 Demain a l'esprevier conquerre,
 Que je l'en menrai en ma terre,
 Se Dex la Victoire me done.
 Je li ferai porter corone,
 S'iert roïne de trois citez.” (vv. 658-65)

Enide seems to be almost an afterthought here, a necessary and convenient accessory to Erec's quest for vengeance. All of these circumstances deflate the sparrowhawk's symbolic value, which holds a man's victory in combat as a validation of the beauty and worth of his lady love. Underneath the courtly veneer that appears to justify the combat's result—the knight's love for the most beautiful, most perfect lady—we see that in this situation, it is indeed might that makes right.

The recounting of a similar episode in *BI*, clearly an intertextual borrowing from Chrétien, puts an even finer point on the problematic logic of the sparrowhawk by the text's

²⁶ All citations of *Erec et Enide* refer to the edition of Jean-Marie Fritz (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992).

seeming refusal to buy into such a symbol at all; rather than concealing the operations of “might” under the cover of “right,” *BI*’s description of the sparrowhawk challenge makes explicit that the customary significance of the sparrowhawk is an arbitrary valuation determined by contingency and by strength in combat, rather than by any basis in truth:

Et si couvient a la pucele
Qui vaura avoir l’esprevier,
Que maint o soi un chevalier
Por desrainnier qu’ele est plus biele
Que nule dame ne pucele;
Car cil qui del castiel est sire
Maintenant li va contredire,
Et le desfent de par s’amie,
Et dist que si bele n’est mie
Con s’amie est, ce dist, sans faille.
Issi commence la bataille. (vv. 1592-1602)

And unlike in *Erec*—where the logic of the sparrowhawk, though called into question by certain circumstances surrounding the challenge, is ultimately upheld intact by the perfect coincidence wherein the exemplary romance hero wins the exemplary romance heroine in literally the same stroke as he defeats his fearsome nemesis –, in *BI*, the things unfold less conveniently. Guinglain happens upon the sparrowhawk challenge when he meets Margerie, whose lover has been killed in combat trying to win the sparrowhawk. Guinglain, moved by her grief and distress, subsequently succeeds in winning the sparrowhawk on her behalf by defeating the fearsome Giflet, the lover of Rose Espanie. But Margerie, though now possessed of the symbolic proof of her superlative beauty, is but one of a series of superlatively beautiful maidens Guinglain encounters throughout the course of the romance—and ends up being something of a side note, a peripheral character overshadowed by the more important, and presumably even more beautiful, female figures of the narrative: Esmeree, who initially motivates Guinglain’s quest and whom he eventually marries, and the Pucele aux Blanchés Mains, the lost and deferred love of the romance’s ending and epilogue.

Thus, the logic of the sparrowhawk, already placed under strain by its antecedent in Chrétien and by the skeptical presentation of it in the narrative of the *BI*, is fractured by this sequence of events. If Margerie is indeed the fairest lady of them all, why is her lover defeated by Giflet? Why does it take a stronger, better knight to enforce her claim? And what do we make of the fact that the woman whose beauty is symbolized by the sparrowhawk is ultimately fairly forgettable, and not treated by the narrative as more exceptional than any other woman in the story of whose superlative beauty we were told? If, in *Erec et Enide*, it takes a somewhat careful eye to see how “might” enforces itself under the courtly cover of “right,” in *BI*, this cover is blown open completely: neither the reader of the *BI* nor the fictional characters within it are credulous enough to buy into this now-familiar fiction of romance logic, almost as if in the wake of Chrétien, we’ve now wised up to his tricks, such that the narrative no longer even feels the need to pay lip service to maintaining the pretense of the sparrowhawk as a courtly symbol. It is also hard to believe that so canny a reader might be taken in by Renaut’s claim that “la force paist le pré” is a hallmark of the degraded present that we would never have seen in the idyllic

Arthurian past—if we happened to overlook how “might makes right” in Chrétien’s sparrowhawk episode, then Renaut’s reworking makes up for it by hammering home the point so hard it can’t be missed.

As if it weren’t already sufficiently clear, *BI*’s lampooning of the symbol of the sparrowhawk shows itself most starkly in the figure of Rose Espanie, the lady who is the beloved of Giflet. Unlike in *Erec*, where one gets the sense that there may be something truly at stake in the question of whether the protagonist’s love interest or his nemesis’s is the most beautiful, courtly, perfect lady of them all, in *BI*, there can be no such question. Not even the symbolic value of the sparrowhawk is enough to obfuscate the fact that Rose Espanie is not more beautiful than any other lady—for, we are told, she is indeed patently ugly. If, in *Erec*, the premise of the sparrowhawk is subtly undermined, in *BI*, then, it is turned upside down without any subtlety whatsoever, exposed as a fiction even within the fictional world.

The acuity with which *BI*’s adaptation seems to “read” the analogous episode in *Erec* and to put its finger on the very point of Chrétien’s self-reflexive, self-problematizing gesture contrasts with the somewhat obtuse explanation that Renaut will offer us for the breakdown of the logic of the sparrowhawk challenge in *BI*’s fictional world. Renaut defends Giflet’s distorted perception of Rose Espanie with this explanation:

Mais nus hom ne se puet garder
K’Amors nel face bestorner;
La laide fait biele sanbler,
Tant set de guile et d’encanter. (vv. 1732-35)

While it doesn’t seem farfetched that a man in love is willing to go to unreasonable lengths to demonstrate his love of his lady, and that he might evaluate her beauty through rose-colored glasses, Renaut’s recourse to this clichéd courtly language of Love’s hold over the hapless lover seems simplistic and insufficient here—especially given that the reader has already been given cause, as we have just seen, to question and challenge the narrator’s maladroit use of courtly commonplaces to account for the events of the romance story. Just like the procession of one “most beautiful woman ever” after another wears away the power of this literary convention to do its work undetected, the proximity and concentration of courtly commonplaces in this episode strain credibility, especially after we have already seen such a cynical representation and reception of the undermined symbol of the sparrowhawk. And it is also telling, though perhaps ultimately not surprising, that the author-narrator-lover here is unwilling to indict either the self-deceiving lover or the conventional romance logic represented by the sparrowhawk challenge. The latter is the tissue from which Renaut’s romance “d’un molt biel conte d’aventure” is fabricated; to tear it down tears at the very flesh of the story which serves as the instrument of Renaut’s courtship, at the very logic by which he seeks to ensnare her. The former—the self-deceiving lover—perhaps hits too close to home, since this is precisely what Renaut as author-narrator is himself: a man who, driven by love or desire for his beloved, misuses established conventions of signification to signify something that isn’t there or doesn’t exist. For Giflet, this mis-signification takes the form of co-opting the symbol of the hawk as a claim for Rose Espanie’s beauty—and even her name points at the disjunction that the ugly beloved introduces into the apparent unity of signifier and signified. For Renaut, it is the misuse of the language and

conventions of courtly romance in an act of discursive force that enjoins his beloved lady to accept his suit, that comes as close as it can to performing the work of accepting it on her behalf—even when all the facts of the story and the logic of the author-narrator’s own utterances suggest that if the lady is as canny as *BI*’s readers, she should reject him. Rather than a critique of either the figure of the self-deceiving lover or of the logic of courtly symbolism, Renaut instead resorts to another romance topos in his repertory in order to account for this disruption to the conventional symbolism of the sparrowhawk. In other words, he uses more conventional romance logic to patch up a place where that very same logic seems to have been worn away, perhaps with age and exposure—in the perspective of both the characters and the reader.

Here, then, we have a key example of how a consideration of a text’s intertextual engagements changes our reading of its self-reflexive gestures, and how a consideration of the self-reflexivity of *both* intertexts changes our understanding of what the intertextual engagement looks like. In the concluding section, we will see the implications that this revised understanding of *BI*’s intertextuality, which recognizes how *BI*’s self-reflexivity develops out of the narrative strategies of its textual predecessors, has for understanding the romance’s self-reflexive poetics.

V. The Obscurity of *Amitié*: Love, Sex, and the Limits of Language

We have seen how *BI*’s self-reflexivity and intertextuality serve to challenge and undermine romance topoi and conventions. Now, to understand the stakes of the romance’s interrogation of its own formal and narrative elements, we turn to the language of love and sex, and particularly the narration of Guinglain and the Pucele’s consummation of their relationship, in *BI*. Our understanding of *BI*’s techniques of self-reflexivity will allow us to recognize instabilities and slippages in Renaut’s language of love that call into question not only his reliability as a narrator and lover, but also the value of his poetic enterprise. In other words, given that *BI*’s narrative is an act of love and of writing made coextensive, it follows not only that *BI*’s scrutiny of the processes of its own composition entails an interrogation of its representation of love as well, but also that the contradictory, inconsistent way in which the author-narrator talks about love has repercussions for what *BI* has to say about its own status as a romance—and about romance as a whole.

It should be noted that, though contradictory and inconsistent, the way in which Renaut talks about love does not lack its own governing logic: that of Renaut’s own particular interests as a sort of extradiegetic “character” who is serving as a narrator because he wants to be a lover. For example, Renaut’s admonitory appeal to the commonplace of the lover beguiled out of his senses by dangerous Love to explain and implicitly defend the topsy-turvy misperception of Giflet, discussed above, seems to contradict what he will say about love a few thousand lines later:

Et Dius nos vaut, je cuic, former
Por eles toutes honnerer
Et por lor comandement faire.
Por ce est fauls qui s’en veut retraire,
Que des dames tos li biens muet;
Fols est qui amer ne les veut.

Dius, qui Sire est, lor amaint joie!
 Doucement li prie qu'il m'oie;
 Et cels qui sont maldisseor
 Des dames et de fine amor
 Maudie Dius et sa vertus
 Et de parler les face mus! (vv. 4845-56)

We see that Renaut shifts easily between competing *topoi* of love as befits his particular purposes. This contradiction, then, does not just signal to the reader not to take the author-narrator's language at face value, but itself asks to be interpreted within our knowledge of Renaut and of the context of his enunciations and poetic production.

The narrative context gives us a revealing indication of what may be motivating the courtly stance of Renaut's defense of love and women. Renaut's condemnation of the men who speak ill of women and love—"Car a cele ouvre que il font / Demonstrent bien de coi il sont, / Qui tant se painnent de mentir" (vv. 4857-59)—is followed immediately by an outburst that totally belies the long-suffering patience with which Renaut has just claimed he will await the reward of his lady's love (vv. 4828-32). "Ha! Dius, arai ja mon plaissir / De celi que je ainme tant?" (vv. 4860-61), Renaut bemoans—as if his courtly stance were a performance motivated by his desire to get what he's really after, a mask that has slipped back off and revealed Renaut's true face again in a moment of desperation and self-pity.

The urgency of this utterance is particularly revealing—and funny—considering its narrative context. Not only does it come right on the heels of Guinglain and the erstwhile Pucele's consummation of their love, but it is this "reward" for Guinglain's suffering that motivates the author-narrator's committed perseverance in his not-yet-requited love, and thus the utterance of the intervention itself:

De tos les mals et le contraire
 C'Amors a fait a Guinglains traire
 Iluec le gerredon li rent.
 Por ço d'Amors ne m'en repenc,
 Que desloiauté n'i falt mie
 Envers Amors n'envers m'amie.
 En un jor me puet bien merir
 Plus que ne puis ja deservir. (vv. 4825-32)

Here we have a suggestion of closure of what had previously been left open, a potential resolution of what seemed suspended in the lengthy intervention of a couple thousand lines earlier: the static sense of infinite deferral in "Tos jors serai en sa merchi" (v. 1271) gives way to the optimism and possibility of "En un jor me puet bien merir / Plus que ne puis ja deservir" (vv. 4831-32). His previous linguistic equivocation also seems to have resolved itself. While earlier he questions and retracts his own use of *amie* to describe the lady he loves, since he cannot call her that if she has not requited his love, now he seems to have no qualm about applying this term to her yet again, even though the event of requital has not yet occurred—almost as if he thinks to extend the illocutionary quality of the language of prayer and exhortation, in which he so often

indulges, to his own narrative utterances, as if the linguistic realization of the relationship will bring about or even stand in for its physical realization.

And that realization is indeed physical. The nature of the “reward” Renault hopes for is made amply clear by the context of the consummation. As an aside to telling us that Guinglain has just *despucele* the Pucele, Renault, previously equivocating and despairing, now takes comfort from his fictional counterpart’s sexual success in bolstering his own hopes of winning that same *gueredon* from his lady. The causal nature of the relationship is emphasized; it is “por ço,” Renault tells us, that Renault continues to cherish hopes for the successful outcome of his own affair—almost as if he is the willing dupe of his own conceit that links outcomes of the intradiegetic fiction to his own extradiegetic success in love. Or even, in a more sinister reading, as if he hopes that his own affirmation of and adherence to this logic will induce his lady to do likewise. Thus, just as Guinglain’s *gueredon* makes real or possible the eventuality of Renault’s, so would Renault’s lady’s acceptance of him, despite his flaws and inconsistencies, make possible the Dame aux Blanche Main’s reunion with Guinglain, the man who betrayed her. As with his preemptive use of *amie*, discussed above, the narrator’s move to explicitly yoke the intra- and extradiegetic together here in this passage creates a discursive resolution—almost a narrative trap of sorts—that not only anticipates but actively tries to enable and perform the non-discursive resolution that Renault will demand more directly in the epilogue, when he holds Guinglain’s happy ending with the Dame (and presumably the romance’s happier and more satisfying ending) hostage against the lady’s fulfillment of Renault’s hopes: not (just) for love, but also, this passage makes specifically clear, for sex.

While it is neither strange nor surprising that a romance lover’s desire for his lady should also include a latent sexual component, what *is* noteworthy is that the unstated or understated relationship between love and sex here is characterized not just by slippage, but by tension and even disjunction between the two. Renault’s narrating-by-declining-to-narrate the consummation of Guinglain and the Pucele’s sexual relationship brings to mind the gesture of narratorial withholding by Chrétien in describing the moment in the *Charrette* when Lancelot and Guinevere sleep together. After first making it unequivocally clear that the two lovers are compelled to be together by the power of Love (although, of course, he loves her many times more than she loves him!), the narrator then proceeds to make it unequivocally clear, at quite some length, that this Love culminates in some incredibly pleasurable sex for the pair. But in the course of describing Lancelot and Guinevere’s night of pleasure, the narrator interrupts himself, saying:

Mes toz jorz iert par moi teüe,
Qu’an conte ne doit estre dite.
Des joies fu la plus eslite
Et la plus delitable cele
Que li contes nos test et cele. (vv. 4680-84)

This refusal to disclose “what should not be said in the story” is curious—in part because it seems like the narrator’s discretion comes too late, after the beans have already been spilled. Perhaps, then, what Chrétien demurs from is not the identification of the act, but of a potentially pornographic overindulgence in the description of it. That would seem to make sense: he can tell

us that they had sex, but anything more explicit than that has no place in the *conte* of a courtly romance. If that is the case, however, this intervention only serves to draw more attention to the prurient details that have been omitted by so conspicuously signaling their absence, where it might otherwise not have been noticed—like the Victorian fig leaf placed over a statue’s groin that comes to indubitably signify and even symbolize the very thing the leaf is meant to be concealing from view. Hult, in his analysis of the rhetorical play of the author-narrator in the *Charrette*, points out the recurring narrative ploy of saying one thing, with the effect of achieving the opposite.²⁷ The declaration of silence concerning Lancelot and Guinevere’s night of sex clearly falls into this pattern, and conspicuously draws our attention to its own contradictory premise through the narratorial editorializing that follows the refusal to disclose: an insistently superlative description of the very act that should not be spoken in the story, a further attempt at representation, no matter how abstract, of the very thing that we are told the story is trying to hide and conceal. The syntax of the Old French underscores this contradictory impulse in a way that gets lost in idiomatic English translation; by delaying the relative clause that modifies the sentence’s subject until the end, Chrétien creates a crescendo effect of increased specificity (“Des joies fu la plus eslite”) and intensity (“Et la plus delitable...”), culminating in the juxtaposition of the homophony of the rhyming pair in *cele/cele*: the demonstrative, pointing to the description that Chrétien has been building up, only to be curtailed by the declaration of concealment and withholding ending in the verb *celer*. Renaut’s narratorial intervention at the moment of the consummation thus seems like it could be winking at this coyly suggestive posture of Chrétien’s, of telling-but-not-telling when it comes to sex. Indeed, Schwartz points out this episode as an example of how “Renaut emulates... the clerkly narrator of the *Charrette*” and, according to Schwartz, displays his concern with demonstrating his faithfulness as a narrator.²⁸

But while Chrétien’s coyness about sex can be seen as falling into a familiar pattern of self-reflexive self-contradiction that undergirds the narrative of the *Charrette*, Renaut’s apparently similar gesture presents us with a different logical problem altogether, one that introduces into *BI* a sort of confusion of the terms that seem so very clear in the *Charrette*:

Por l’amor qu’entr’els deus avoit,
 Vaut l’uns ço que l’autres voloit.
 Je ne sai s’il le fist s’amie,
 Car n’i fui pas, ne n’en vi mie,

²⁷ Hult, “Author/Narrator/Speaker,” 90-91.

²⁸ Schwartz, “Guinglain and Lancelot,” 24-25. In support of this argument for Renaut’s interest in faithful narration, Schwartz cites as well his earlier quibbles over calling his lady his *amie*, an impulse that she relates to Chrétien’s withholding of the details of Lancelot and Guinevere’s sexual encounter. As we have already seen above, however, it is precisely in narrating the scene of the consummation that Renaut reverses course on the issue, relapsing into calling the lady his *amie* as he laments the long wait for his own “reward.” I take the opposite tack from Schwartz; in what follows in this chapter, I contend that both Chrétien’s and Renaut’s discretion is a characteristic example of each author-narrator’s narrative play, and that Renaut’s refusal to narrate here is a disingenuous move that goes part and parcel with his inconsistency in using the term *amie*.

Mais non de pucele perdi
La dame dalés son ami. (vv. 4813-18)

Renaut's uncertainty about whether or not Guinglain truly makes the Pucele his *amie* contains a faint echo of the narrator's earlier reflection over whether or not he could rightly call his beloved lady *amie*—but the circumstances of the two narratorial equivocations over this term are markedly differently. Renaut tells us that the desire between Guinglain and the Pucele is mutual, and uses the word *amor* to describe it. Renaut's disclaimer of firsthand knowledge (“Car n’i fui pas, ne n’en vi mie”) suggests that what he has not witnessed is perhaps that which is not suitable for a third party's eyes and which consequently ought to be omitted from the telling of the story: that is to say, sex—except that Renaut immediately after makes it unmistakably clear that they do indeed have sex. So what exactly is in question here, then, that makes Renaut not know “s’il le fist s’amie”?²⁹

The obscurity, I think, is intentional—and although the semantic richness of the word is certainly at the center of the games Renaut plays with it, the fact that *ami/e* has a plurality of meanings is not itself the cause of this obscurity. It is illustrative to compare with the uses of the word in other romances. For example, in *Erec et Enide*, when Erec is fighting Ydier at the tournament of the sparrowhawk before his resultant marriage to Enide, the narrative refers to Enide as Erec's *amie*: “Erec regarde vers s’amie” (v. 911). After they marry, the narrative describes Erec's infatuation with his wife at the expense of his knightly duties: “A sa fame aloit dosnoier, / De li fist s’amie et sa drue” (vv. 2434-35)—clearly this is not a contradiction to the previous usage (i.e., the narrative was wrong, and she wasn't his *amie* before), but rather, an obvious euphemism for having sex. In the previously mentioned example from *Cligès*, Soredamors's extensive pondering over whether she would be lying if she were to call Alexandre *ami* is followed immediately by the queen Guinevere's direct address of Alexandre as *ami* (v. 1420). Likewise, there is no logical contradiction or semantic ambiguity presented by the two different usages of the same word. There is no question over what kind of relationship is being denoted.

Yet, the meaning of *ami/e* that concerns us most, describing the courtly relationship between a man and a woman, does have a certain semantically ambiguous quality about it, as evidenced by the existing romance tradition of episodes and exchanges that explore and probe at the use of the word. The potential instability, or at least lack of semantic clarity, is hinted at in *Erec et Enide*, when the Count of Limors asks Enide if she is Erec's *fame* or his *amie* (v. 4682); she replies, “L’un et l’autre” (v. 4683). His question implies that these are non-coinciding if not outright contradictory subject positions; her reply implies that they are not (and the romance's depiction of her relationship and marriage with Erec suggest that she is right, but that the two positions do require careful negotiation and balance to coexist). The episode underscores the question of what it means to be an *amie* and provides an example of romance characters subtly contesting that meaning.

²⁹ This ambiguity is lost in translation, for example, when Colleen P. Donagher renders *amie* here as “true love” in her translation accompanying the edition of Karen Fresco (New York and London: Garland, 1992).

The ambiguity of *ami/e* is further attested in the proliferation of romance scenes in which a character ponders the correct use or interpretation of the word, often leading to some interesting rhetorical gymnastics. If the example of Soredamors from *Cligès* seems semantically unproblematic at first glance—is the crux of her problem not whether her love for Alexandre is requited, rather than some fundamental uncertainty about the word *ami* itself?—, nevertheless, the way in which the text describes Soredamors’s uncertainty about calling Alexandre *ami* shows us how the question of love requited or not opens up questions of correct language use, and the implications of word choice. Soredamors’s fear that she will be lying if it turns out Alexandre does not requite her feelings, in particular, is an interesting point of comparison to the *BI* author-narrator’s concern about using the word *amie*. And her following thought, that “Voldroie avoir de mon sanc mis / Qu’il eüst non ‘mes dolz amis”” (vv. 1411-12), makes an interesting point of contrast to a similar moment in *Yvain*. As Yvain reflects on whether Laudine should call him *ami* or *anemie*, he asks and answers: “Et me doit ele ami clamer? / Oil voir, pour che que je l’aim” (vv. 1458-59).³⁰ Yvain’s reasoning suggests that the identity as *ami* is a function only of his own feelings; thus, regardless of how she may feel about him, he is her *ami* because he loves her. But does this make her his *amie* in turn? Is it possible for a woman to have an *ami* and not be his *amie*? In other words, is there reciprocity inherent in these terms themselves? How do we use this language, and what happens when we use this language, to describe something that is uncertain, unknown, or not reciprocal? And what asymmetries do gender roles introduce into these dynamics—Soredamors who fears to call Alexandre *ami*, Yvain who contends Laudine ought to call him *ami*?

Renaut poses anew to us these familiar semantic and pragmatic questions surrounding *ami/e* in a way that destabilizes the word itself. Whereas for Yvain, the lady’s resistance doesn’t upset his status of *ami* but rather enables the punning simultaneity of *ami/anemie*, Renaut’s reasoning, at least initially, suggests that the lady’s lack of reciprocation might throw a spanner into the semantic works. He loves her, but cannot call her *amie* because she doesn’t love him—does that mean he is not her *ami* either, despite the fact that he loves her? This unasked and unanswered question, which might have escaped our notice when we first examined the earlier passage containing Renaut’s musings on the semantics of *amie*, surfaces here in the seeming illogic of how he uses and doesn’t use the word in the scene of consummation and the narratorial intervention that follows. Renaut identifies *amor* as the root of Guinglain and the Pucele’s mutual desire. The Pucele is then *despucele* and becomes the Dame, a lexical transformation that occurs over the course of a single sentence. And yet Renaut does not know if Guinglain made the Dame his *amie*... while in the same sentence identifying Guinglain as *her* *ami*. And then, in the subsequent intervention (“Por ço d’amors ne m’en repenc, / Que desloiauté n’i falt mie / Envers Amors n’envers m’amie”), he doubles back not only to the thematics of deferral and suspension of the lover’s fate waiting for his lady to requite his love, but to the question of the word *amie*, reversing course from his previous position by using this word once again to describe the woman who has not yet returned his affections, and from whom, it is strongly implied, he is desperately hoping to receive the *gueredon* of sex.

This destabilization of the terms and the relations of *ami/amie* exposes the lack of clarity regarding love and sex that the word *ami/e* so often obscures in romance. While sex is often a

³⁰ *Le chevalier au Lion*, ed. and trans. David Hult (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994).

latent (and occasionally not so latent) presence that slips easily behind and into romance love discourse and pokes through more insistently only in certain key moments, Renaut's description of the consummation upsets this latency, this coyness in speaking-by-not-speaking about sex, not (just) in the moment of consummation, but in the love-sex relations that undergird the entire romance and much of romance as a genre: Renaut moves the question of sex to the forefront by so starkly delineating it and separating it from the question of what it means to be an *amie*. The possibility that Guinglain could have sex with the Pucele and *not* make her his *amie* develops a particularly sinister cast in the retrospective light of what happens later in the story: he sleeps with her, breaks his promise to her, leaves her, and ends up marrying another woman. Renaut's slippery language here and elsewhere reveals how the terms *ami* and *amie* allow for the articulation of a relationship between a man and a woman that has special status and that demands to be taken seriously, without actually specifying what the terms and stakes of that relationship are. We overlook such semantic indeterminacy when these unanswered questions find their own solution and resolution. For instance, questions about the status of *ami* arise in the *Charrette* when Lancelot contemplates the same problem that Renaut does; having just referred to Guinevere as his *amie*, he reflects: "Ne sai comant je die, las / Ne sai se die amie ou non, / Ne li os metre cest sornon" (vv. 4362-64). But the linguistic question in the *Charrette* seems to resolve itself easily enough; Lancelot's doubt is settled by the two lovers' romantic and sexual union as Guinevere eventually accepts him and they consummate their love.

What furthermore differentiates Renaut's elaboration on this question in *BI* from its predecessor in the *Charrette* is that it occurs not as direct discourse, but rather as an utterance of the romance's extradiegetic narrator. It is not only the pondering of a lover, but a reflection on *BI*'s linguistic and narrative production, and a rumination on the accuracy and reliability of *BI*'s narration. Thus, it is highly significant that the semantic uncertainty regarding the designation of *amie* in *BI* stands in such sharp contrast to the lexical determinacy of the change from *pucele* to *dame*: in the absence of any other name besides the epithet of her white hands, this woman is referred to only by identifiers that point explicitly to her status as someone who has or hasn't yet had sex. Renaut cannot tell us if she is Guinglain's *amie* (or, whether Guinglain made her his *amie*), and we as readers don't even understand the implications of what that would mean—and yet Renaut's language can and does constantly index and disclose the current state of the sexual relationship between the two, not just in the moment of consummation but throughout the entire romance. Renaut, then, gives us a narrative in which sexual relationships and identities are signified in a linguistically stable and unproblematic way, while the language of *amitié* is destabilized and problematized not only by the narrator's explicit metalinguistic commentary but also by his own inconsistent and opportunistic usage.

What seems to mimic a gesture of prudishness that might be taken as conventional, then, reveals itself to be something quite different. Chrétien's coyness is about sex; Renaut's is about something that is defined only as other than sex, but in a way that disguises that there *is* something other than sex to be coy about, something other than sex that is in question that Renaut doesn't wish to give name to in his narrative. The two narratorial interventions, Renaut's and Chrétien's, are most similar not in their likeness to one another, but in how they extend and expand upon key themes in the narrative dynamics of each romance. In the *Charrette*, Chrétien states his refusal to tell what does not belong in the story, even while by his telling he ends up granting a greater prominence and attention to the very occurrence that the story is supposedly

trying to conceal, playing on the same rhetorical ploy developed in the prologue, epilogue, and elsewhere in the text. Renault's demurral, on the other hand, is presented not as a matter of narrative authority but rather one of personal authority; his claim that he does not know about the lady's status as Guinglain's *amie* because he was not an eyewitness to the events of this part of the story (as opposed to those of the rest of the story?) enables an abnegation of personal accountability over Guinglain's deeds and their outcomes—even as he hitches his own hopes for success to those same outcomes, both here and in the epilogue. Ever the opportunist, Renault wants to have his cake and eat it, too.

This dodging of accountability—in the sense of both liability, being potentially to blame, and answerability, being able to give an account—stands out all the more given the text's intensive and conspicuous thematization of writing, which we commented upon earlier. The self-described premise of Renault's composition of this romance is as an act of service to, and love for, his lady, whose affections the narrative is designed to solicit; yet, if the composition of *BI* is an act of writing that is also an act of love, here, we see that this act of writing breaks down at precisely the moment where the intradiegetic lovers, whose fate is made a function of that of the extradiegetic narrator and lady and vice versa, consummate their relationship, as Renault refuses and claims to be unable to narrate exactly what is happening at this moment. That a problem of narrative authority in the *Charrette* (“I can't tell you this because it's not appropriate for it to be mentioned explicitly in the story”) should have as its counterpart a problem of personal authority (“I can't tell you this because I didn't see it myself and therefore know nothing about it”) in *BI* is fitting given how each of these texts treats the thematization of writing and establishes the link between intra- and extradiegetic: for Chrétien, by invoking a relationship of literary patronage, and for Renault, by the conceit of composing a romance to win the lady whom he loves. What is presented by Chrétien as a function of literary and generic convention in Chrétien is reproduced by Renault as product of individual desire, experience, and will—and thus, the logical flaws of the narrative (e.g., the claim that the author-narrator of a fictional text can't narrate something he didn't see firsthand) redound not upon questionable generic conventions, but rather upon the credibility of the narratorial persona itself. The problem of the narrative lacuna of the consummation also calls into question the very supposition that acts of love can be properly enacted through acts of discourse, and vice versa, and perhaps confirms what Renault says about the deceptive nature of language employed rhetorically as an act of courtship.

Thus, Renault's act of narratorial distancing when relating the event of the consummation only adds to our suspicions about him as a lover and arouses further suspicion about what this sex act does and doesn't signify—both inside the fiction of the story and on the higher narrative level of our interpretation. By so conspicuously calling our attention to the potential disjunction between sex and *amitié* in the relationship between Guinglain and the Dame, Renault casts doubt on his own motives, as he explicitly posits a relation of causality and even commensurability between Guinglain's *gueredon* of sex and what Renault hopes to get from his lady; Renault tells us in almost as many words that he doesn't regret his love (“Por ço d'amors ne m'en repenc”) because of Guinglain's sexual success and the consequent possibility that Renault too may one day be granted such favor. Choosing to refer to his lady as *amie* now, rather than stabilizing what was earlier left unresolved (in both moments of questioning over the status of *amie*: “Que dirai dont? La molt amee? / ... / ... moi ne fait ele sanblant. / ... / Tos jors serai en sa merchi” and “Je ne sai s'il le fist s'amie / ... / Mais non de pucele perdi / La dame...”), only upends things even

further. Renaut blatantly contradicts what he said earlier, when he retracted his use of *amie* on the grounds that to call his lady that when she had not requited his love would be a lie. But also, by again designating the lady as *amie* in his moment of optimism about having sex one day, he makes this term seem like a pretense, one whose hollowness is quite apparent—because we have already seen that it is sex, not *amitié*, that turns Renaut from his earlier pessimistic despair to the optimism of this moment, and that the question of whether or not this sex involves *amitié* is one that Renaut cannot and will not answer. And in fact, it is Renaut’s disingenuous refusal to comment on this disjunction of sex and *amitié*, raising the question only to disclaim it, that brings it so conspicuously to our attention. His equivocation and self-contradiction suggest the possibility that what Renaut is really angling after, in the text as a whole but particularly in this passage, is sex.

If we take this view of Renaut’s motives seriously, we would understand the trick of the ending held hostage and the act of poetic composition itself as a ploy to persuade the lady to give in to Renaut’s sexual advances. Thus, the romance itself does what Renaut seems to want to forestall when he exclaims, “De ço nos viene Dius garder!”, and not just because, as we noted earlier, Renaut’s attempt at rhetorical courtship flies in the face of his warning against the use of language to win women’s affections. Rather, Renaut’s rhetorical courtship, in the light of our examination, ends up justifying the warning against it, as it confirms the aspersions cast on the habile use of love language as a deception used by men to get what they’re really after: “Quant en arés tot vo vouloir, / Adont le vaurés decevoir” (vv. 1257-58). Thus, Renaut himself, and not just Guinglain, becomes the negative fulfillment of the prophecy the author-narrator seems to make when he exclaims, “Mal ait qui... / ... jamais jor le fera!” (vv. 1259-60).

All the more reason for the lady to resist the pressure put on her in the epilogue, where we see this problem of sex subtly resurface in the terms of Renaut’s ultimatum, which again slips between terms of love, *amitié*, and sex:

De cuer vos veut tos jors amer.
 Ce ne li poés vos veer.
 Quand vos plaira, dira avant
 U il se taira ore a tant.
 Mais por un biau sanblant mostrer
 Vos feroit Guinglain retrover
 S’amie que il a perdue,
 Qu’entre ses bras le tenroit nue.
 Se de çou li faites delai,
 Si ert Guinglains en tel esmai
 Que ja mais n’avera s’amie. (vv. 6251-61)

Here, again, Renaut goes back on his own word; whereas before, he insisted that he couldn’t say if Guinglain made the Dame aux Blanches Mains his *amie*, now Renaut has no qualms about referring to her as such not just once, but twice, in rapid succession. And the second occurrence of this nonchalant contradiction of his previous claims about the use of the word *amie* takes place in exactly the same context of enunciation as the first: the evocation of sex that has happened as leverage for bringing about sex that will happen in the future, if Renaut’s lady can be persuaded

to give in. The unnecessary detail of Guinglain holding the lady naked in his arms not only returns us to the scene of consummation, but also tellingly reduces both past union and future reunion to what we could suspect may be, for Renaut, their most important point (and we might accordingly wonder about what specific value the verb *avera*, “have,” has here). The romance makes its concluding gesture, then, by once again linking language and sex, and by making closure a function of both. But, of course, we have already observed that this concluding gesture does not succeed in achieving closure...

Earlier, we had remarked how the enterprises of writing and love (a term that may be in question, given the obscurity of the relations between love/sex/*amitié*, but whose semantic breadth and obscurity is appropriate here, as in “making love”) intersect and become coextensive in the form of Renaut’s attempted rhetorical courtship: suspicion of one entails suspicion of the other, and thus the merging of love and writing causes both enterprises to fail. Now, we see more precisely why this is necessarily the case: *BI* shows us both that the coextensiveness of love and writing is at the core of the romance genre, and also that it is a conceit that can only be sustained in fiction—and fiction that does not pull too hard at its own loose ends or overly disturb the boundaries of narrative. The use of verbal ingenuity to not only solicit love, but to enact and perform it, is exposed as disingenuous, concealing as much as it purports to reveal—about love, sex, the relation between them, and the relation of each of them to language itself. This is the case not only with acts of courtship and love as represented by the romance (as we see played out by Guinglain, and as we are warned by the narrator himself, in the aforementioned intervention). *BI* problematizes the highly rhetorical nature of love as represented in courtly texts, and also the formal premises of many of those courtly texts themselves. The premise that language and love can be coextensive, that one can stand in for the other, is foregrounded in *BI*, but also undergirds much love narrative and literature—not least, the intertexts and other literary traditions upon which *BI* so conspicuously draws. It is the disingenuousness of this standing in of one for the other, this representation, that leads to the confusion not just of truth and fiction, but also means and object of representation. What self-reflexive texts do—and what *BI* does in an especially provocative, conspicuous, innovative way -- is question the means by which this confusion occurs. This confusion is not just some purely ludic verbal play, a display of poetic ingenuity or virtuosity that reveals the “modern-ness” of the medieval author’s literary sensibilities. *BI* does not merely trouble the distinctions between extradiegetic and intradiegetic, truth and fiction, words and things, means and object. Rather, its true ingenuity lies in how its narrative conceits prompt us, or even force us to question *why* and *how* this troubling happens.

In this, I agree with this statement by de Looze, that “[t]he poem is [...] about the process that gives rise to it. ... [I]n this respect *Le Bel Inconnu* poses a question that will haunt thirteenth- and fourteenth-century authors: namely what the relationship between language and reality is and which conditions which.”³¹ But I don’t mean it in exactly the same way. De Looze argues that *BI*’s open ending represents Renaut’s lady’s freedom to choose a socially subversive form of love that is coextensive with her freedom to determine how the story ends.³² As de Looze puts it: “The Narrator, wielding the language of his story, can add or subtract; what he cannot do is apply a certain appellation to his beloved without her free consent. ... [H]e desires

³¹ De Looze, “Generic Clash,” 118.

³² De Looze, “Generic Clash,” 119.

that this Lady become his *amie*... that she transgress the power structure and social norms by opting for illicit *fin'amor*. But he does not try to impose his desire."³³ But even in de Looze's own reading, it seems that the freedom of the lady to love is rather a restriction upon the narrator's ability to narrate—a literary and poetic restriction, not a moral or social one. Furthermore, is not the transgression represented by *fin'amor*, itself part of a more general courtly literary construct of heterosexuality, its own kind of social norm, its own gendered power structure?

More importantly, however, we have seen that these claims are simply not true. Renaut *mimes* concern for the beloved's consent to being called his *amie*, but later, freely speaks of her as such anyways, a lapse whose significance is hidden by the familiarity of the conventional love language of romance but that reveals his previously expressed concern to be part of a motivated performance—the aim of which is to persuade his lady to yield to his advances. If the motivations underlying Renaut's poetic production and his performance of courtly language sometimes escapes undetected, that is testament to the power of generic norms and conventions in shaping our understanding of how narrative creates meaning. But *BI* asks us to attune ourselves to at least one kind of reality that conditions its language, and especially its language of love. Renaut tells us pointblank what it is he's after—not just what he wants, but how narrative and representation depend on that want being fulfilled even as they are his means of fulfilling it:

Se de çou li faites delai,
 Si ert Guinglains en tel esmai
 Que ja mais n'avera s'amie;
 D'autre vengeance n'a il mie.
 Mais por la soie grant grevance
 Ert sor Guinglain ceste vengeance,
 Que jamais jor n'en parlerai
 Tant que le bel sanblant avrai. (vv. 6259-66)

What is the act of holding the ending of the story hostage to the lady's reciprocation of his desire but an attempt by Renaut to impose his desire on her by wielding the power of language and narrative? Certainly, the lady is left with the choice to accept or refuse Renaut; the narrative, within the constraints of its own form, cannot force her to choose one way or another. But Renaut's rhetorical gambit of yoking his own prospects in love to that of his romance protagonist, and of holding the ending hostage against the lady's choice to try to elicit the response he desires, places constraints on the lady's decision other than simply her desire to be with or not be with the man that Renaut has shown himself to be. To characterize this gambit as an attempt to respect and underscore the lady's freedom of choice, the importance of her consent, and her agency in determining her own identity and role vis-à-vis Renaut's desire is to overlook the power dynamics that undergird such a rhetorical ploy: Renaut opens by declaring that he is in his lady's power and is composing a narrative to please her; he ends by claiming that only her requital of the romancer's affection can bring the narrative and the romance protagonist to their proper, satisfying conclusion. Thus, he places accountability for narrative closure (and

³³ De Looze, "Generic Clash," 118-19.

culpability for a lack thereof) onto her. What's more, Renaut describes this unresolved ending as *vengance* that will be enacted upon the narrative, and upon Guinglain, in retaliation for the lady's withholding of her affections. Compare this, for example, to contemporary feminist critiques of the disingenuous and coercive ways in which men use pick-up lines and other commonplace rhetorical strategies to try to convince women to sleep with them, from which Renaut's gambit is not so different. These pick-up tactics do not render women unable to make a choice one way or the other; indeed, like Renaut's ending gambit, they actively demand just such a choice be made. But surely this must be considered an attempt to impose one's desire insofar as it is possible to do so verbally, and certainly this kind of linguistic utterance is not one that recognizes itself as semantically or pragmatically limited by respect for the other party's consent, even as it insistently attempts to elicit that consent.

De Looze's rosy reading of *BI*'s open-ending speaks to a more general impulse in romance criticism (though by no means unique to romance criticism alone): the desire to see what is narratively and generically subversive in literature as socially subversive as well. This goes part and parcel with contemporary criticism's tendency to equate the literary worth of medieval texts with the quality of being somehow *modern*. Thus, scholars often tend to view the texts most deserving of critical interest not only as modern, but also as somehow socially or politically progressive before their time. (A particularly salient case is the gender-bending *Roman de Silence*, discussed in the next chapter). Even when not explicitly the basis of an argument in favor of a certain interpretation of a text, this impulse seems often to condition how romance self-reflexivity is interpreted. But this impulse, taken too far, overlooks the fact that at the heart of self-reflexivity as I have understood it (as dialogism, discussed in the introduction, between texts as well as internally within a single text) is not (just) critique but *self-critique*.

What De Looze misses in his reading of *BI*'s unresolved ending as a linguistic production limited by the reality of the autonomous lady's ability to choose is this aspect of self-critique, the dialogic zone of contact between difference voices in a narrative that is both representing and represented. For, as we have seen, the whole of the narrative, understood as an utterance or enunciation by the persona of Renaut that inhabits the text extradiegetically, can be interpreted in subordination to the romance's central conceit: that the purpose of the entire poetic production, the telling of the story, is to help Renaut win his lady. This conceit is not just a frame, but a lens for understanding and making sense of the narrative, as we saw in our readings in this chapter of Renaut's narratorial interventions and how those interventions interface with the romance story—an extradiegetic reality that conditions the production of language. At the same time, the narrative, both extra- and intradiegetically, is full of indications that Renaut is not trustworthy as either author-narrator (in the sense that his narratorial decisions are often revealed to have other motivations than what he declares them to be) or as lover. Thus, *BI*'s unresolved ending demands an interpretive choice from us, just as it demands a decision from Renaut's lady. In doing so, it forces us to confront this central contradiction in the text: between what is putatively required to "complete" the romance in a way that satisfies our readerly expectations (for the lady to accept Renaut), and what our careful reading of the romance, and especially the interrelation of the extra- and intradiegetic within the romance, implies to be the correct choice (for the lady to refuse him). Using the arsenal of romance commonplaces and intertextual borrowings at his disposal, Renaut offers us a romance crafted as a rhetorical act of courtship, and at the same

time, drawing and building upon the self-reflexive strategies of those same intertexts, offers us the means to critique that act.

BI's poetics of self-reflexivity ask us to question what work is done, what undercurrents are concealed, by the way in which this and other romances represent love—what kind of realities these representations of love construct, and what we might miss by buying into these realities. Our suspicion of Renault's as author-narrator has repercussions not only for our understanding of the narrator's interventions or the events of the fictional story, but on the entirety of Renault's narrative enterprise—the conceit of courtship and composition that constitutes *BI*, but also the very act of romance-making itself.

Chapter Two

I. Introduction

Moving our chronological focus forward to a slightly later generation of romance, this chapter examines two early- to mid-thirteenth-century French verse romances, Heldris de Cornuailles' *Roman de Silence* and the anonymous *Amadas et Ydoine*. The chapter aims to demonstrate how the thematization of interpretation in these romances enables them to respond to the narrative structures and problematics of their more well-known and widely studied twelfth-century predecessors, in way that pushes the romance form to its logical limits. We saw in Chapter One that *Le Bel Inconnu* (as well as many moments in Chrétien with which *Le Bel Inconnu* may be engaging) addresses a spectrum of problems whose unifying preoccupation is the appropriate use of language and words to signify: deception (men using the language of love to deceive women), sincerity or lack thereof, empty words (using words without meaning or understanding them adequately), false speaking (whether to call the lady *amie* or *molt amee*). These problems are played out in the arena of *Le Bel Inconnu*'s metapoetic reflection on the representation of love: love, writing, and the relation between the two. I hypothesize, however, that this and other kinds of self-reflexive rhetorical play, which appear in the work of Chrétien and his twelfth-century contemporaries as strategies to disrupt generic conventions and the reader's horizon of expectations, eventually no longer function as such. After all, there are only so many times the same tricks can be played and replayed before a reading audience comes to anticipate them. Indeed, we saw how *Le Bel Inconnu* reproduces famous ironic episodes in Chrétien in a way that underscores the intertextual relation and capitalizes on the reader's familiarity with the intertext. Such narrative games, while perhaps not commonplace, cannot be unexpected after the examples of the *Charrette*, *Le Bel Inconnu*, and other romances such as, for instance, *Partonopeu de Blois*, which employ similar strategies. Rather, they become somewhat conventional features of French romance in their own right. In the two romances we will examine in this chapter, the focus of self-reflexivity shifts from the problem of poetic and linguistic production, to that of reading and interpretation—and especially, of reading romance and interpreting signs (discursive or otherwise) of love. These texts, compared to their twelfth-century predecessors, are characterized by an explicit and hyper-rhetorical (sometimes even to the point of absurdity) focus on the importance, and the difficulty, of such reading and interpretation—and especially of their own reading and interpretation.

Both *Silence* and *Amadas* explore anxieties over the correct reading and interpretation of signs—especially, but not exclusively, signs of love—and how the fraught relation between signifier and signified complicates the work of interpretation. Thus, in these two texts, self-reflexivity finds its most powerful articulation not through the identification between the author-narrator and his characters, but rather between characters and readers—sensibly, as their own authors are also well aware of their position as readers of the (by now) long, established romance tradition preceding them. Or, to put it another way: in *Le Bel Inconnu*, as we saw, the key problem at stake is the narrator's question, mirrored by the situation of the romance protagonist, of whether or not it is appropriate to *use* the word *amie* to describe a beloved lady if the love is not known to be requited (no, she is *molt amee*); in *Silence*, the key problem at stake is the protagonist's question, mirrored by the situation of the romance reader as interpreter of the text, of how to understand the word *ami(e)*, and how to parse through its potential for ambiguity. In

what follows, we will explore how the focus on hermeneutics and interpretation is also a way for the lesser-known thirteenth-century romances examined in this chapter to thematize their own difference from an earlier generation, as texts like *Silence* and *Amadas* foreground the importance of their own interpretation as well as how they interpret and respond to their literary predecessors.

II. The Language of Interpretation and the Figure of the Author-Narrator in *Silence*

The exploration of the instability and potential ambiguity of linguistic signification that arises in the act of interpretation is a familiar and important thematic of some of the most famous examples of medieval French romance—a thematic that, as we will see in this chapter, is continued in *Silence* and *Amadas*, but also subject to formal and narrative innovations that provoke new questions about the stakes of interpretation of the romance genre and its conventions. D. H. Green, taking stock of a wealth of canonical examples from different language traditions, observes how commonly medieval romance’s self-conscious engagement with its own interpretation intersects with its treatment of the love story precisely at the point of the text’s representation of characters’ efforts to verbalize the experience of love and to make sense of each other’s verbalizations—that is, at the scene of the ambiguous confession (or non-confession, as the case may be) of love.¹ The most well-known model for this is, of course, the famous avowal of love in Thomas’s *Tristan*, which, as we will see, serves as inspiration for a similar episode in *Silence*. As their twelfth-century predecessors do, both *Silence* and *Amadas* use the characters’ language of love and the scene of uncertain avowals (or non-avowals) of love as a site to dramatize a mode of reading that responds to the hermeneutic problems posed by the text.

In *Silence*, this tradition of the metanarrative avowal of love is, if not outright lampooned, then certainly narratively foregrounded and spotlighted in a markedly peculiar way. Like the Tristan story and intertexts such as Chrétien’s *Cligès*, *Silence* begins with the courtship and marriage of the protagonist’s parents (called Cador and Eufemie), before proceeding to the adventures of the protagonist’s own life and love story. In the case of *Silence*, this parental subplot (and therefore the many interesting moments of intertextual and metatextual play, including scenes of Cador’s and Eufemie’s avowals of love) has been subject to a certain degree of critical neglect. *Silence*, relatively unknown until a few decades ago, began to garner interest primarily among Anglophone scholars for a plot that seemed to speak uncannily well to contemporary theoretical and critical conversations about language and gender.² In the romance,

¹ D. H. Green, *Irony in the Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 180ff.

² On the relation between language and gender in *Silence*, see Kate Mason Cooper, “Elle and L: Sexualized Textuality in *Le Roman de Silence*,” *Romance Notes* 25 (1985): pp. 341-60; R. Howard Bloch, “Silence and Holes: The *Roman de Silence* and the Art of the Trouvère,” *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): pp. 81-99; Peter L. Allen, “The Ambiguity of Silence: Gender, Writing, and *Le Roman de Silence*,” in *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature*, ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1989), pp. 98-112; Simon Gaunt, “The Significance of Silence,” *Paraglyph* 13 (1990): pp. 202-16; Christopher Callahan, “Lyric Discourse and Female Vocality: On the

Ebain, the king of England, passes an edict forbidding women to inherit. Thus, when Silence, a girl, is born, her parents Cador and Eufemie decide to raise her as a boy. Silence's mastery of chivalric masculinity ensures the ploy is successful until Ebain's queen, enamored of Silence, to seduce "him." When the seduction attempt fails, she accuses Silence of rape in retribution and plots to have "him" killed. In the end, Merlin gives up the game, exposing Silence as female in front of Ebain and his court, at the same time as he exposes the queen's lies and her adultery with a male lover theretofore disguised as a nun. King Ebain executes his wife and marries Silence, taking her as his new queen.

If the Cador and Eufemie subplot seems much more conventional than the rest of the story in its treatment of both genre and gender, it is nevertheless rife with episodes of thematic and interpretive significance to the romance as a whole, as we shall see. For much of the part of the romance dedicated to them, Cador and Eufemie are in love, but each unsure of the love of the other.³ The tension of this situation of mutual infatuation and doubt comes to a head when Eufemie, who has been treating Cador's illness (dragon-induced and otherwise), inadvertently betrays her feelings by speaking more revealingly than she intends:

Vient en la cambre a son ami.
 Dist li: "Amis, parlés, haymmi!"
 Dire li dut: "Parlés a moi,"
 Mais l'Amors li fist tel anoi
 Que dire dut: "Parlés a mi,"
 Se li a dit: "Parlés, haymmi!"
 "Parlés a mi" dire li dut,
 Mais "haymmi!" sor le cuer li jut.
 Si tost com ele ot dit "amis,"
 En la clauze "haymmi!" a mis.
 "A mi" dut dire, et "haymmi!" dist,
 Por la dolor qui en la gist.
 (vv. 879-92)⁴

Given the clear parallels between the Cador-Eufemie love story and famous plot elements from the story of Tristan and Yseut, this play on words appears to be something of a riff on Thomas of

Unsilencing of Silence," *Arthuriana* 12 (2002): pp. 123-31; Katherine H. Terrell, "Competing Gender Ideologies and the Limitations of Language in *Le Roman de Silence*," *Romance Quarterly* 55 (2008): pp. 35-48.

³ This narrative set-up strongly recalls Chrétien's *Cligès* and its depiction of the love story of Alixandre and Soredamors; see also Karen Pratt, "Humour in the *Roman de Silence*," in *Arthurian Literature XIX: Comedy in Arthurian Literature*, ed. Keith Busby and Roger Dalrymple (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), pp. 89-92. The situation also recalls elements of the Tristan story (the forestory of Tristan's parents Blancheflor and Rivalin in Gottfried, Iseut's treatment of an injured Tristan, Tristan slaying the dragon), another obvious influence on this episode in *Silence*.

⁴ All references to the *Roman de Silence* are from the edition of Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1992).

Britain's famous punning on the meanings of *l'amer/la mer* (love/bitterness/the sea), echoes of which are also present in a couple of *Silence's* end rhymes (e.g., vv. 245-46; 771-72). The somewhat contrived quality of the play on *ami/a mi/haymmi* might lead us to see it as a parody of Thomas's scene, as Sarah Roche-Mahdi does.⁵ The strained play on words also points our attention towards crucial differences between the passages from the two texts. Unlike in Thomas, the wordplay here in *Silence* is not a true play on multiple possible meanings, but rather a coincidental phonetic similarity whose emphatic repetition over several lines seems to reduce language to sound. *Ami* and *a mi* are homophones, but any confusion in meaning between the two, if the potential for such exists, bears few meaningful repercussions for the interpretation of Eufemie's speech. Eufemie says *haymmi* instead of *a mi* not out of deliberate cleverness, but because the strength of her feelings has caused her to lose command of language; thus, she seems to represent her own feelings through sound in a way that seems to bypass language altogether. There is something almost primal about this utterance that is not even communication, which implies the intention of making oneself understood by another party—but rather, pure, involuntary, artless expression. And yet, not so; embedded in this intertextual context of such a contrived play on words, the use of *haymmi* seems anything but purely expressive and artless. We can almost feel the author-narrator straining to make this wordplay work.

Yseut's equivocation, on the other hand, seems at once more mysterious and more meaningful. She speaks in double-edged sentences rife with genuine multiplicity of possible meaning, leaving her intention and her interiority opaque. Her play on the meanings of *l'amer/la mer* is one that we equally appreciate and enjoy even from our privileged vantage point as readers. Although we are aware of the score in a way that Tristan and Yseut are not and cannot be, this knowledge does not actually resolve the inherent ambiguity of the non-confessions of love. In the corresponding passage in *Silence*, what ambiguity there is only exists because the characters cannot access the extratextual knowledge of the author-narrator and reader: it is situational more so than verbal. Unlike Yseut, Eufemie plainly says what she means (even if not exactly what she intends), and unlike *Le Bel Inconnu's* author-narrator or Chrétien's Yvain, has no equivocations about naming her loved one *ami*. The right use of the right word, however, does not clarify the situation; but rather the right word is what produces the potential ambiguity that plagues Cador, prompting his interpretive dilemma:

Grant esperance li a fait
 Que li a dit “haymmi!” a trait,
 Car el l’ot ains “ami” nomé.
 Or cuide avoir tolt asomé.
 Cist doi mot “haymmi!” et “amis”
 Li ont moult grant confort tramis.
 Cis mos “amis” mostre l’amor,
 Cis mos “haymmi!” fait le clamor.
 ...
 “Aimmi!” demostre le martyre,
 Le paine d’amor qu’a sofierte.
 (vv. 893-900, 906-07)

⁵ Roche-Mahdi, p. 323.

The reader, of course, suffers no such confusion but will note that Cador's fears are perhaps not entirely groundless, as the same word *amie* is used by the king to address Eufemie. Conversely, the breakdown of language—the denaturing of Eufemie's intended words (*a mi*) into a nonsensical utterance (*haymmi*)—renders her true meaning not less but rather *more* transparent.

Cador's attempt to grapple with Eufemie's words to him underscores the disconnect between enunciator (speaker, author) and enunciation (speech, language), in a way that seems oddly overdetermined. A word *ami* used straightforwardly, without the burden of any of the attendant semantic complications that tend to afflict its use in other romances, nevertheless generates an ambiguity that Cador is unable to resolve. *Haymmi*, a mistaken utterance of sound resulting from Eufemie's garbled mispronunciation of what she had actually intended to say, provides Cador with the most accurate insight into Eufemie's interiority. Language in this scene does both too much and too little. It activates a surplus of potential meaning that exceeds any intention on Eufemie's part and confuses her future lover. At the same time, it is inadequate to the task of self-expression and so taxed by the effort that it begins to denature, a breakdown which finds its formal expression in the repetitive and meandering chiasmus of near-homophones.

The belabored quality of this wordplay shines a revealing light on the artfulness and artifice of this metatextual, interpretively laden love language. The entire exchange seems stilted and contrived, even more so than its analogues in *Silence's* romance predecessors, because Cador is trying to solve a wholly affective problem in a purely textual way. The problem is that there is no organic connection between the affective and the textual here. In the equivalent passage in Thomas' *Tristan*, the equivocation between a potential multiplicity of meanings (one of which does not preclude the others) is suggestive of emotional equivocation on the part of Yseut; the lack of definite resolution of the linguistic instability mirrors the opacity and complexity of her interiority. Affective and textual interpretation are inextricable from one another, and the reader and Tristan share in both. But the same conceit of using love language to thematize interpretational issues seems strained in a scene that is so patently transparent to the reader. The verbal excess of the text in describing Eufemie's speech does not seem to be sustained by the complexity of her dilemma and of the language she uses to verbalize it, which are relatively uncomplicated. Likewise, Cador's insistent readings of—and reading *into*—Eufemie's words seem disproportionate, probing deeply into something that perhaps just isn't that deep. What ambiguity is to be found is mostly contingent, only present by virtue of the fact that the characters (and human beings generally) are not completely transparent to one another, and therefore Eufemie's words are not enough to resolve Cador's already existing doubts. The interpretive questions raised by her language are altogether different from the question that Cador is trying to answer through *his* interpretation of her language.

From a first reading, it is perhaps difficult to know what to make of this odd exchange, which in the last analysis is not terribly complex, but yet seems to insistently demand that *something* complex be made of it. If its first effect is to overtly establish the thematic intersection between problems of love and problems of interpretation, its second is just as loudly to signal the heavy-handed artifice of its own literary technique. This contrived version of a familiar romance device (the interpretively significant non-avowals of love) reminds us that the romance story is a

narrative creation, constructed (often with varying levels of artistic ability) by the poetic production and the linguistic choices of the first-person author-narrator, whose persona always hovers over the narrative, even when not explicitly invoked. This passage's strangeness and its clumsiness (as if the romancer were trying and failing to imitate superior romance models) draw the reader's attention to how the story is being told, and to the very fact of the telling.

The effect is compounded through its accumulation and elaboration as the romance again takes up this technique of thematizing interpretation through the lovers' verbal attempts at feeling each other out, this time, when Eufemie is left to ponder whom Cadour has in mind when he talks about *the one* he loves. Cadour tells her: "Mais el roïame n'en a trois / Dont la mellor presisse mie / S'une m'en faut, bele Eufemie" (vv. 982-84). Eufemie, unsurprisingly, is unable to grasp that Cadour is talking about her. Luckily, the author-narrator is there to connect the dots for us:

Biele Eufemie, cho est l'une
A cui li cuers Cadour s'aüne!
De l'une est Eufemie gloze,
Mais que sor li prendre ne l'oze,
Qu'en li n'en a pas tant d'ozet
Qu'ele sor li l'oze glozet.

(vv. 985-90)

The verb *glozet*, used to describe Eufemie's understanding of Cadour's words, suggestively places Eufemie in the position of a reader of language which requires careful textual interpretation, demands to be *glossed*. If such a passage casts into sharpest relief the link between characters' linguistic negotiation of love and romance's negotiation of its own problematics of interpretation—the word *glose/glozet* making explicit the connection between the two—the semantic misfit of this language in an avowal of love equally calls attention to the passage's verbal artifice. The same can be said of the fact the author-narrator makes such a point of glossing something that does not really require it; the *glose* provided is a statement of the obvious. The reemerging presence of the author-narrator marked by the intrusion of the first-person voice in this key moment between the lovers again draws our focus to the text's representation of its own constitution through narration.

The gesture of self-commentary here is all the more interesting from this perspective because it echoes another earlier and equally unusual occurrence of the word *glose*, this one in the prologue, as the narrator rails against stingy aristocratic patrons: "De honte ont mais lor cort enclose. / Chi n'a mestier metre de gloze, / Car jo n'i fas nule sofime" (vv. 67-72). The rhetorical register of *glose* seems slightly out of place, a conspicuous choice of word that calls attention to the overdetermination of its use here: the author-narrator refusing to explain or elaborate a remark that has no need of explanation, since he has not used any *sofime* in it. Still, the semantic range of glossing implicitly identifies Eufemie's understanding of Cadour's language with the narrator's explanation of it for the reader (and both of these with the narrator's commentary on his own language and textual production) as fundamentally similar kinds of activities, all of which can be called *glose*.

These intersecting, overlapping conceptions of *glose* foreground a kind of commensurability between the author-narrator's language (the language that *produces* the text and does the work of representation) and that of the characters' (the language represented by the text). Both kinds of language, in fact, are being *represented* by the text. This is a familiar dynamic for both readers of medieval romance and readers of Bakhtin: the means of literary representation become equally an object of literary representation, as the language of the author-narrator, just like that of the characters, is the potential object of glossing, and thus invites and requires readerly attention.⁶ Yet *Silence* takes this burgeoning dialogic consciousness a step further. Peter Haidu notes that:

... the text turns back on a word just pronounced to elucidate or comment on it—a rhetorical technique well established in twelfth-century vernacular textuality. What is new here is its insistent self-naming... overtly declaring its appropriation of a technique of religious hermeneutics. It is not only self-reflexive, it names its self-reflexivity and names its source.⁷

But the appropriation of the word *glose* here does more than just signpost the presence of self-reflexivity in the text. It introduces a tension between narrative levels while at the same time threatening to collapse them. *Gloser* is what Eufemie does (or rather, doesn't dare to do) within the world of the fictional story. It is also what the author-narrator does (or rather, explicitly refuses to do) in the romance's prologue, in a passage where, addressing the reader, he explicitly discusses the task of poetic composition.

These two usages, and along with them the different narrative levels occupied by the characters and by the author-narrator, intersect without warning at Heldris's remark that "De l'une est Eufemie gloze," a line that is disorienting not only for the unusual literary register of the word *glose*, which seems slightly out of place, but also for the statement's strange narrative status, which the choice of the word serves to highlight. If the main hermeneutic preoccupation of Eufemie's speech is Cador's glossing of *ami* and *haymmi*, and that of Cador's is Eufemie's glossing of *l'une*, here, the reader who feels similarly compelled to probe at the full range of semantic possibilities enabled by the use of *glose* may note that the word's deployment activates two potential meanings that may not appear clearly distinct from one another at first glance but whose difference bears important implications for understanding the romance's manipulation of narrative structure. *Glose* here is, on the one hand, an act of narrative in the simplest sense, a *telling* of the story, the events at the diegetic level occupied by Cador and Eufemie: Eufemie (the author-narrator tells us) does not dare to take Cador's words as referring to herself, but they do indeed refer to her, as she is the one whom Cador loves. At the same time, the remark is, as

⁶ The potentially dialogic nature of the author-narrator's language is clarified most usefully and beautifully Bakhtin's reading of *Evgenii Onegin* in "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. and trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin, TX, University of Texas Press: 1981), pp. 43-49. For the potential applicability of this applicability to medieval literature and genre study, see Ardis Butterfield, "Medieval genres and modern genre theory," *Paragraph* 13 (1990): pp. 190-93.

⁷ Peter Haidu, "Problematizing Identity: *Silence*," in *The Subject Medieval/Modern: Text and Governance in the Middle Ages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 244.

mentioned by Haidu, an act of textual self-commentary, and thus an extradiegetic interaction between author-narrator and reader.

The potential for confusion between narrative levels already presents itself like a slowly widening crack in earlier romances as these texts play on the interactions and tensions between the fictional story and the position of the first-person narrator. That potential for confusion inheres in the voice of the first person itself—a speaking subject that purports to be the author of the text in which it appears. Thus it is the medieval text with its self-reflexive, oft-intervening author-narrator that exposes both the necessity and the limitations of such theoretical formulations as, for instance, *histoire* and *récit*, *diegetic* and *extradiegetic*. It would be difficult to discuss the narrative nuances of medieval romance without recourse to categories of analysis that allow one to make conceptual distinctions between such narrative levels, functions, and situations. Readings of irony and ambiguity in French romance, for example, often implicitly depend upon the recognition of distance between different narrative levels: between what the narrator explicitly says and what the reader observes happening in the text or story, and between what the narrator explicitly says and what the author's intentions or the actual work of the text may be. At the same time, it is difficult to maintain the neat separation between such categories in texts where these narrative levels are made to intersect in potentially problematic ways—for example, in *Le Bel Inconnu*, where the satisfactory completion of the romance story, which the prologue tells us is being composed in order to win the favor of a certain lady, is made contingent on her response to the narrator's suit.⁸

It is such a theoretical separation that leads critics such as F. Regina Psaki to argue for an analysis of *Silence* that insists on separating the author (and thus, our interpretation of authorial intent and the meaning produced by the text) from the narrator, who constitutes a sort of character and thus is an object of the text's representation.⁹ Psaki justly observes that the critical oversight in conflating real author and extradiegetic figure of the narrator has obscured important and interesting facets of the romance's narrator and its narrative construction. Her analysis illustrates the fallacy of assuming that statements made by the first-person voice of "Heldris de Cornuälles" must directly represent the opinion of the real person who wrote the *Roman de Silence*, and that whatever idiosyncrasies the narrative exhibits must be a product of the author's lack of ability or sophistication, rather than part of the text's literary technique. Thus, Psaki argues, the author offers a critique of medieval misogyny by representing it through the voice of a narrator-character who the text exposes as unreliable and self-contradictory.

But the surgical cut Psaki proposes to make between the role of narrator (as fictional author, quasi character) from that of the (real) author—a conceptual division that unproblematically justifies itself in modern examples—ends up severing an essential connection at the heart of the medieval first-person narrator: the condition of being an *author-narrator*.¹⁰ If

⁸ See Chapter One.

⁹ F. Regina Psaki, "The Modern Editor and Medieval 'Misogyny': Text Editing and *Le Roman de Silence*," *Arthuriana* 7 (1997): pp. 78-86.

¹⁰ Thus, Haidu, commenting on the strand of *Silence* criticism that exculpates the author at the expense of the narrator, remarks that "the exact territorial divide between the two is hard to trace

Psaki's analysis of the *Silence* author-narrator seeks to carve out an insistently extradiegetic space in which we can read self-reflexivity, irony, subversion, even resistance, in doing so it risks eliding the play between narrative levels that is common to French romance but especially explored and problematized in the romance of the thirteenth century (and in *Silence* in particular). That the author's position on the feminist question—and, as I will argue, the narrator's as well—is so hard to pin down is no accident. *Silence*'s manner of playing on the fundamentally ambiguous position of the medieval author-narrator makes the first-person *je* impossible to situate—and any meanings produced by its discourse thereby impossible to attribute to a responsible party, if they can be determined and stabilized at all. The implications of this strategy emerge clearly in the light of the romance's cultivation and thematization of discursive ambiguity on every level, and in light of how the rhetorical techniques used by the narrator to straddle the fence on misogyny and other problems are closely mirrored by the verbal machinations of the fictional characters as they seek to manipulate the instability of linguistic signification in their own language, for their own ends. To insist on neat conceptual separations between different narrative levels, whether in the guise of the terminology of author/narrator or of extradiegesis/diegesis, then, is to introduce an artificial divide into the romance's narrative workings.

Thus far, we have seen how *Silence*'s self-reflexive *glose* plays upon the permeability and instability of the boundary between diegetic and extradiegetic functions. The narrative workings of this passage depend on the recognition of this instability: the text comments on itself, but is also itself constituted by this act of self-commentary. This element of self-commentary lays bare a dynamic that is fundamentally important to *Silence*'s romance predecessors, but remains largely implicit in them: that the function of narrative in these texts is not just to tell the story, but also to comment on the forms of the romance genre and the text's own employment of these forms—a function that inextricably intertwined with the potentially ambiguous status of the author-narrator and first-person voice. Crucial to the interpretation of the text's ambiguous language, and therefore to the interpretation of the authorial persona and the narratorial first-person voice, is an attentiveness to meaning across narrative levels. In Chapter One, we saw how parallels between the author-narrator's extradiegetic situation and the romance protagonist's story could be read ironically, in a way that turns the author-narrator into the object of the text's critique, and therefore, the first-person voice and the narrative of the text itself into both means and object of representation. In *Silence*, we will see how author-narrator's interventions not only foreground the necessity of being attentive to such ironic possibilities, but also how they take full advantage of the ambiguity of the author-narrator's status, not just as a formal device through which a text can be interpreted ironically, but rather, as a vehicle of significant content in its own right.

III. Interpretation and the Narrative Status of Characters' Language in *Amadas*

If it is only to be expected that the episode of the confession of love in *Amadas et Ydoine* is also the site of an intense thematization and problematization of interpretation, as we have observed in *Silence* and other romances, the way in which this little-read romance deploys its scene of

in a culture where an author is likely to have read his text out loud to an audience” (“Problematizing Identity,” p. 261). See the discussion of the author-narrator in the introduction.

avowal is singularly surprising, yet overlooked by scholarship and criticism. In this anonymous romance, Amadas, the son of a seneschal, falls in love with Ydoine, the daughter of the duke his father serves. He confesses his love to her, and she initially rejects him—the text tells us she is too haughty and arrogant, not properly and humbly receptive to the demands of Love. Finally, she requites his love, but while he is away, she is married off to another man, the Count of Nevers. Through a series of shenanigans and deceptions—including a counterfeit prophetic dream vision (Ydoine hires a group of witches who pretend to be the three Fates and trick the Count into believing he is dreaming their appearance; they tell him he will be doomed if he consummates his marriage with Ydoine), an enchanted ring, a faked death, and numerous lies and verbal tricks—the protagonists eventually marry each other and have a happy ending.

While its plot may seem much more conventional than that of *Silence*, the way in which *Amadas* inscribes the problematics of interpretation within literary discourses of love is certainly not. The romance's description of Amadas's confession of his love for Ydoine is, at first glance, utterly baffling:

En la parfin, mult a envis,
 A grant paour et a grant honte
 Commenche a basse vois son conte.
 L'amour ki l'a en son destroit
 Li enseigne com faire doit.
 En couvrant descoevre son conte,
 En descouvrant coeuvre sa honte.
 Amours le fait soutil et sage ;
 Couvrant descoevre son corage.
 C'est d'amour sens et grant mesure
 Soi descouvrir par couverture,
 Et en couvrant parole ouverte,
 En descouvrant cose couverte ;
 Car ja ne venrés honme sage
 D'Amors, s'il ne set son corage
 Par couverture soi ouvrir,
 Et en descouvrant soi couvrir.
 Premier parole par figure
 A une foible couverture,
 Par raison mains aperceüe,
 Couverte et nonpourquant seüe,
 Par mainte parole couverte,
 Oscure et nonpourquant ouverte
 Et agüe et apercevant,
 En double maniere ataignant.

(vv. 469-93)¹¹

¹¹ All references to *Amadas et Ydoine* are from the edition of John R. Reinhard (Paris, Honoré Champion: 1926).

Firstly, it is hard to read all this vocabulary of covering and uncovering and not be put in mind of the language that allegorical texts use to describe their own dynamics of meaning in terms of acts of concealing and covering, revealing and unveiling—for example, the language of things expressed *covertement* and *apertement* in the prologue to Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la Rose*. Here, though, the acts of covering and uncovering are so coextensive and intertwined that to do one is to do the other in equal measure, a dynamic that recalls Stephen Melville and Rita Copeland's insistence upon the allegory's entanglement with allegoresis: the fact that allegoresis, in claiming to "unveil" the hidden meaning of a text, in fact creates the covering it claims to strip away.¹² The repeated instances of the words *couvrir* and *decouvrir* formally imitate the paradoxical relationship of causality and priority between allegory and allegoresis, allegorical covering and uncovering, noted by Copeland and Melville. First, there is one very tidy instance of chiasmus in a pair of rhymed lines with parallel structure: "En couvrant descoevre son conte, / En decouvrant coeuvre sa honte" (vv. 474-75). This is followed by the constant interlaced reiteration of these terms (vv. 477, 497-91, 484-85, 487, 489-91), to the point of confusion, incoherency, and perhaps even absurdity. It becomes difficult, if not impossible, to track the logic of this description to imagine what sort of speech act could be occurring.

The problem is exacerbated as well by the shifting or switching of referents. For instance, the text distinguishes between *parole ouverte* versus *cose couverte* (vv. 480-81), a contrast underscored by the end rhyme. But a few lines later, as the passage shifts from describing allegorical dynamics to describing allegorical language, Amadas speaks by means of *parole couverte*, which confuses not only the logic of the processes of covering and uncovering, but potentially also the distinction between words and things. If in *Silence*, we saw an instance of a text constituting itself through self-commentary, here, the text itself is missing, replaced or displaced altogether by the language of allegorical commentary. Picking up on the conventional vocabulary of the ambiguous avowal of love used in predecessors such as *Tristan* and *Cligès*, *Amadas* takes this form to its metanarrative limits, defamiliarizing the language we've become familiar with, and raising new questions about the interpretation of the avowal—at least, for the reader.¹³ What, exactly, does it mean for Amadas to cover while uncovering, conceal while revealing? The language of commentary and interpretation is itself in need of commentary and interpretation.

This episode offers an interesting departure from a more typical romance scene such as that found in *Silence*, in which each of the lovers' language and body language—easily comprehensible to the reader familiar with Ovidian love conventions—are subjected to endless examination, reading, and interpretation by the other party in an effort to discern whether or not

¹² Rita Copeland and Stephen Melville, "Allegory and Allegoresis, Rhetoric and Hermeneutics," *Exemplaria* 3 (1991): pp. 158-87.

¹³ The vocabulary used in the narrative to describe Amadas's confession of love particularly resembles language used to describe Soredamors's and Alexandre's realization of their own and each other's feelings of love; for example, Soredamors resolves to let Alexandre know of her love for him "par sanblant et par moz coverz" (v. 1041). For more on the thematic of covering and uncovering in *Cligès*, see Peggy McCracken, "Love and War in *Cligès*," *Arthuriana* 18.3 (2008): pp. 6-18, and on the language of love/of the lovers, Kristen Lee Over, "Narrative Treason and Sovereign Form in Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligès*," *Comitatus* 26 (1995): pp. 95-113.

their love is requited. In *Amadas*, Amadas manifests the conventional physical signs of love to a comical extent, coming close to literally dying of love-sickness.¹⁴ Ydoine, who sees this, totally fails to understand the cause of his ailment—if she had, the text tells us, there would be no need to send for doctors from Montpellier or Salerno! It is only through Amadas’s “*oscure et nonpourquant ouverte*” speech that she understands what is going on—an interpretive clarity that is worth noting in a story full of so many incorrect interpretations (a staged dream vision, Ydoine’s many other deceptions, the confusion caused by the theft of the engraved ring that Ydoine promises not to remove as long as their love endures), and that is totally foreshortened by the narrative, as there is seemingly no distance or cognitive processing that must take place between Amadas’s confession and Ydoine’s understanding and rejection of it. However puzzling the romance’s diegetic description of Amadas’s speech may be to the reader, Ydoine’s understanding of what is *couverte* and *oscure* evidently suffers no such interpretive obstacles.

As in other romances, the scene of this avowal becomes a way for the romance to establish a thematic connection between the interpretation of love language and the reading and interpretation of love literature; in the case of *Amadas*, this interest in the interpretation not just of the text itself but of its romance intertexts is overt and explicit, and appears everywhere in the romance, from the author-narrator’s extradiegetic utterances to the characters’ direct discourse. We can see the grappling over how to put love into words in this scene of avowal (how Amadas should confess his love, but also the secondary question raised by this passage of the literary representation of love) as part and parcel with the text’s greater concern about representing love in the wake of an established romance tradition. This concern is evoked by the author-narrator’s opening appeal not only to lovers themselves, but also to “*Vous qui avés oï d’Amours, / Selonc le conte des auctours / Et en latin et en roumans / Des les tans as premiers amans*” (vv. 5-8). Thus, we see that from the very beginning of the romance, the narrator has chosen to address himself to an audience well-versed in the long literary tradition that precedes him—an awareness of which seems to manifest itself as an apparent anxiety to establish the superlative character of his narrative and its protagonists. There are, of course, the commonplace comparisons to Tristan and Yseut, who frequently serve as the generic yardstick against which to measure the devotion of romance lovers—Ydoine suffers more than either Tristan or Yseut (vv. 2883-87), Amadas and Ydoine’s love is more “natural” than Tristan and Yseut’s because it isn’t the result of drinking a potion (vv. 1176-90).

But the ambitiousness fueling this comparison eventually begins to exceed the commonplace. We see hints of this already in the use of language that explicitly appeals to readerly knowledge and experience—not only does Amadas love more intensely than Tristan, etc., but you, the reader, are reading something that exceeds or surpasses anything you’ve read before, what you are accustomed to reading. What is at stake here is not just love, but the literary representation of it—the romance and its author in the face of the scope of tradition preceding them. Hence, the narrative continuously seeks to establish Amadas and Ydoine’s exemplarity in

¹⁴ On the literalization of figurative love conventions in *Amadas*, see William Calin, “*Amadas et Ydoine: The Problematic World of an Idyllic Romance*,” in *Continuations: Essays on Medieval French Literature and Language in Honor of John L. Grigsby*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Gloria Torrini-Roblin (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1989), p. 40.

terms of the expansiveness not only of time (since the first lovers, since Adam and Eve, all lovers who have ever lived or ever will live), but also of the transmission of the literary tradition:

Parlant s'en vont a tel delit,
Si com l'estoire conte et dist,
Que ja mais jor n'erent trouvé
Doi amant de leur loialté.
De tous endrois sans traïson
Et sans vilaine mesprison,
De bones meurs, en tous samblans
Sormontent tous autres amans
Qui sont et qui or ont esté,
Dont on avra dit et conté
Ne en estoire n'en cançon
Par reasonable description.

(vv. 4679-90)

This insistence finds its reiteration within the narrative, for example, when the author-narrator describes Ydoine as "... la plus tresloial amie / *Que on oïst mais en roumans* / Puis le tans as premiers amans" (vv. 4978-80, emphasis mine), and is also manifested on the fictional level, in the awareness of the characters themselves, as they repeatedly describe their love for and to one another in similarly superlative terms (e.g., vv. 5000-08, 6564-69). Nor, among characters, are such descriptions limited solely to the lovers themselves. The knight whom Amadas defeats at Ydoine's tomb, praising Amadas, tells him: "Et si avés tous les amans / Qui sont et qui aront esté / Vaincu, sire, de loiauté" (vv. 6357-59). The echoes of this language in the mouths of all the characters as well as the author-narrator therefore resonate on every level of the text, and bring us back to the extradiegetic level and the author-narrator's address to an audience who has read widely in the love tradition in both French and Latin, and who now will read his own work. We are thus constantly being reminded to situate what we read in relation with what we *have* read.

The same Amadas who botches things up so badly with Ydoine, we see as the narrative continues, is himself evidently an atrocious reader and interpreter of this love tradition that serves as predecessor to *Amadas* the romance. Amadas's invocation of a catalog of literary lovers is the romance's most startling, indeed, bizarre, instance of the characters' self-awareness in situating themselves within a literary tradition of love. Believing himself betrayed by Ydoine, Amadas condemns all women as deceitful and unfaithful, complaining that, among others, "Le cortois Tristans fu traïs / Et deceüs et mal baillis / De l'amisté Yseut la bloie" (vv. 5833-35) and Paris by Oenone and Helen, "Dont il ot tant dolor et paine" (v. 5838). These decidedly odd interpretations of stories so well known as to be common knowledge are both thematically noteworthy. Amadas's mangled understanding of the Tristan story is especially remarkable given that the love story of Amadas and Ydoine is itself modeled in part on that of Tristan and Yseut, a connection that shows itself not only through the *Amadas* author-narrator's explicit name-dropping or the similarities in episodes of plot, but also in expressions and turns of phrase which

echo language found in the extant texts of Thomas or Gottfried.¹⁵ Amadas's distortion in representing Paris, the author of his own misfortunes as well as those of many others, as the victim of female betrayal, distills perfectly the misogyny of laying the blame on women for what is obviously—and in this case, universally known and accepted to be—the fault of a man, brought about through his agency and her lack thereof. It is this kind of distortion of the truth that underlies not only Amadas's rant, but also the author-narrator's own mediation of and intervention in representing the events of the story—a distortion that the text calls attention to not just here, but in other ways as well, as we will see later.

The references that follow these in Amadas's catalog are even more incontrovertibly wrong-headed: Amadas claims that Ulysses, Roland, and Aeneas were deceived and duped by Penelope, Aude, and Lavinia (vv. 5841-42, 5845-48)—one woman who exemplifies spousal fidelity, a second whose sole action in the text in which she appears is to follow her betrothed to his death, and a third whose successful marriage engenders the hallowed lineage that becomes the basis for French self-legitimation through claims of Roman descent, as, for example, in the topos of *translatio et imperii*. On the other hand, Amadas extols Dido and Lucretia as positive exempla of women who loved loyally as long as they lived (vv. 5857-62)—apparently without any need to comment on the fact that this was not long at all, given that both of these women took their own lives out of loyalty to their lovers (or in Lucretia's case, her husband). Even in the case of such praise, however, we do not escape without an obligatory injection of misogyny:

« Ainc ne tricierent pour amer
Dont l'en oïst avant parler.
Mais je sai bien certainement
C'ainc n'amerent si loialment
Que aucun point par vain corage
Ne feïssent aucun folage. »

(v. 5863-68)

More strangely still, Amadas celebrates the virtue of these women by comparing their faithfulness in love to that of Pirus for Thisbe (v. 5862)—rather than vice versa, which might be more expected. The cross-gender comparison does make sense as a way for Amadas to uphold his sexist reasoning: if all women except maybe these three are faithless and treacherous, of course, it follows that the paragon of fidelity to whom they are compared should be a man. This expediency, however, does not conceal its logical flaw: that, if the extent of Pirus's faithfulness as a lover is proven by his suicide out of love and grief for his beloved, whom he believes dead, then the same quality ought to be equally attributed to Thisbe. It seems to miss the point of the story altogether that Amadas describes the love and loyalty between them only unidirectionally, crediting Pirus alone with exemplary status for behavior no more or less praiseworthy than Thisbe's. In fact, if there is one more culpable than the other for the tragedy that befalls them, it is Pirus, rather, whose mistaken interpretation (!) of Thisbe's bloodied veil leads to their mutual end. Pirus's suicide is an act of fidelity, but a mistaken, misplaced

¹⁵ John R. Reinhard, *The Old French Romance of Amadas et Ydoine: An Historical Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1927): 132; Alison Adams, "Amadas et Ydoine and Thomas' *Tristan*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 14 (1978): 247-54.

one that costs his beloved her life as well. Thisbe, at least, is certain her lover is dying—or on his inevitable way—when she kills herself.

Thus, the particularities of the stories of these literary lovers, and especially that of Piramus and Thisbe, resonate with that of Amadas and Ydoine. It is the erroneous belief in Thisbe's death that drives her lover Piramus to kill himself out of grief—more or less the fate that the not-really-dead Ydoine tries to avert for Amadas. The commonality shared by Dido, Lucretia, and Thisbe, which seemingly escapes Amadas, points metafictionally to Ydoine's own "death," and perhaps also her act of self-sacrifice: she concocts a false story of her own infidelity and depravity in order to prevent Amadas's from dying of love and grief for her after her death. Amadas has thus chosen as figures to hold up as the "good ones" the literary women who share this connection with his own beloved, whose apparent betrayal is the occasion for his condemnation of all women, and yet who he insists is better than all other women (vv. 5891-913)—hence, perhaps, his need to call into question the faithfulness of Dido, Lucretia, and Julia as well. Perhaps most significantly, though, all of Amadas's ill-founded representations of famous lovers serve as an obvious metafictional indication that Amadas's belief in Ydoine's betrayal is also a misreading—and an equally egregious one. This is something Amadas himself will soon come to realize.

But this episode, of course, is not just a metafictional device of the author-narrator, but itself an object of the author-narrator's storytelling; it offers us a representation of a certain type of lover and reader. Within this fictional context, what do we make of Amadas's incredible misinterpretations of the love tradition he cites? Given the type of lover and reader Amadas is—one who dramatically misinterprets canonical texts of medieval love literature as part of a misogynistic impulse to fault all women for his frustrated desire for Ydoine and his mistaken sense of betrayal—what do we then make of his earlier confession of love to her? We should be wary of making assumptions about the content of Amadas's *parole par figure*—we cannot simply reverse the substitution of allegorical discourse for love discourse in our minds by leaning on the face value of the author-narrator's representation of events within the frame of romance convention. What has he revealed to her, and what has he concealed? Even if we allow that he has made a perfectly conventional confession of love through masterful use of all the appropriate figurative language, readers familiar with the romance tradition (as this author-narrator assumes his readers will be) have already seen that language undermined, exposed, and turned on its head in so many other romance texts. But we cannot even assume that much, for as we have just seen, subsequent events in the romance show that Amadas's knowledge and interpretation of the literary love tradition are offensively inadequate. The slip into allegorical discourse, read in this way, signals not only a need for its own careful interpretation and unveiling, but also a need for careful interpretation of the romance's use of the literary discourse and conventions of love—for attentive scrutiny to what is being covered up in the process of ostensible uncovering.

Does such scrutiny help us make sense of the narrative logic of all this allegorical, or pseudo-allegorical, language that we took as the point of departure of our discussion of *Amadas*? Both characters and author-narrator make reference to the Tristan story throughout the romance, and the passage makes sense as a description of Amadas's speech if he is performing a Tristan-like piece of wordplay—perhaps the crutch of a narrator who, less adept than Thomas, has to resort to telling us about it rather than showing us. Could Amadas be confessing his love by

playing on double meanings, by using language that is potentially ambiguous at the same time that its meaning is plain to a knowing listener and reader—as Thomas’s Tristan does when, picking up on the ambiguity of Iseut’s language, confesses his love by playing on the meanings of *l’amer* and *la mer* (love and the sea), a confession that remains inexplicit but which is sufficiently *sage* to reveal his *corage*? (For Thomas uses this end-rhyme coupling to describe Tristan’s confession as well.) Not only does *Amadas*’s language of covering and uncovering, of obscure yet plain meaning, suitably describe such a rhetorical trick, but the romance also picks up the use of the end-rhymed pairing of *corage/sage* to describe the conditions under which such a trick takes place—the rhyme is repeated twice in short succession (vv. 476-77, 482-83).

We should question, however, if in the context of the fiction, Amadas is really *sage* enough for such a game, for we have already seen his inadequate understanding of love stories in general and *Tristan* specifically (since that is one of the examples he mis-cites) cast into sharp relief. We have also seen, even at this early point in the romance, that Ydoine is not particularly *sage* either when it comes to the hermeneutics of love—or else she would be able to read Amadas’s obvious signs of love-sickness for what they are. The romance makes a point of underscoring this interpretive deficiency on Ydoine’s part with its crack about doctors from Montpellier and Salerno. Yet Ydoine, deficient as she is, has no trouble immediately understanding Amadas’s meaning, or at least, no trouble coming to her own conclusions about it, regardless of what Amadas may have intended (for, as we observed, the text seems to describe Amadas as having little agency in his own language and its production of meaning). At first glance, it seems that the text portrays Ydoine as the archetypal woman *sans merci* who cruelly rejects a deserving lover. Careful attention on the part of the reader, however, leaves it open what Amadas actually says, what Ydoine understands, and why she reacts the way she does. In this, the scene of avowal in *Amadas* is strikingly different from its counterparts in *Tristan* and especially *Silence*, where, as we previously noted, a discursively simple situation is rendered interpretively complicated only by the fact that words can have more than one meaning. All the *glose* in the world cannot render language—even an unthinking, artless sound of pure self-expression, such as Eufemie’s unwitting utterance—a transparent representation of love or of human emotion, condition, or intention. Thus, Cadour struggles and angsts over the interpretation of language that contains no real ambiguity at all from the reader’s perspective. The situation is the opposite in *Amadas*, where interpretation presents no obstacle for Ydoine, and yet is frustrated for the reader by the text’s veiled, discursively knotted second-hand representation of one of the most important speech acts of the romance genre—the “speech” of which is completely concealed from the reader’s view.

Just as important as the question of the actual content and language of Amadas’s speech is the fact that the narrator has replaced the romance protagonist’s most important linguistic production (the confession of love) with a bald statement of the romance’s own narrative procedures: for, as we briefly touched upon earlier, not only does the author-narrator “reveal” Amadas’s speech act to the reader by covering up his actual language, but he also, in concealing from view the work done by romance conventions and topoi, simultaneously shines a revealing light on it. When the narrator tells us that “C’est d’amour sens et grant mesure / Soi découvrir par couverture, / Et en couvrant parole ouverte, / En découvrant cose couverte” (vv. 478-81), he is also describing how he covers up Amadas’s *parole ouverte* and in the process, discloses a *cose couverte*, something concealed. That *something* could be Amadas’ discursive inadequacy and the

potential failure of his language to live up to the rhetorical standard of Tristan and other exemplars of the courtly tradition; or even more critically, it could be the potential *narrative* failure of a certain kind of love discourse once the machinery of romance convention is exposed. Like the glosses of *Silence*, this scene of the ambiguous confession of love in *Amadas* produces meaning on different narrative levels, which it brings together inextricably in an act of self-commentary.

In this extradiegetically focused reading, then, the thrust of the passage shifts from the problem of talking about love (the character's problem) to that of writing about love (the author-narrator's problem). To be *sage d'Amors* is also to be wise or skilled in the *literary treatment* of love. The potential intersection of these two questions (how to talk about being in love, how to write about love) has been signaled from the very start of the romance, in the paired address to actual lovers and to readers of love stories—but here, in the confession of love and its language of allegorical interpretation, they fully converge. The *sens et grant mesure* of love is realized not only in the lover's confession but also in the narrative technique used to depict it, and more broadly, in the kind of rhetorical game in which the romance requires not only the reader but also the characters and narrator to participate.

So it is not only Amadas's own language that has a double valence, as described in the passage. The language of text is also itself double-pronged, as it is a description of Amadas' speech but also of the romance's own poetics. This gesture by a medieval romance to thematize its own poetics and interpretation is by no means new, as Green establishes and *Silence* itself gestures to in its imitation of Thomas's *Tristan*, perhaps the model *par excellence* of such a poetics of love in romance. What is unusual in *Amadas* and *Silence* is the formal innovation through which this thematization is achieved, and the new interpretive and narratological questions such innovation raises. For instance, the rhetorical play in *Silence* dramatizes how language produces meaning differently across different narrative levels, and therefore, how the same language can pose wildly different interpretive problems depending on the perspective from which it is analyzed: what may be ambiguous at one narrative level (Cador and Eufemie's understanding of each other's language) is totally clear at another (the reader's understanding of the characters' language). This dynamic is complicated when the distinctions between the narrative levels themselves become less clear—this is the problem thematized by the author-narrator's discussion of Eufemie's *glose*/the *glose* of Eufemie. The confluence and conflict of readings on different narrative levels, whose distinctions and boundaries cannot always be determined, produce the key ambiguity of the romance: the inability to properly locate meaning and intention in discourse.

Thus, the inherent difficulty of the figure of the author-narrator, whose utterances always contain the potential to be both extradiegetic and diegetic, and both diegetic and mimetic. This fundamental ambiguity, in large part, generates *Silence*'s unspecifiable stance towards gender and “feminism,” which has spurred so much scholarly debate.¹⁶ It is this author-narrator-

¹⁶ For an overview of critical opinions in the debate over *Silence*'s supposed feminism or misogyny, see Lorraine Stock, “The Importance of Being Gender ‘Stable’: Masculinity and Feminine Empowerment in the *Roman de Silence*,” *Arthuriana* 7 (1997): pp. 7-34, and F. Regina

character problem that gives rise to so much of the particular narrative self-reflexivity of medieval French romance. Though the fact of this ambiguity is itself not novel, is the interpretive stakes of this ambiguity that are new and unexpected—as we will see more clearly in the rest of this chapter. Likewise, the characters’ direct discourse and the way in which their language functions as their own commentary on their own circumstances as well as a metatextual commentary on the romance itself has new, heightened stakes in *Amadas*. Although in *Le Bel Inconnu*, for example, the characters’ language does serve some extradiegetic function beyond its status as part of the romance story and as a narrative device for the telling of that story—as we saw in chapter one’s analysis of Guinglain’s use of the word *amie*,—in *Amadas*, the characters’ language takes on new importance in the text, both its absence (e.g., in the avowal) as well as its presence (e.g., *Amadas*’s catalog of literary lovers). By refocusing the site of self-reflexive play from the extradiegetic first-person intervention to this most mediated and narratively distant representation of language—the speech of a fictional character circumlocuted as an act, pure diegesis—, *Amadas* offers a new critical stance from which we can analyze not only this particular narrator’s use of language, but, as we will see in the final sections of this chapter, the function of romance narrative itself.

IV. Reading the Stakes of Interpretation: the Instrumentalization of Linguistic Instability

It is the failure of scholarship to recognize the heightened stakes of interpretation in texts like *Silence* and *Amadas* that has resulted in their relative critical neglect.¹⁷ In particular, I hypothesize that the dominance of Chrétien and other twelfth-century examples in romance scholarship has meant that new forms of self-reflexivity that do not closely reproduce familiar gestures or episodes from Chrétien, as the *Bel Inconnu* and so many other texts do, have gone unrecognized, or at least have not been adequately explored. Formal innovation and play across narrative levels in texts like *Silence* and *Amadas* get mistaken for authorial clumsiness or lack of skill or originality. If, like *Silence*, these texts are fortunate in their critical fate, eventually some scholar comes along later to argue that they do have interpretive value—that the romancer is not simply unskilled or ignorant, but rather, is tasking the reader with interpreting the “gap between what the narrator says and what he shows.”¹⁸ Much criticism, especially of lesser known texts, is satisfied to stop here, with proof of the romance’s self-reflexive, metatextual awareness—as if to distinguish sophisticated romancers from unsophisticated ones, and romances worthy of the critical attention of modern readers from those unworthy of such interest.

But surely, with the accumulation of sufficient examples of it over decades, the presence of self-reflexivity—the text’s acknowledgment of itself as a text, the text’s signaling to the reader of the need for interpretation, to not take its language and its narrative construction at face

Psaki, “Un coup de foudre: La recherche anglo-saxonne sur le *Roman de Silence*,” *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales et Humanistes* 13 (2006): pp. 287-303.

¹⁷ *Silence* has certainly had its fair share of attention especially in the Anglophone academy—but again, primarily for interest in the politics and representation of gender, rather than for its formal qualities and its generic innovations in its deployment of the first-person voice and the persona of the author-narrator, crucially important to my reading in this chapter.

¹⁸ Suzanne Kocher, “Narrative Structure of the *Roman de Silence*: Lessons in Interpretation,” *Romance Notes* 42 (2002): p. 350.

value—on its own cannot always remain new and surprising. The medieval romancers who followed Chrétien surely did not all collectively fail to see the irony in his *oeuvre*—and in *Le Bel Inconnu* and many other romances that played with and laid bare Chrétien’s ironic strategies—, and surely did not all content themselves with reinventing the wheel, or reinventing lesser wheels. Modern critics have identified self-reflexive ambiguity and irony in *Silence*, if only as a way to rescue the text from accusations of misogyny, and the author from accusations of stupidity and/or misogyny. Critical attention has been slower to come to *Amadas*, though awareness of irony and ambiguity in this lesser-known romance has also begun to emerge, for example, in the reading of Sara Sturm-Maddox, who points out many of the text’s self-reflexive indications not to take its narrative and its narrator’s language at face value.¹⁹ Yet, there remains the question of how such the irony and ambiguity of such self-reflexive gestures should be interpreted. Both *Silence* and *Amadas* offer compelling answers to this question.

Very little criticism on *Silence* has shown much interest in the utterances and interventions of the narrator except as a subordinated extension of other critical interests in the text—most often, the attempt to determine the text’s (and by extension, the author’s) status as pro- or anti-feminist.²⁰ Therefore, the role of the narrator has emerged most sharply in arguments such as Psaki’s that defend the text’s position as fundamentally opposed to that of the misogynistic attitude of the narrator. Otherwise, *Silence*’s narratorial interventions have often been treated as clumsy digressions (whether due to lack of authorial talent, or as Psaki argues, part of an intentional, artful portrayal of the narrator as unskilled and unintelligent in a deliberate critique of the narrator’s misogynistic attitudes), or else disregarded as if they were mere “paratexts” to the “text” that is the more interesting story of the gender-bending *Silence*.

Kristin L. Burr, however, has recently noted that the ideas that the author-narrator articulates in *Silence*’s prologue are more thematically connected to the rest of the romance than

¹⁹ Sara Sturm-Maddox, “‘Signeur, vous qui l’oeuvre saves’: Amadas, Ydoine, and the Wiles of Women,” in *De sens rassis”: Essays in Honor of Rupert T. Pickens* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005), ed. Keith Busby, Bernard Guidot, and Logan E. Whalen, pp. 605-616. Sturm-Maddox’s argument about *Amadas* is strikingly similar to the position of Psaki and others who question an anti-feminist interpretation of the author-narrator of *Silence*. Sturm-Maddox argues that the author-narrator’s misogynistic remarks about deceitful women are not meant to be taken at face value, but rather are being presented to the reader as the object of representation of critique. This is signaled to the reader by the parallels between the author-narrator’s language and that of Amadas’s patently mistaken and wrongheaded utterances.

²⁰ The critical subordination of the author-narrator’s role in *Silence* is encapsulated perfectly by Kocher’s claim that Heldris reverses the conventional relationship between a medieval romance and its narrative frame, meant to guide audience’s interpretations of the story contained within: “the story of *Silence* so far exceeds its narrative frame that the audience is obliged to work backward: it becomes necessary to interpret the narrator’s commentary in light of the characters’ example, rather than primarily the other way around” (“Narrative Structure,” p. 352). How can one contend that the story “exceeds” the narrative frame without a serious consideration of what interpretive work, exactly, is done by that frame?

may be evident at first glance.²¹ The Heldris of Cornüalles of Burr's interpretation is not an unintelligent or *maladroit* romancer checking off boxes by rote from the list of formal elements necessary to begin a romance, but rather, a narrator whose prefatory remarks deliberately and artfully weave a thematic thread that continues throughout the romance fiction, in the form of the story's preoccupation with concepts of honor and shame. Honor and shame, of course, feature prominently in the romance's prologue, as Heldris complains at length about the stinginess of his aristocratic patrons:

Formens valt moils de gargherie,
Et rosse miols de margerie,
...
Autant valt povertés honeste
Miols de .m. mars sans joie et feste,
Et volentés gentils et france
Qu'avers a iestre et rois de France.
Ausi valt miols honors de honte.
(vv. 91-92, 97-101)

Burr justly describes the logic that subtends this invocation of *honor* and *honte*: “Underscoring the honor gained from generosity and the shame born of greed permits Heldris to make a case for financial compensation for minstrels, revealing his self-interest. He sets the stage for his own remuneration.”²² Burr's reading identifies a little-noted aspect of the prologue and the narratorial persona, but analyzes it in the terms provided by the author-narrator himself. What gets short shrift here is the issue of self-interest and remuneration—precisely the aspect that will allow us to fully make sense of the extreme semiotic slippage to which these terms, honor and shame, are subject throughout the romance, by both narrator and characters. If Burr sees the author-narrator's assertion of self-interest as an extension of the romance story's fundamental investment in exploring honor and shame, I would propose, rather, that the author-narrator instrumentalizes language, using familiar literary and courtly concepts to both voice and to conceal the self-serving nature of his narrative-making. As part of this strategy, Heldris proceeds to craft a narrative that tells us a story in which the central plot elements all revolve around characters doing the same thing: manipulating conventional forms of signification for their own self-interest.

There is little reason to accept the author-narrator's declarations in the prologue—nor the terms in which he puts them—at face value. If such a strong assertion of self-interest does not already make us inherently suspicious as readers, the narrator's preemptive refusal to gloss his own words, which he insists are self-explanatory and expressive of a truth accepted by all, surely smack a bit of protesting too much:

De honte ont mais lor cort enclose.

²¹ Kristin L. Burr, “Nurturing Debate in *Le Roman de Silence*,” in *Founding Feminisms in Medieval Studies: Essays in Honor of E. Jane Burns*, eds. Laine E. Doggett and Daniel E. O’Sullivan (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016), pp. 33-44.

²² Burr, p. 37.

Chi n'a mestier metre de glose,
Car jo n'i fas nule sofime.
Jal savés vus tres bien meïsme:
Losenge est mais en cort oïe,
Ameë i est et conjoïe.

(vv. 67-72)

The use of the word *sofime*, like *glose*, calls attention to itself not only as a term of an unexpectedly rhetorical register, but also as one that is being actively disclaimed by the narrator: no *sofime* to be found here, hence no need for gloss. This seems almost like signposting a transparent “nothing to see here” at the scene of an accident, especially as *sofime*, which we might understand here as figurative language or even deceptive language, is the very device in evidence when the author-narrator says “De honte ont mais lor cort enclose,” and which we see in proliferation elsewhere in the prologue as well as in the author-narrator’s many subsequent extradiegetic interventions. And, as with the recurrence of *glose*, which links the author-narrator’s extradiegetic commentary with the communicative and cognitive activities of the fictional characters, the word *sofime*, too, reappears later in the text, in the narrative’s description of Silence’s own thinking: “Dont se porpense en lui meïsme / Que Nature li fait sofime” (vv. 2539-40). This use of *sofime* to describe Silence’s gender-bending thus suggestively connects the author-narrator’s use of language and the content of the extradiegetic narratorial interventions with the romance’s central plot element.

This paves the way for Heldris to take the conventional rhetorical play of the romance author-narrator (in prologues, epilogues, and interventions) one step further into what becomes almost outright deceptiveness: Heldris’s verbal sleight of hand to simultaneously assert and conceal his expressions of self-interest. (This strategy of verbal trickery will find its echo in the various deceptions and fraud carried out by the characters of Heldris’s story, often in order to advance material interests of their own which are masked by the conventional values associated with the language they invoke.) This is always followed quickly, of course, by a disclaimer of his own intent, as he will constantly repeat that all he wants to do is go back to telling his story (e.g., vv. 1575-76)—an echo of the claim which he ends the prologue, that “... moult grans volentés me point / De muevre rime et commencier, / Sans noise faire, et sans tenchier” (vv. 104-06). The narrator uses the conventional aphoristic language of shame and honor as a façade behind which he can continue to conceal his repeated assertions of the greed of aristocratic patrons (and hence, the economic injustice that he, the romancer, is suffering). If this strategy is fairly transparent in the first instance that Burr points out to us, the collocation of terms and meanings in the prologue allows Heldris a shorthand with which to reiterate the same complaint without recourse to an explicitly pecuniary vocabulary. Thus, the narrator repeatedly interrupts his own storytelling with such interventions as, for example:

Les noces durent .xii. mois,
Car tels estoit adonc lor loirs.
Entiere avoit adonques joie;
Mais li aver, cui Dex renoie,
Ont enpirie la costume.
Grans maltalens m'art et alume

Qu'il l'ont cangie et remuee.
Car fust la pute gens tuee
Par cui honors est abascie.

(vv. 253-61)

The choice of this particular moment, this particular lost custom to lament, as the point of departure for Heldris's more generalized complaint about the degraded present is not random. The significance of the yearlong celebration becomes clear in the light of the tradition of gift-giving at weddings and feasts, and especially of rich rewards given to minstrels and performers. Thus the abasement of *honor* about which Heldris complains is the abolishment of a tradition which would have offered him an opportunity for material gain.

This instrumentalization of the values of *honor* and *honte* subsequently becomes even subtler and more slippery, for example, in the personification allegory in miniature that accompanies the description of Eufemie's father, whom the text praises as a man of many virtues:

Car il ert hom sans vilonie,
Larges, cortois, sains felonie:
Et tels gens ert adonc amee.
Mais or est Faintise entamee
Et Vilonie est aforee.
Lozenge a le bouce doree;
Et Verités de corte est rese
Si qu'ele n'i valt une frees.
Et Amors et Valors mendie.
Ne sai mais, las! que jo en die.
Honors ne valt mais une tille.
De Honte ont fait lor ciere fille.
Il ne le voelent marier,
Por rover ne por tarier,
Mais retenir veïr en voel.
Qu'en puis jo donc, se jo m'en duel?
Hontes a trop esté a cort:
A cascun més trote et acort.
En li a mais vielle puciele,
Il n'a en tiere damoisiele
Se tant se fust a cort tenue
Com Hontes est, ne fust kenue,
Vils a veïr et a savoir.
Et Honte voelent tolt avoir:
Honte ont et Honte les maintient,
O cui vivre .m. mars sont nient.
Miols doi dire morir que vivre
Car Hontes est mors, kis enivre.
Tans seroit mais de lasscier Honte.

Or voel repairier a mon conte.

(vv. 1547-76)

This recapitulation of the topos of *laudatio temporis acti* borrows from the rhetorical arsenal of the personification of virtues and vices in order to amplify the force of its moral outrage. The greed of the rich is not only shameful, but is also symptomatic of the decline of virtue and propagation of vice in the present, a truism whose authority Heldris thus exploits without having to put himself forward as the one who authors it—because everyone knows this is true! The familiar, conventional feel of this rhetorical gesture is disrupted by its transition into an extended allegorization of *Honte*, noteworthy for its length and for its odd character. The logic of the allegorizing *Honte* as a daughter whose parents refuse to marry her off is not readily apparent or comprehensible—what does it mean to find a husband for *Honte*? for *Honte* to be an old maid? for people to be sustained by her? But it is not too difficult to see what Heldris is really trying to get at. Echoing language used earlier in the prologue (courts enclosed with shame, a thousand marks), the peculiar personification of *Honte* does not allow us to lose sight of the true, specific object of Heldris' complaint (greedy rich people), because it is only in this context that we can make sense of it: everyone wants to have money, is sustained by it, hoards it and refuses to give it away, etc. We see that *Honte* here is really standing in for something us; the previously established constellations and confluences of meaning revolving around this word now allow the narrator to rail against shame when he really means greed, and greed when he primarily means to say that his patrons aren't paying him enough.

It seems flattening and inelegant to read these apparent digressions (so clearly signaled to the reader as such by Heldris's insistent and repeated declarations that he only wishes to return to telling his story) as representing clumsiness or lack of skill on the part of the narrator (much less the author), when they so clearly signal a rhetorical ploy at work here—one with thematic relevance to the romance story. The author-narrator “accidentally on purpose” interrupts the story at pertinent moments to reassert his pecuniary demands without saying so in so many words. In fact, the trick is to deliberately say so, but only in *other* words, words that populate the lexical field of courtly romance and its conventions.

Rather than continuing to disregard these extradiegetic parts of the text as if they were some sort of footnote or aside, a second-order device to further extend or emphasize the romance story's central themes of shame and honor, we will allow it to suggest a lens through which we can consider the text of the romance story as the discursive production of the kind of author/narrator/character that we now know Heldris to be. In other words, what kinds of readings emerge when we place metaphorical quotation marks around the romance story, when we regard the production of this *récit* to be its own sort of *histoire*, that of the extradiegetic narrator Heldris? This changes the coloring of even the very beginning of the romance story, which opens with a description of King Ebain. The author-narrator lauds the king's generosity and his willingness to give liberally to his subjects and remarks that “Il maintenoit chevalerie, / Si sostenoit bachelerie / Nient par falose mais par dons” (vv. 121-23). The voluminous praise of the king (vv. 124-30) segues directly into rapturous praise of the virtue of giving, “Car ki done done derriänment / Il n'i a gré, ains piert son don / Et plus avoec, son los, son non” (vv. 134-36). What would otherwise seem innocuous and totally conventional has to be seen as a pointed jab at the greedy aristocratic patrons of Heldris's time who do not live up to the generous gift-giving ideal

of this romance king. It is difficult to take it otherwise, following as it does directly on the heels of the long and vociferous complaints of the prologue. (It also gives further lie to Heldris's claim that he intends to put his complaining behind him and just get on with the story without fuss and bother.)

In fact, we can view the entire gender-bending romance plot that has so fascinated critics over the last few decades through this same thematic lens. For, the hidden assertion of material and economic self-interest is at the heart of Cadour and Eufemie's decision to raise their daughter as a son in order to secure her inheritance. We see the manipulation of conventional systems or modes of signification to force them to signify differently but covertly in the parents' attempt to turn the girl child into a boy through the re-construction of gender and language. We can also observe this dynamic in a more general fashion on the larger scale of the text itself: social and political concerns (the political implications of the various marriages that take place, the king's political and economic interests in forbidding female inheritance and in marrying Silence, the political nature of the social construction of gender) behind or overwritten by the forms of romance convention.²³

Heldris's exploitation of linguistic instability, of the unfixed nature of the sign and the arbitrary relationship of signifier/signified, we also see echoed by the characters within the fiction of the romance, with varying degrees of subtleness and success. The most prominent and successful example of such instrumentalized verbal ambiguity is, of course, the titular one, the strategic naming of the child—Latin *Silentius*, which can easily be reverted to the feminine *Silentia*, if necessary, and in French betrays no grammatically gendered ending. Likewise, several characters similarly leverage *honte* and *honor* to disguise their true motivations or to conceal the true stakes of their speech. For instance, the wicked queen conspires to kill Silence through a forged letter, supposedly from Ebain, asking the king of France to kill Silence as soon as he has read it. The queen's letter accuses Silence of having committed an *honte* so terrible that an explanation of what that act was cannot be put into words (v. 4324)—in other words, a shame that cannot be glossed, conveniently enough.

Sharon Kinoshita points out that the political and genealogical interests of various parties involved in the marriage of Silence's parents are "euphemized" by the romance's framing of Cadour and Eufemie's courtship within the generic conventions of love.²⁴ While Kinoshita proposes to "move from a poetics to a politics of *Silence*," I would suggest instead that the poetics themselves already inscribe the need to pay attention to the politics.²⁵ Indeed, this need to pay attention to what is "euphemized" is the very point of the romance—at the center of all its plots, and foregrounded by the author-narrator in a way that can't be overlooked, through

²³ This is perhaps why such topics were relatively late to come to *Silence* criticism. See, for example, Sharon Kinoshita, "Heldris de Cornuälle's *Roman de Silence* and the Feudal Politics of Lineage," *PMLA* 110 (1995): pp. 397-409 and "Male-Order Brides: Marriage, Patriarchy, and Monarchy in the *Roman de Silence*," *Arthuriana* 12 (2002): pp. 64-75. For the construction of gender in *Silence* as a political act, see Peggy McCracken, "'The Boy Who Was a Girl': Reading Gender in the *Roman de Silence*," *Romanic Review* 83 (1994): pp. 515-36.

²⁴ Kinoshita, "Feudal Politics," p. 398.

²⁵ Kinoshita, "Feudal Politics," p. 398.

increasingly lengthy and repetitive interventions whose logic reveals itself at the slightest scrutiny that looks below the surface of generic convention. And *Silence* is not alone in employing—and self-reflexively exposing—this narrative strategy. We have already seen what is perhaps *Amadas*'s most blatant—at least formally—example of such narrative euphemism in the scene of Amadas's confession of love. The full extent and stakes of instrumentalized linguistic ambiguity and narrative euphemism in *Amadas* emerge when we examine the romance and its story as a whole in the light of our questions about this scene.

V. Sex, Gender, and Power: Instrumentalized Language and Narrative Euphemism in *Amadas*

We have already seen a kind of instrumentalized ambiguity, albeit indirectly, in the scene of Amadas's confession of love. It is this ambiguity—which has escaped critical scrutiny as such, yet is foregrounded so conspicuously for the reader who takes the time to wonder what Amadas is covering and uncovering—that leaves room for the unthinking reader to fill in the blanks with expectations and assumptions from romance convention, or for the more critical reader to try to uncover what Amadas actually is saying, if not what generic norms taken at face value might lead us to expect. In Amadas's confession, the allegorical cover replaces direct language, both within the fiction of the romance as well as metafictionally, in the text we are reading: in the author-narrator's discourse, the language of allegory displaces the literary representation of love. The author has “revealed” Amadas's confession of love to us under cover of the description of his allegorical speechifying, thus concealing any indication of the actual language of what was said.

If Amadas escapes having to confess his love directly, the author also escapes having to directly represent the confession. The only direct discourse is this declaration, which Amadas repeats a thousand times, as the text tells us: “Bele, merchi, / Com chil qui voit en fin sa mort, / Se par vous n'a hastif confort” (vv. 503-05). A sympathetic reader, moved by the previous description of Amadas's extreme love-sickness, might interpret this charitably as the desperation of a lover driven to the deathbed by the force of his feelings; the surface-level construction of the narrative itself would encourage such a reading, as it seems to frame Ydoine as the typical merciless woman who arrogantly rejects all lovers and doesn't care if they die for love of her. In fact, the author-narrator's description of Amadas's later lovesickness in the wake of Ydoine's rejection of him starkly echoes the language that Amadas himself uses when making his appeal:

N'i a un seul, grant ne petit,
Home ne feme, qui nel plaigne,
Et qui de lui server se faigne,
Fors seul *Ydoine qui l'a mort*
Pour seul sousfraise de confort.
(vv. 819-23, emphasis mine)

The uncritical acceptance and parroting of Amadas's claim stands out even more because Amadas *doesn't* die, and the reader has no reasonable expectation that he will.

If we allow ourselves to set aside this narrative scaffolding, however, limiting ourselves simply to what we actually know is said, it sounds like Amadas is simply repeatedly badgering Ydoine for sexual intercourse under the pretense that he will die otherwise, making a case of “blue balls” *avant la lettre*. The actual words of Ydoine’s reply are compatible with this reading, as she asks him, if he indeed truly loves her, then:

“Dont te vient si grans derverie
Et tes rage com as ou cuer ?
Comment osas tu a nul foer
Si grant outrage descouvrir ?
Ne me voel pas pour toi hounir.”
(vv. 528-31)

We could thus surmise that Ydoine reacts the way she does—and that her reaction that is justified—because she understands Amadas’s confession as a proposition for sex.²⁶ If Amadas is indeed actually propositioning Ydoine for sex, whether intentionally or inadvertently, as we entertained earlier, then the *double maniere* of his language might rather be the result of sexual innuendo or double entendre, whether intentional on Amadas’s part or not. This reading would make much sense of the suggestive end-rhymed pairing of *honte* and *conte*, which also occurs twice in the passage: “A grant paour et a grant honte / Comenche a basse vois son conte” (vv. 470-71), and then, “En couvrant descoevre son conte, / En descouvrant coeuvre sa honte” (vv. 474-75). The order of the terms is reversed in the second instance—fittingly, as *conte* and *honte* are the objects of the simultaneous and paradoxical chiasmus of covering and uncovering. A more conventional understanding of *honte* as it relates to confessions of love and their attendant difficulties might be something like *pudeur*. This makes sufficient sense in the context of the first occurrence of the word, but is more difficult to parse in the second—what does it mean that Amadas “En descouvrant coeuvre sa honte”? But if we uncharitably assume the worst of Amadas, a different possible interpretation of *honte* presents itself: not just shame, but outrage or even insult. Again, the common understanding of a term conventional to the romance genre conceals from view other, perhaps more germane interpretive possibilities.

The possibility of such an interpretation, that of a more salacious current underlying Amadas’s confession, concretizes in the light of the slippery way in which the rest of the romance will position sex in relation to love—more specifically, the way in which the problem

²⁶ The possibility of a sincere confession of love being mistaken for a more scurrilous proposition is addressed explicitly in *Silence*; Cadour ponders:

Jo li puis bien amor rover,
Mais or me poroit reprove
Son travail et sa medecine,
Et poroit penser la mescine
Que folie ai en li veüe,
Que por cho ruis que soit ma drue.
(vv. 653-58)

of sex can explicitly or implicitly undergird interactions that the narrative tries to frame in other terms. This dynamic comes to the fore most conspicuously when Ydoine eventually marries the Count of Nevers. In order to preserve her virginity, Ydoine engages the service of three witches to trick her husband into believing he will die if he consummates the marriage with her. This proves to be quite vexing for the count, who is torn between his fear and his wish to play “Le giu que tant a desire / De la pucele au cors maullé” (vv. 2347-48), a description that makes perfectly clear the nature and source of his attraction to her. As expected in a medieval romance, the text is never perfectly explicit in identifying sex as such. But there is a somewhat startling contrast between the text’s frankness in describing carnal desire and its coyness in naming that which it describes. “Faire le veut,” the romance tells us of the count, “mais n’ose pas” (v. 2378)—there is no antecedent specified for this pronoun *le* (recalling, perhaps, for the modern reader the juvenile way in which young adolescents talk about doing “it”), except that which can be gleaned from context—the *giu*? It is another substantive, rather, that takes pride of place in the lines that follow as the motivating agent of the count’s desire for his wife:

La contesse paraime tant
 Que finement eüst *l’amours*
 Vaincues toutes les paors,
 S’el le consentist et vausist.
 En l’aventure s’en mesist,
 Mais ele nel consentiroit
 Pour riens nule qui u mont soit.
 (vv. 2380-86, emphasis mine)

The ardency of his sexual desire is framed as a product of how much he loves her. It is *amour* that makes him willing to have sex with her at the risk of dying. Yet, the authenticity and suitability of the language of love to describe whatever is going on with the count here is dubious not only because of the subsequent developments in their marriage (the count tires of Ydoine and is happy to let her divorce him because he wants to marry someone else), but also because of the lack of respect for her consent implied about 50 lines later:

Par les sorcieres est garie :
 S’eles ne fuissent, nel laissast,
 Qui tout le monde li donast,
 Ne li feïst le cortois jeu :
 Priere n’i eüst ja leu.
 (vv. 2434-38)

Her refusal to consent keeps his “love” from overcoming his fear—but if not for his fear, the text makes it amply clear, nothing else would stop him from trying to consummate the marriage. The ruthlessness of this reasoning contrasts starkly with the euphemistic circumlocutions used to describe the act. Calling it a courtly game (*cortois jeu*) in the same breath as the text tells us that nothing would have stopped the count from having sex with Ydoine if not for the threat of death, that the non-consenting Ydoine was protected and saved (*garie*) from this only by the witches’ intervention, points towards a double concealment: the first, that of the euphemism itself; the second, and more significant, that enacted by the term *courtois* and the discourse of courtliness.

That this vocabulary lends itself readily to the veiled expression of desires whose true motivating interests are at potentially odds with the polished veneer of the language that conceals them is also evidenced by the text's earlier euphemizing of sex as an *aventure* (v. 2384) that the count would have undertaken if not for the obstacles in his way. Although the suggestion of sex and sexual desire, often humorous and titillating, can appear to be a normal and logical coextension of courtly language and interaction in romance (it is natural that beautiful people who love each other would want to have sex with each other), Ydoine's overt resistance to her husband's assertion of his marital rights threatens to release and therefore expose the potential violence of the pent-up tension produced by the scarcely visible subduction of sexual desire beneath the surface of courtly ideology.

So we see that sex, here, is circumlocuted as a "courtly game," through omission ("faire le veut"), and as a function of love. If we were to summarize this dynamic as "love as agent of something expressed as/through play and concealment," we might well recall that such a paraphrase also describes with precision the poetics of Amadas's confession of love. If we return to the text's representation of the confession entertaining the idea that "love" can work rhetorically to surreptitiously intimate and assert the desire for sex "under cover," then the description of *Amour* as the agentive force that makes Amadas *soutil* and *sage* acquires a different tenor. *Sagesse* here might well connote not wisdom or intelligence, but rather, the kind of facile and insincere use of love language that the author-narrator denounces in *Le Bel Inconnu*, on account of the fact that it is used to trick and deceive women.²⁷ This valence of the word is further reinforced when we observe that this same language, *soutil et sage*, is that used later in the romance to describe women's great capacity for deception (v. 3579). Ydoine's own deceptiveness, it should be noted, is framed by the author-narrator as a function of love, as if to justify praising this one woman while condemning others.

Amadas' desire for sex is made explicitly clear near the end of the romance, after his combat with an unknown knight results in Ydoine's miraculous return from the dead:

... ne n'i quida
 Rien recouvrer quant s'esvilla
 A lui, car s'il quidast s'amie
 Ravoir ausi quant l'estotie
 Emprist par son grant hardement,
 Plus s'en mellast hardiement.
 Mult s'en affice en son porpens
 De rendre li en poi de tens
 Un guerredon si rice et grant
 Dont a tous jors a son vivant
 Se tendra plus rice c'un roi.

(vv. 6687-97)

²⁷ "Cil qui se font sage d'amor, / cil en sont faus et traïtor" (vv. 1261-62); see Chapter One.

The text in vv. 6687-92 obviously refers to the fact that Amadas had thought Ydoine dead, and had fought the unknown knight without any expectation that he would be able to bring her back to life. But taken together with what follows, the juxtaposition of what Amadas stands to gain (*recouvrer*) by fighting for Ydoine alongside the *guerredon* that Ydoine promises him suggests, through the logical implication of such a sequencing of events, that what Amadas ends up winning through his courtly action is the right to eventually have sex with Ydoine. There can be no equivocation about the nature of this *guerredon*—the narrative makes clear what he wants from her, in language that mimics exactly the circumlocution used to describe the desire of Ydoine’s husband, the count:

Ce li feïst mult volentiers
Dont a eü tant desiriers,
Que bien i voit et tans et lieu ;
Mais Ydoine icestui *gieu*
Ne li otroie ne consent.
(vv. 6673-77, emphasis mine)

As in the case of the Count of Nevers’s thwarted consummation of his marriage, it is Ydoine’s consent that presents the obstacle to the fulfillment of the male desire for sex—although this time, for very different reasons. Ydoine’s objection here arises from a particularity of canon law—if she engages in adultery with Amadas (she is still married to the Count of Nevers at this point), any subsequent marriage between her and Amadas will be invalid, a situation which is unacceptable for her as daughter and heir of a duke (vv. 6742-59).²⁸ Her withholding of consent here throws into sharp relief both the precise nature of Amadas’s desire and what is at stake in granting it: Amadas wants sex (which, it should be noted, unlikely to be a desire that has suddenly materialized out of nowhere at this late point in the story), and Ydoine refuses him in order to protect her own interests. It is this dynamic whose possibility is neglected by the discourse of the author-narrator in the representation of the confession of love and its aftermath, but which nevertheless emerges in spite of itself later in the romance.

Ydoine’s most discerning, impressive, and significant assertion of agency and self-interest is the one that brings about the romance’s conclusion in what appears to be a generic happy ending, as the lovers who have overcome so many obstacles are finally afforded the opportunity to wed. After succeeding in dissolving her marriage to the count, Ydoine persuades her father to grant her her choice of husband. Rather than exercising this choice directly and asking to marry her beloved Amadas on the spot, however,—as she is now perfectly within her right to do—she instead chooses to consult her father’s barons, who of course, select Amadas, giving Ydoine what she wanted all along. Of Ydoine’s ploy in engineering happy romance ending she wants, Sturm-Maddox notes that “[t]he narrator’s admiration is enthusiastic: ‘Hé! Dix, tant par est decevans, / Quant par si bel engin se coevre’ (7516-17). And again: ‘Dius! Com est soutilte et sage! / Par grant raison et par savoir / Veut aciever tout son voloir.’ (7584-86).”²⁹

²⁸ See Sally L. Burch, "Amadas et Ydoine, Cligès, and the Impediment of Crime," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 36 (2000): pp. 185-95 for the implications of Ydoine's affair with Amadas in canon law.

²⁹ Sturm-Maddox, "Wiles of Women," p. 613.

But why is this manipulation necessary if the duke has already said she can marry whomever she wishes? The author-narrator's praise of her in this moment frames this as yet another example of her penchant for deception, which she has demonstrated amply throughout the romance and which, according to the sentiments of the author-narrator, is so typical of and natural to her gender. But this framing, which "undercut[s] female power by trivializing it as feminine wile," conceals from view an alternate understanding of Ydoine's actions in the story.³⁰ What has been dressed up all along in terms of conventional romance commonplaces reveals itself in a different light when one looks past romance's gender constructions to see a different driving force behind Ydoine's actions and decisions, on the level of the fictional story: Ydoine's exercising of power, or more specifically, Ydoine's ability to effectively recognize and manipulate social and political power dynamics in order to protect and advance her own position and interests. Under the cover of the romance's narrative euphemization, all of Ydoine's actions can be interpreted through a different lens: she rejects Amadas not because she is a cruel, merciless woman, but because she recognizes his proposition is insulting and potentially socially harmful to her; she refuses to consummate her relationship with him while still married to the count not because she is playing coy, but to avoid committing adultery and to ensure they can later legitimately formalize their relationship; she orchestrates her marriage in a roundabout way not because she is a woman and thus naturally excels at and relishes in deception, but in order to avoid the kind of power struggle that characterizes Tristan's relationship with Marc's barons. Rather than leaving room for the barons to assert their power by objecting to her marriage, she allows them to think that they *are* asserting their power, by letting them think that the outcome she has wanted all along is their idea.

The dynamics of this scene offer interesting comparisons not only to *Amadas's* intertexts *Tristan* and *Cligès*, but also to *Silence*, in which King Ebain, who has already granted Cador his choice of any wife he wishes to take, tries to manipulate Cador, who already loves Eufemie, into marrying her. We have seen how the author-narrator's interventions, with their veiled assertions of Heldris's demand for monetary compensation, help shine a revealing light on undercurrents of self-interest in the romance. This includes the way in which even Cador and Eufemie's love match advances and serves the material interests of multiple parties. The text gives us repeated reminders that from their marriage to each other, Cador and Eufemie stand to gain an income of a thousand pounds a year (for example, v. 1473). This figure echoes the mention a thousand marks in the author-narrator's digressive rant on *Honte* and rich people (v. 1572), which closely follows the mention of Cador and Eufemie's income in the text. In fact, it is the promise of this income, as well as the securing of Eufemie's inheritance, that facilitates the union. When the Count of Chester approaches Eufemie and Cador as a matchmaker on the king's behalf, he appeals to the couple by invoking the potential for financial gain and security. Having reminded them of the story behind Ebain's ban on female inheritance, the count informs them that the king

³⁰ Sturm-Maddox, "Wiles of Women," p. 614; Roberta Krueger, "Misogyny, Manipulation, and the Female Reader in Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*," in *Courtly Literature, Culture and Context*, ed. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1990), pp. 395-409, here pp. 399-400. Sturm-Maddox sees Krueger's analysis of *Ipomedon* as applicable to Ydoine here as well.

has promised them the county of Cornwall—the domain of Eufemie’s father which ought to have been Eufemie’s inheritance. The lovers respond well to this overture:

Il oënt que li cuens de Cestre
Voit et entent trestolt lor estre.
Dient: “Se nos le seüsciens,
Que nos avoir le peüsciens,
Et la conté et l’ireté,
Dont diriens nos par verité
Que vos avriiés fait por nos.”
(vv. 1463-69)

After hearing about the additional offer of a thousand pounds a year in perpetuity (a promise for which the count falsely takes credit), Cador and Eufemie quickly declare themselves more than ready to be wed (v. 1481). Thus, Cador and Eufemie’s union, while motivated by the kind of love conventional to the romance genre, can also be conceived of as essentially an attempt to circumvent the king’s unfair law in order to secure Eufemie’s inheritance; the Count of Chester frames it explicitly this way in his pitch to the lovers, and the lovers respond accordingly, expressing verbal delight not at the prospect of a love-match but of the material gain accompanying it.³¹

We might well wonder what the king stands to gain from this union. His determination to manipulate the situation to his will is perhaps obscured by the fact that his desire in this instance coincides with that of the lovers; there is therefore no conflict. Yet, despite the fact that he has promised each of them free choice of spouse, Ebain feels so strongly about the match between Eufemie and Cador that he declares that even if their preferences lie elsewhere, he must ensure that they marry one another (v. 1262 ff.). We should recall that, in exchange for his service, Ebain has offered Cador not only his choice of bride, but also a county. While the former of these two rewards perhaps remains foremost in the context of Eufemie and Cador’s love story, the latter is by no means forgotten. When the lovers are still coyly feeling each other out in order to determine if the love each of them bears is reciprocated, Eufemie reminds Cador of the king’s promised reward, primarily because of her interest in knowing whom Cador wishes to choose as his bride—but she does not neglect, in the same breath, to also mention the promised county. In his affirmative reply, Cador echoes the same terms back to her—a bride and a county. The lovers too, even alone with one another in the throes of their mutual courtship, do not forget issues of their material self-interest.

The way in which the king ends up fulfilling the terms of his promise shows how his manipulation of Cador and Eufemie’s union has worked to his own advantage. By giving Eufemie to Cador in marriage, Ebain thus avoids having to make good his original promise to give Cador a county; Cador can simply inherit Cornwall after the death of Eufemie’s father, Renaut. This inheritance, of course, ought to have been Eufemie’s anyways, as the Count of Chester reminds Cador and Eufemie, but with Ebain’s abolishment of female inheritance, would

³¹ For a discussion of the political interests of Cador and Eufemie’s match, see Kinoshita, “Feudal Politics” and “Male-Order Brides.”

have been slated to pass to the king, since Eufemie's father has no sons—so Ebain does, in the strictest terms, fulfill his agreement with Cador. But one gets the sense that the matter might not have been that simple—there is plenty of discontent around Ebain's decree, and the romance intimates that it will revert upon Ebain's death. It is not evident that control of Cornwall would have passed peacefully to Ebain, in such a scenario. Renault seems intent on keeping the goods in the family, so much so that he stipulates that his holdings will only pass to Cador in the case that Cador and Eufemie have an heir; after Renault's death, Cador stations armed troops around the castle, a move whose significance goes unmentioned by the author-narrator but which sharply underscores the anticipated resistance to a smooth transfer of power, even though authorized by Renault and by Cador's marriage to Eufemie, as well as by the king himself.

So, as it turns out, Ebain gives Cador the deferred gift of a county that is not yet, and is not guaranteed to ever be, under royal control, thus avoiding having to diminish his current wealth and power by giving up one of his own holdings. Ebain also averts the possibility of an overt challenge to his authority on Renault's or Cornwall's part: the text had mentioned that the decree abolishing female inheritance had been poorly received by the counts whose interests it affected, and this way, at least one of them—presumably a fairly important and powerful one, if his domain is Cornwall—is placated. We shall not forget either that by the end of his romance, Ebain has effectively reclaimed whatever remuneration he has made to Cador by marrying his heir, Silence, and absorbing her holdings into his own.

Burr notes that “[a]lthough the narrator never condemns Ebain, Cador and Eufemie's union has been brought about by many of the traits that Heldris laments: deception, flattery, and an ability to manipulate the truth.”³² Likewise, although the author-narrator of *Amadas* repeatedly berates and condemns the entire female gender for their collective deceitfulness, he never brings this criticism to bear on Ydoine's deceptions and trickeries. To the contrary, he seems to repeatedly express admiration and pleasure in Ydoine's cleverness throughout the romance. As do their predecessors, both romances leave it to their readers to identify and interpret the discrepancies between what the author-narrator says and what is represented in the text on the level of story. But the key question here does not concern the *need* for such interpretation (which should be well-established by a long tradition of texts using such self-reflexive metanarrative strategies), but rather the *stakes* of interpretation. Interpretive ambiguity here is not an end, but a means—and is put to use in these romances in a way that reveals the limits of romance self-reflexivity as critique.

VI. Conclusion

These two thirteenth-century romances appropriate the dialogic strategies of their twelfth-century predecessors and take them as far as romance form will allow them to go, through extended engagement with signification and interpretation on the extradiegetic level—in *Silence*, the narratorial interventions, in *Amadas* the allegorical confession of love disguising metapoetic commentary. Both *Silence*'s and *Amadas*'s self-reflexive engagements with their own poetics reveal how the objects of the text's representation (and of the readers' and characters' interpretation) are constructed by the very language used to describe and represent them; or, in

³² Burr, “Nurturing Debate,” p. 36.

other words, not only how language is both means and object of representation in romance, but how that distinction ultimately becomes untenable. This is why in *Amadas*, the romance's representation of Amadas' love language is also its description of its own poetics, and why Eufemie's reaction to Cadour's obscured statement of love for her and the author-narrator's explication of the text for the reader in *Silence* are both *gloses*. In both texts, acts of narrative self-commentary are foregrounded and brought to the surface of the text for the reader's attention.

The thematic importance of interpretation in these romances—the suggestion with which we began the chapter—is not an analytical end here, then, but rather a point of departure from which to understand specific ways in which these texts engage with and comment upon romance language, conventions, and narrative form. Our analysis raises the question of whether it is sufficient to subsume thirteenth-century romance under the critical paradigms used to analyze the more famous twelfth-century examples (and in particular, Chrétien), or whether there is a need to think specifically about thirteenth-century romance as part of the historical development of the genre, one that shifts the genre's horizon of expectations in a way that is legible when these romances are read in conversation with one another. This might also lead us to consider whether innovations we see in texts such as *Silence* and *Amadas* are precursors to trends we observe later in the development of the French *roman*—for example, in the nearly-contemporary *Roman de la Rose* and even in later medieval authors such as Machaut and Froissart. One particular aspect that comes to mind is the development of the first-person voice of the author-narrator. The *Rose* is often referred to as the first truly first-person narrative in the French language. While *Silence* and *Amadas* are not at that level, they do seem to represent a development in the figure of the narrator that comes closer to that of a true first-person than, say, Chrétien's narrators do—perhaps the beginning (or continuation) of the slow extrication of the narratorial voice from a strict adherence to the posture of real authorship?

In raising these questions, we see more starkly the limitation of a critical paradigm that is content to stop at the realization of self-reflexivity or textual indeterminacy as its analytical endpoint. In this paradigm, self-reflexivity becomes the feature that, paradoxically, is supposedly the unique feature of an exemplary individual text while also being a hallmark of medieval textuality in general.³³ By considering self-reflexivity instead as a point of departure, something that becomes a generic feature of romance, we can better read the particular dialogic engagements that occur between texts and within an individual text as part of the historical development of the genre. In Chapter One, we saw how *Le Bel Inconnu*'s response to episodes from Chrétien builds upon Chrétien's self-reflexivity and irony, and offers richer interpretive possibilities to the reader already familiar with the intertext. Romances such as *Silence* and *Amadas*, in their turn, offer response to and commentary on this tradition of self-reflexive, ironizing narrative gestures—what it means to employ and interpret them, and particularly, what

³³ See Allen, "The Ambiguity of Silence" and Bloch, "Silence and Holes." Bloch describes *Silence* as a text that "is in fact all about misreading," (p. 98) and that "in fact begins to read itself, for the medieval text prescribes the parameters of its own interpretation" (p. 83, emphasis mine). Similarly, Allen argues that *Silence* requires us to learn to accept ambiguity and textual indeterminacy in order to teach us how to read and interpret such a text. These same arguments have also been made about many other texts, medieval or otherwise.

it means to do so once such gestures are expected and conventionalized. By interpreting *Silence* and *Amadas* under the assumption that both romances and their readers are familiar with the rhetorical strategies of the previous generation of romance—the use of avowals of love as sites to thematize interpretation, the ironic employment of the first-person voice and the irony of the author-narrator person, the use of the narratorial intervention as a metanarrative counterpoint to the story—interpretive questions are given new stakes. We see how, in these romances, the concealment of material interests behind the illusory effects of a conventional discourse and system of signification (in this case, the language of love and courtliness) is echoed and exposed on every level of the narrative, in every corner of the fiction. *Silence* and *Amadas* build on a poetics of irony and ambiguity familiar to readers of French romance to show us how irony and ambiguity are put to use, by characters in the story, as well as by author-narrators. The self-reflexive gestures that in the context of individual text have often been read as self-examination, critique, or even parody or satire of the romance genre are shown to be constitutive of that genre itself. This is why, in pushing its forms to their logical limits, these thirteenth-century romances reveal the limits of romance self-reflexivity as critique, as I said earlier. The games that *Silence* plays with the voice, positionality, and persona of its author-narrator might enable a feminist reading against the grain, since the author-narrator's utterances cannot be taken at face value. But the text does not make its position on the feminist question and its stance toward its author-narrator plain, but rather relishes in ambiguity—as evidenced by continued scholarly debate, and as thematized on every level of the text itself. Heldris's exploitation of the inherent ambiguity and instability of the author-narrator position allows him to have his cake and eat it, too, without having to take accountability for any position that a reader might ascribe to him or his text. This is the trick of romance and its self-reflexive play as this chapter shows us: that it reveals what it purports to conceal, but at the same time, conceals what it purports to reveal.

Chapter Three

I. Introduction

In this chapter, we expand the scope of our study of romance beyond a single language tradition, opening into a comparative examination of two key examples of French and German romance respectively: Chrétien's *Yvain* and Hartmann von Aue's translation or adaptation into Middle High German, *Iwein*. Although we have long since moved past the nationalist moment of comparative literary criticism dominated by source work and studies made in the interest of establishing the superiority of one national literature over another, comparative scholarship of French and German texts has silently retained many of the same tendencies and impulses, even while embracing new approaches and methodologies. Scholars specializing in one language often fail to do justice to the literature of the other; much credit has been given to Gottfried von Strassburg and Wolfram von Eschenbach, as authors of two of the great masterpieces of the Middle High German canon, but studies of Hartmann von Aue have especially suffered from the unfavorable comparison of Hartmann to his French predecessor and his German successors. Scholarship on the relation between Chrétien and Hartmann has focused overwhelmingly on Hartmann's deviations from Chrétien's romances, rather than considering his texts as whole individual entities. These deviations have often been analyzed only superficially, and have often simply been used as the basis for impressionistic or qualitative judgments stemming more from disciplinary biases than textual interpretation.

Even as scholars of French romance increasingly recognized and embraced the ironic and ambiguous possibilities of Chrétien interpretation, they have been far slower to acknowledge the possibility of any similar phenomena existing in the German adaptations, except in the case of Wolfram and perhaps Gottfried. Grimbert curiously overlooks D. H. Green's work on irony as it pertains to Hartmann, even as she cites it elsewhere in support of her argument for a more nuanced reading of Chrétien's *Yvain*. In the introduction to his 1979 book, Green, a Germanist, contextualizes his study and outlines previous attitudes toward Hartmann, noting that Germanists have been divided as to whether Hartmann's adaptations could be credited with any irony at all, but that critical consensus has increasingly come down on the side of recognizing and reading at least some irony in Hartmann, even if it manifests itself differently than in his French source.¹ Grimbert, who takes so much trouble to enjoin readers to look beyond face-value statements and assumptions in Chrétien's *Yvain*, says of Hartmann's treatment of his source text's ambiguity: "Même Hartmann von Aue, dont l'adaptation allemande de l'*Yvain* (*Iwein*) reste relativement proche de son modèle, trouva bon de préciser, *en trahissant parfois un manque de finesse*, le sens d'un passage qui chez Chrétien restait incertain," an impulse that she attributes to Hartmann's total incomprehension of Chrétien's irony.²

Meanwhile, attempts to rehabilitate Hartmann on the other side of the disciplinary divide have often come at the expense of Chrétien, a notable example of which is Ojars Kratins' 1985 comparative study of *Yvain* and *Iwein*, which attempts to remedy what Kratins considers

¹ D. H. Green, *Irony in the Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2.

² Grimbert, *Yvain dans le miroir*, 2 (emphasis mine).

previous scholarship's "excessive distance" from the primary texts.³ A major premise of Kratins' call for a critical reevaluation of Hartmann is that *Iwein*'s "independence" from its French source has been under-rated; it is unsurprising, and perhaps inevitable, then, that Chrétien's work should be given short shrift in a study whose interest in engaging in comparative study is primarily to make a claim about Hartmann's undervalued originality—this is done in Kratins' book by giving an account of Chrétien that completely suppresses analysis or acknowledgment of any complexity in *Yvain*, while going to great lengths to argue such complexity in *Iwein*.

While the ample scholarship on these authors and texts attests to their complexity and the great deal of interest they hold for literary critics, attempts to put them in conversation with one another in comparative study have often been hobbled by flat-footed treatment of one or both primary texts, resulting in the reduction of Chrétien to plot content or a straw man representative of the "conventional," or else a reduction of the German texts to the sum of their differences from their French sources. Some comparative work that avoids falling into these traps ends up for the most part sidestepping literary questions—for instance, focusing on the social and historical milieu of transmission and reception, or circling their analyses back to the same impressionistic, even stereotypical ideas of Chrétien's and Hartmann's different thematic or ethical concerns, especially in the case of Hartmann's romances, whose ethical and religious accents have perhaps been over-emphasized.⁴ Even more successful comparative work has not quite filled this interdisciplinary lacuna, whether due to disciplinary biases that have caused key aspects of one or the other language tradition to be overlooked, or simply due to limitations in scope of what can be addressed and analyzed in a single article-length study, by a single scholar.⁵

³ Ojars Kratins, *The Dream of Chivalry: A Study of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain and Hartmann von Aue's Iwein* (Washington: University Press of America, 1985), xv.

⁴ Will Hasty believes that the wide range of varied approaches to and disparate interpretations of Hartmann's *oeuvre* "indicates that it may not be appropriate to locate the major significance of Hartmann's works in their frequently stressed moral or didactic element, despite its undeniable importance, or to force Hartmann entirely into the role of court pedagogue." He suggests that Hartmann occupies an "indeterminate" position in relation to figures such as Chrétien and Wolfram, and that rather than taking this as impetus for critics to "take sides" between one author or another, this indeterminacy might be interpreted productively as a distinguishing feature of Hartmann's *oeuvre*. See Will Hasty, *Adventures in Interpretation: The Works of Hartmann von Aue and their Critical Reception* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996).

⁵ Tony Hunt, for example, offers an illuminating comparison of some key passages from *Yvain* and their adaptation and reworking in Hartmann's *Iwein*, with a convincing reading of the motivations and implications of Hartmann's departures from his French source. Yet, even this attentive and sensitive reading, from the perspective of a French scholar, overlooks important literary aspects of the German adaptation, in the shadow of the example set by Chrétien. While Hunt sees *Yvain* as an "auto-reflective" text that "examine[s] its own methods and presuppositions and mak[es] interpretation an integral part of its thematic design," filled with ironies that constantly work to subvert audience expectations of the genre. Hartmann's adaptation, in Hunt's view, does not seek to ironize or subvert, but only to affirm the image of the genre for a German audience less familiar with the romance genre than their French counterparts. I differ from Hunt's position, in that I contend that Hartmann's *Iwein* is also a self-

Despite tremendous advances in interdisciplinary comparative study as well as in Hartmann criticism, the frustrating state of comparative scholarship on Chrétien and Hartmann still largely persists (as well as, to a lesser extent, scholarship on Chrétien and Wolfram, and perhaps to an even greater extent, comparative work on less widely-studied texts, such as the *Roman d'Enéas* and Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneit*). This is despite the enjoinders of critics who for some time have called for the outmoded critical approaches stemming from the nationalist impulse that drove comparative studies in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries to be set aside.⁶ In a recent *Companion to the Works of Hartmann von Aue*, published a decade after Hasty's remarks, the sole contribution to address the interrelation between Hartmann and Chrétien (admittedly a large question to which entire monographs could be—and have been—devoted), an essay by Alois Wolf, contains remarks such as this:

“Hartmann's version is not inferior to his source, but even surpasses it for the most part. That cannot, however, be maintained for the introductory part of the romance, the sophistication of which Hartmann did not reach; this can be explained from the literary surroundings with which Chrétien was associated and from which he wrote.”⁷

This comment represents in a microcosm many of the problems that have historically plagued comparative scholarship, and that often reappear in more current work, although usually in less blatant fashion than this: an insistence on qualitative judgments of one or the other author's superiority, the refusal to allow for any literary interpretive significance to Hartmann's transformation of the beginning of Chrétien's romance, and the overdetermined generalization of one specific moment of divergence in two literary texts, and a reduction of this divergence to simply an undistorted reflection of its socio-historical context. There is no room for any thinking about intertextuality here. A few steps later, Wolf points out Hartmann's choice to “exculpate” Arthur from the unspoken suggestion of indolence and sexual over-indulgence by providing an

reflexive text, and that Hartmann is also interested in ironizing and subverting romance's generic norms (and indeed, that Hartmann recognizes this ironizing to be a constitutive quality of romance as a genre). What form this self-reflexive ironizing takes, however, is necessarily different in Hartmann's adaptation for an audience not yet familiar with the genre in the way that Chrétien's audiences are. Tony Hunt, “Beginnings, Middles and Ends: Some Interpretive Problems in Chrétien's *Yvain* and Its Medieval Adaptations,” in *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics*, ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester, MI: Solaris Press, 1964), 88.

⁶ For example, Michael Batts, “National Perspectives on Originality and Translation: Chrétien de Troyes and Hartmann von Aue,” in *Chrétien de Troyes and the German Middle Ages*, eds. Martin H. Jones and Roy Wisbey (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 9-18. In the volume's introduction, the editors express their hope that the group of scholars across several disciplines, working in different languages, “offer[s] the possibility of a new openness and plurality of approach following a period in which debate had been dominated—and polarized—by the claims arising from the excessively narrow view of the possibilities of literary reception associated with the concept of ‘l'adaptation courtoise’,” vii.

⁷ Alois Wolf, “Hartmann von Aue and Chrétien de Troyes: Respective Approaches to the Matter of Britain,” in *A Companion to the Works of Hartmann von Aue*, ed. Francis G. Gentry (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 62.

alternate explanation for Arthur's absence from his own feast at Pentecost, but remarks simply: "Thus based on the literary evidence, it seems clear that Chrétien's audience had different expectations of the model of Arthur."⁸ This seems like a very broad conclusion to draw on the basis of a single divergence between Chrétien and Hartmann; it also completely levels any potentially interesting interpretive possibilities in either the French or German texts, assuming that their features are simply a result of whatever expectations their respective audiences had—e.g., that both texts are completely conventional.

The very fact of linguistic difference seems to present a limiting conceptual boundary that inhibits the kind of comparative thinking that scholars would happily practice within the safety of their chosen language of study.⁹ A 2012 volume on *Fictions de vérité dans les réécritures européennes des romans de Chrétien de Troyes* attempts to remedy this interdisciplinary deficit within the field of French studies. The volume focuses on intertexts in several different language traditions, with contributions from scholars working across a broad range of disciplines.¹⁰ Unfortunately, René Pérennec's essay on Germanic (he includes Dutch) adaptations of Chrétien, despite purporting to address "les jeux de la fiction et de la vérité" in its title, seems hampered precisely by an inability to distinguish between the two, to treat *fiction* and *vérité* as separate analytical categories. Pérennec engages in some oddly psychologizing biographical speculation, as if he were diagnosing the German authors of some individual emotional reaction or disturbance that caused them to react to Chrétien's text the way they did. For example, in his analysis of Hartmann's adaptation of *Erec et Enide*, he writes: "[Hartmann] a dû trouver la fin du roman français frustrante; en tout cas, il a prolongé un peu l'histoire d'Erec... et il a composé un véritable épilogue..."¹¹ This is rather reminiscent of the kinds of remarks made by Grimbert in describing Hartmann's adaptation of Chrétien. Hartmann is "frustrated" by Chrétien—the language very strongly suggests that there is something about Chrétien's complexity that Hartmann is simply not capable of understanding or properly appreciating. Pérennec continues:

Nous interprétons les traits dialogiques du premier roman arthurien allemand, adaptation du premier roman arthurien connu, comme le résultat produit d'un processus d'assimilation de la nouveauté. ... La critique a souvent souligné le caractère 'congénial' de l'adaptation d'*Erec et Enide* par Hartmann. À la fin du récit allemand, l'adaptation montre cependant que pour l'artisan adepte du travail bien fini qu'est l'auteur d'*Erec* l'innovation que représente l'auto-référentialité du récit-source n'est pas totalement assimilée.¹²

⁸ Wolf, "Hartmann von Aue and Chrétien de Troyes," 63.

⁹ The French side, in particular, has often been lacking in this regard, for which Danielle Buschinger's recent translation of *Iwein* into modern French will hopefully help remedy the situation (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2018).

¹⁰ Annie Combes and Anne-Catherine Werner, eds., *Fictions de vérité dans les réécritures européennes des romans de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012).

¹¹ René Pérennec, "Les Adaptations allemandes de romans de Chrétien de Troyes et les jeux de la fiction et de la vérité," in Combes and Werner, *Fictions de vérité*, 137.

¹² Pérennec, "Les Adaptations allemandes," 136-37.

In other words, Hartmann is not as good at being Chrétien as Chrétien is at being Chrétien. The accusation that Hartmann could not completely succeed in adopting Chrétien's innovative self-referentiality (which assumes that this was Hartmann's goal to begin with, and that Hartmann's text does not demonstrate self-referentiality in other ways) resembles the old charge that Hartmann was not adequately skilled or intelligent an adaptor to sufficiently appreciate or translate Chrétien's ambiguity and irony.

This chapter proceeds through a comparative reading of Hartmann's and Chrétien's poems from the understanding that, even in an attempt to "faithfully" render what is thematically and generically interesting about Chrétien's text, Hartmann would necessarily have to work with different rhetorical strategies, towards different narrative aims. Chrétien's subversion and sending up of the norms and conventions of the romance genre rely upon the reader already having a baseline of familiarity, an established horizon of expectations. The kind of self-reflexive ironic gestures we saw in our readings of *Bel Inconnu* rely on the reader not only being familiar with Chrétien, but with the strategies of Chrétien's self-reflexivity and irony. By the time of the highly rhetorical and explicitly metatextual later thirteenth-century romances such as *Silence* and *Amadas*, the horizon of expectations does not stop at familiarity with the commonplaces of conventional romance, if such a thing can still be said to exist at all, but rather, encompasses as well the tradition of subversion, irony, and self-reflexivity inaugurated by Chrétien. The reader of French romance by this point is already expecting the narrative tricks that characterize Chrétien and the tradition that follows in Chrétien's wake.

Hartmann's readers, on the other hand, are coming to his text with a very different horizon of expectations, with knowledge of a very different literary tradition.¹³ Hartmann's *Yvain* makes a point of thematizing the text's status as an adaptation and Hartmann's role in translating, reworking, and responding to Chrétien—but all without being able to rely on an audience who has already read Chrétien, who could be expected to notice the active work of adaptation in any noticeable departure from the precedent set by Chrétien. Thus, it is not that Hartmann is incapable of recognizing Chrétien's irony or producing an ironic text of his own, nor that Hartmann's German audience were insufficiently clever to understand or appreciate texts that were ironic, ambiguous, difficult, or complicated. Rather, his readers' horizon of expectations, which does not necessarily include the kinds of narrative and rhetorical strategies familiar to readers of Chrétien, require that Hartmann proceed differently. This chapter will show how Hartmann foregrounds his individual role as adaptor and translator—one who consciously and deliberately departs from Chrétien at times, but also mimics and reproduces some of Chrétien's forms of irony and rhetorical play—for this different audience, but without seeking to explain Hartmann's narratorial choices (or Chrétien's for that matter) as solely catering to these expectations, i.e., to convention. Rather than leveling what is interesting in Chrétien, or letting it be lost in translation, Hartmann adapts it for his own readership, and for his own ends.

¹³ Hunt points out that "[i]t is likely that [Hartmann] could not presuppose in his audience a knowledge of romance other than that gained from his own *Erek* [sic]... and that the ironising, self-referential opening of the *Yvain* would have so perplexed his listeners as to be counterproductive"; "Beginnings, Middles, and Ends," p. 88.

II. The Adaptation, Overwriting, and Rewriting of Irony in *Iwein*

A close comparison of some analogous scenes in *Yvain* and *Iwein* reveals changes in Hartmann's adaptation that may seem like trivial alterations at first glance but are compelling when their effect is taken into account in its entirety—especially when their repercussions are considered in light of Chrétien's rhetorical strategies for producing ambiguity and irony in his text. An examination of just the opening passages of both romances is quite illustrative. The beginning of Hartmann's adaptation reproduces quite closely many of the key aspects of the beginning of *Yvain*, while also departing from the French in significant ways. Hartmann's praise of the figure of Arthur as an instructive model of exemplary behavior (vv. 1-30) echoes and expands upon the opening lines of Chrétien's romance (vv. 1-6), turning a succinct comment on Arthur as a figure of didactic value into an extended encomium of Arthur's virtue and its continued survival in the present: "si jehent er lebe noch hiute: / er hât den lop erworben, / ist im der lîp erstoren, / sô lebt doch iemer sin name" [They say he still lives today. He has attained such fame that even though he has died, his name will live forever] (vv. 14-17).¹⁴ In both the French and the German, this praise of Arthur becomes the basis for the expression of nostalgia for the good old days, a comparison of past and present in which the present must inevitably come up short. But, as we will see, although Hartmann follows Chrétien's example closely, imitating several of Chrétien's rhetorical gestures, the French and German texts will develop the same idea quite differently. Looking at how Hartmann reworks this topos from Chrétien is revealing, as it exposes some key points of departure and opens up our perspective on Hartmann's narrative project and the ways in which he speaks back to Chrétien.

This topos of *laudatio temporis acti* features much more prominently in Chrétien, who at length makes his complaint about the degraded state of the present, specifically with regards to love and love language. Describing the happenings at Arthur's court during the feast of Pentecost, the author-narrator remarks:

Li un recontoient nouveles,
Li autres parloient d'Amours,
Des angousses et des dolours
Et des grant biens qu'en ont souvant
Li desiple de son couvant,
Qui lors estoit riches et boens;
Mais or y a molt poi des siens,
Qui a bien pres l'ont tuit laissie,
S'en est Amours mout abaissie. (vv. 12-20)¹⁵

¹⁴ All references to *Iwein* are from the edition of Volker Mertens (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008); English translations are from the translation of Richard H. Lawson, in *Arthurian Romances, Tales, and Lyric Poetry: The Complete Works of Hartmann von Aue*, trans. Frank J. Tobin, Kim Vivian, and Richard H. Lawson (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ All references to *Yvain* are from *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. and trans. David Hult (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994).

The two activities that the laudable Arthurian knights are described partaking in here—telling stories and talking about love—lie at the very heart of the text, imbricated as they are in the romance story, in the narrative and the task of narrating undertaken by Chrétien, and in the text’s thematization of discursive communication and meaning-making. They are also deeply intertwined with one another, as the author-narrator will elaborate further in the lines that follow:

Car chil qui soloient amer
Se faisoient courtois clamer
Et preu et largue et honorable;
Or est Amours tournee a fable
Pour chou que chil qui riens n'en sentent
Dient qu'il aiment, mes il mentent;
Et chil fable et menchongne en font
Qui s'en vantent et droit n'i ont. (vv. 21-28)

The idea that correct speaking and signifying is what differentiates the courtly past from the corrupted present crystallizes here, as the insincerity and the empty boasting of those who speak of love without feeling it is blamed for the debased state of love in the present. This is a problem of love, but also one of language. Unlike the courtly and correct speaking and storytelling of Arthur’s court, the language of “chil qui riens n’en sentent” but “dient qu’il aiment” is semantically void. These liars turn the object of their linguistic representation, *Amours*, into *fable* and *mensonge*, fiction and lie, language that fails in or falsifies its representation of its object.

The relation between the author-narrator’s thematization of the value of discourse with respect to meaning and his own storytelling enterprise emerges clearly, as Chrétien’s disgust with the discursive deficiency of the living *vilains* of the present leads directly into his description of his undertaking to recount something worth listening to:

Mais pour parler de chix qui furent
Laissons chix qui en vie durent,
Qu'encor vaut mix, che m'est a vis,
Un courtois mors c'un vilains vis.
Pour che me plaist a raconter
Chose qui faiche a escouter
Du roy qui fu de tel tesmoing
C'on en parole pres et loing;
Si m'acort de tant ad Bretons
Que tous jours mais dura ses nons;
Et par lui sont ramenteü
Li boin chevalier esleü
Qui en amor se traveillierent. (vv. 29-41)

The emphasis on the endurance of Arthur’s name, which we saw frontloaded in Hartmann, occurs here, not with the text’s first praise of Arthur as a paragon to be imitated, but rather embedded in a complaint that hinges on the value of language and the correct, meaningful use of linguistic signifiers. Unlike *Amours* in the present day, presumably both the actual phenomenon

as well as the word signifying it, which is turned into a fiction and a lie, the name of Arthur meaningfully outlives its referent. So Chrétien’s narrativization of an Arthurian love story, his discursive production of language that represents something worth hearing, becomes a way of reviving the *courtois mors*, of recuperating the virtue of the past. Ostensibly, at least—because, of course, soon after this, we see the scenes of dysfunction and squabbling at Arthur’s court, and as we continue, we will observe multiple instances where love, language, and love language are thrown into disrepute.¹⁶ If the crime of the present is to use the language of love without properly understanding or *meaning* it, to use it to signify something besides what it purports to on the surface, we will see that the Arthurian characters themselves are not innocent of such abuse either.

Many of the same elements surface in Hartmann’s adaptation, but with different effects, to different ends. Hartmann borrows the use of the *laudatio* topos from the opening of *Yvain*, but adds a twist, turning the topos on its head:

mich jâmert wærlîchen,
unde hulfez iht, ich woldez clagen,
daz nû bî unsern tagen
selch vreude niemer werden mac,
der man ze den zîten pflac.
doch mûezen wir ouch nû genesen.
ichn wolde dô niht sîn gewesen,
daz ich nû niht enwære,
dâ uns noch mit ir mære
sô rehte wol wesen sol:
dâ tâten in diu werc vil wol. (vv. 48-58)

[It really bothers me—and if it would do any good I would complain about it—that in our present day there can never be joy equal to what was to be found in those days. Still, we have advantages now too. I wouldn’t want to have lived then and not now, since we can enjoy the story of what those knights did. But they thrived in doing the actual deeds.]

Hartmann, too, like Chrétien, disrupts the binary opposition of idealized past-degraded present. But unlike Chrétien, who accomplishes this primarily by lampooning the idealized past, showing how the Arthurian milieu fails to live up to the lofty expectations set for it, Hartmann instead claims continuity between the present and the glory of the past, in what becomes an affirmation of the value of storytelling: the joy of hearing such stories of knightly deeds is sufficient that the author-narrator claims he would not wish to exchange it for the privilege of living in the Arthurian past. This statement thus serves as an implicit assertion of the value of Hartmann’s

¹⁶ This is similar to Debora Schwartz’s reading—except, as discussed in Chapter 1, Schwartz takes Chrétien’s narratorial posturing here at face value, overlooking the self-reflexivity and irony generated by Chrétien’s rhetorical play and the disjunction between what he tells us and what he shows us; “‘Those Were the Days’: The *Ubi Sunt* Topos in *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, *Yvain*, and *Le Bel Inconnu*,” *Rocky Mountain Review* 49 (1995): 27-47.

own work and of the very text that we are reading.¹⁷ It seems that Hartmann takes up what is implicit in Chrétien and spells it out overtly, but expanding the logic behind the thought in the process. Contrary to Chrétien's individual aim of recounting something more telling (unlike all the rest of his present contemporaries, one might surmise), Hartmann's assertion of the value of his work is articulated as a rather Sallustian defensive of narrative composition itself.¹⁸

The modification of the *laudatio temporis acti* topos from *Yvain* demonstrates some key tendencies that run through Hartmann's adaptation of Chrétien's text, which will be the primary focus of this chapter. The first of these is the way in which Hartmann will closely mimic a rhetorical move made by the *Yvain* narrator, only to turn it on its head, or to somehow shift or frustrate the thrust of the original idea. We see this here, as Hartmann reproduces Chrétien's praise of Arthur and seems poised to launch into a similar lamentation of times gone by as he expresses his consternation at the virtue of the past irrevocably lost in the present. Yet he heads off this gesture, not by refuting or renouncing what he (or Chrétien before him) said earlier, but seeming to change course altogether, in a way that doesn't seem totally logically satisfying (why could one not also have enjoyed hearing stories of the deeds of the past in the past?). Another example of this kind of creative reinterpretation of Chrétien's narratorial gestures is in Hartmann's adaptation of a misogynistic remark the *Yvain* narrator makes about Laudine. Describing Laudine's refusal to heed Lunete's advice to marry Yvain, the narrator takes this opportunity to make a generalization about the nature of women, who always act in ways they know are contrary to reason. Hartmann seems to follow Chrétien closely in reproducing this same aphoristic sentiment in the same place in the story:

Swie si ir die wârheit
ze rehte hete underseit
unde si sich des wol enstuont,
doch tete si sam diu wîp tuont:
si wederredent durch ir muot.
daz si doch ofte dunket guot.
(vv. 1863-70)

¹⁷ Schwartz's analysis of how the French Renaut de Beaujeu reworks the topos from *Yvain* in comparison to how the German Hartmann does is emblematic of the larger tendency, discussed above, towards flattening readings across linguistic boundaries. Schwartz is quick to credit Renaut's reworking of Chrétien as "more complex, more literary, and much less obvious" than Hartmann's treatment ("Those Were the Days," p. 38). But this, again, takes Hartmann purely at face value—which makes it easier to make an argument that distinguishes Renaut from Hartmann, and from Chrétien, but which does not do justice to Hartmann's text. In what follows in this chapter, we will see how Hartmann's adaptation of this topos from Chrétien, and his defense of narrative, fits into his greater narrative strategy of responding to and reworking thematics from Chrétien.

¹⁸ Cf. *Bellum Catilinae* 3.2: "Ac mihi quidem, tametsi haudquaquam par gloria sequitur scriptorem et auctorem rerum, tamen in primis arduum videtur res gestas scribere."

[However accurately the truth had been expounded to her, and however clearly she understood, still she did what women do: by nature they contradict what they often regard as good.]

Yet, again, Hartmann's continued elaboration of this idea reverses its course, and that adaptation ends up going against the grain of the original in a way that is somewhat beside the point:

dâ schiltet si vil manger mite:
sô dunket ez mich ein guot site.
er missetuot, der daz seit,
ez mache ir unstætecheit:
ich weiz baz wâ von ez geschiht
daz man si als ofte siht
in wankelm gemüete:
daz kumt von ir güete.
man mac sus übel genuote
wol bekêren ze guote
unde niht von guote
bringen zu übelem genuote.
diu wandelunge diu ist guot:
ir deheiniu ouch anders niht entuot.
swer in danne unstæte giht,
des volgære enbin ich niht:
ich will in niuwan guotes jehen.
allez guot müeze in geschehen. (vv. 1873-88)

[Quite a few people reproach them for doing what they have vowed not to do. Yet this impresses me as a good idea, and whoever says that this is a result of their inconstancy is mistaken. I have a better idea of why they are often seen as being of a wavering nature. It comes from their goodness. Such a wrong state of mind can certainly be changed to goodness, and yet goodness can't convert to a wrong state of mind. Such changeability is good; and none of them behaves otherwise. Whoever then accuses women of inconstancy—of him I am no follower. I impute nothing but good to women. May everything good befall them!]

Again, we see that Hartmann faithfully reproduces, more or less, Chrétien's line of thought, only to controvert it by taking it in a different direction altogether—in this way, offering a personalized reinterpretation, in the form of a textual commentary, of the poem he is adapting. The conspicuous use of the first-person voice in these two examples, the praise of the Arthurian past and the misogynistic aside, underscores the individualized nature of this reinterpretation—"ich weiz baz," Hartmann tells us—, emphasizing the unique and significant intervention of Hartmann in the poem's narrative production, in keeping with the emphasis on his individual authorship that he places in the prologue. At the same time, the first-person emphasis has the effect of introducing a sense of distance between the first-person narrator and the narrative he is *re-presenting* to us. Hartmann's opinions are his own, as he himself makes clear, and they do not always accord with the text he reproduces; nor do they always respond to that text in a logical

and fully satisfactory way. The larger significance of this sense of narratorial distance will be taken up later in this chapter.

A second tendency of Hartmann's adaptation that we pick up on in his borrowing and modification of the *laudatio temporis acti* topos from Chrétien is the way in which Hartmann will often spell out underlying ironies or other dynamics that remain implicit and unstated in Chrétien, even while perhaps attenuating those ironies in the process. For instance, Hartmann picks up on Chrétien's foregrounding of the uselessness of the commonplace complaint against the degraded present, which he gestures to when he says: "unde hulfez iht, ich woldez clagen" (v. 49). While in Chrétien, we call into question the author-narrator's dichotomy of past-present as we observe the discrepancy between what the narrator says about the virtue of Arthur's court and how the text actually shows the Arthurian characters behaving, Hartmann largely elides this narratorial friction. Hartmann's adaptation trims away both Chrétien's extended praise of the virtues of the Arthurian knights in storytelling and love, as well as the unglamorous depiction of Arthur and his knights that gives lie to Chrétien's idealization of the Arthurian past as a time that puts the degraded present to shame. In place of all this, Hartmann simply points out the futility of such complaints about the state of present times. This distillation gets us quickly to the point, but also smooths over the productive ironic tensions in Chrétien's version of the narrative. We will see this tendency again later in the chapter when we look at Hartmann's portrayal of Iwein's early encounters with Laudine, as it is Hartmann who baldly states what we are left to discern for ourselves in Chrétien: that Iwein's noble exploits at the fountain are undergirded with not-so-noble motives, and that his desire to one-up Kei impels him at least as much as, if not more than, love for Laudine.

It is also worth noting here the way in which Hartmann's adaptation seems to deflate or puncture tensions, contradictions, and ironies that occur in Chrétien, in a deliberate and precision fashion. We see this in Hartmann's gentler reworking of the *laudatio temporis acti* topos, his kinder depiction of Arthur's court, and his rehabilitation of characters such as Kalogreanz and Kei, as well as in Hartmann's omission of certain details from Chrétien and his addition of others.¹⁹ The attenuation or outright leveling of the moments that populate the French romance goes hand in hand with a third tendency, which we only catch a glimpse of here but which will emerge more clearly in the analysis to follow: the way in which Hartmann will take some of the very dynamics of irony and verbal play that he excised from his adaptation of Chrétien, and will find a place to reintroduce them back into the narrative, in a different location. Hartmann's adaptation of the French levels one of the key productive tensions that Chrétien repeatedly plays upon and thematizes through the text: the tension of discursive disjunction, between what is said and what is done, what is said and what is meant, and the value of speech and the status of the speaker. We see this in Chrétien's take on the topos of *laudatio temporis acti* (and in Hartmann's

¹⁹ For Hartmann's "rehabilitation" of Kei and Kalogreant from their depictions in Chrétien, see, for example, Joseph M. Sullivan, "Kalogreant/Calogrenant, Space, and Communication in Hartmann's *Iwein* and Chrétien's *Yvain*," *Seminar* 42 (2006): pp. 1-14, and Berndt Volkmann, "Costumiers est le dire mal: Überlegungen zur Funktion des Streites und zur Rolle Keies in der Pflingstfestszene in Hartmanns *Iwein*," *bickelwort und wildiu maere: Festschrift für Eberhard Nellman zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Dorothee Lindemann (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1995), pp. 95-108.

reworking of it, as discussed above), but also in different, and more striking, forms throughout the rest of the romance. In the section that follows, we will take a closer look at Chrétien's problematization of language, discourse, and meaning-making, and at the ways in which Hartmann effaces these dynamics in his adaptation of the equivalent passages in *Iwein*. But we will also observe that Hartmann does not let the problematic of linguistic disjunction drop completely, but rather, relocates it in the space of narratorial distance, the gap between the individual persona of Hartmann and the received material of the romance story, and the process of reworking and rewriting that bridges that gap; that is to say, in the thematic of adaptation and reception itself.

III. Saying, Doing, Meaning: The Problematization of Linguistic and Discursive Signification

To take a closer look at how Hartmann reworks these problematics of language and narrative in his adaptation, let us return momentarily to the details of a passage discussed above, in our examination of Hartmann's restatement of the *laudatio* sentiment:

doch müezen wir ouch nû genesen.
ichn wolde dô niht sîn gewesen,
daz ich nû niht enwære,
dâ uns noch mit ir mære
sô rehte wol wesen sol:
dâ tâten in diu werc vil wol. (vv. 53-58)

[Still, we have advantages now too. I wouldn't want to have lived then and not now, since we can enjoy the story of what those knights did. But they thrived in doing the actual deeds.]

We have previously observed how Hartmann has a tendency to closely imitate a sentiment from Chrétien, only to turn the sentiment in an unexpected, not totally germane direction—a move whose effect is to introduce a sense of distance between the text and the individual persona of Hartmann as a translator or adaptor who perhaps is not fully in line or on board with the text he is in the process of translating or adapting. Here, Hartmann reverses the terms of the past-present dichotomy by linking the present to his defense and affirmation of the value of storytelling, and more broadly, to the posterity and afterlife of the linguistic signifier (Arthur is dead, but his name lives on).

The difference between past and present, then, for Hartmann, is also that between words and actions, between talking about doing something and actually doing it. Thus, Hartmann's reworking of the *laudatio* topos anticipates—in a strange, unexpected, roundabout way—one of the key thematics of Chrétien's *Yvain*: that of the disjunction between words and deeds, and the problematization of language and meaning-making. We have already seen this thematic at work in the passages of *Yvain* discussed above, in Chrétien's introduction to the Arthurian court setting and his own development of the *laudatio* topos. And even while in some places, Hartmann appears to omit or overwrite the tensions that are so productive and interesting in

Chrétien, we will see emerge a kind of compensation for this “translation loss” as these tensions reappear, often in unexpected ways. Hartmann’s treatment of Chrétien’s thematization of linguistic disjunction in the opening of the romance is an especially compelling example.

Chrétien’s problematization of language, his exploitation of the gaps between speaker and speech, language and meaning, reveals itself throughout the romance, as we have seen: in the *laudatio temporis acti* passage; developed throughout the text, in the story, in the characters’ uses of language; and also in the narrator’s own self-contradiction, in the difference between what he tells us and what he shows us, between the face-value meaning of the language of romance convention and what we truly see that language doing in the text. But perhaps the most intriguing instance plays across narrative levels and boundaries, between intra- and extradiegetic: Calogrenant’s narration of his failed quest at the fountain, and in particular, the peculiar “prologue” that prefaces the telling of Calogrenant’s tale, which unexpectedly takes up the same thematic threads with Chrétien’s began the romance. Chrétien laments the insincerity or rhetorical emptiness of those who speak of love without understanding it; later, we see Calogrenant makes a similar complaint:

Puis qu'i vous plaist, or entendés!
Cuer et oroeilles me rendés,
Car parole oïe est perdue
S'ele n'est de cuer entendue.
Or y a tix que che qu'il oent
N'entendent pas, et si le loent;
Et chil n'en ont fors que l'oïe,
Puis que li cuers n'i entent mie. (vv. 149-56)

Calogrenant adamantly distinguishes between the roles of ears and heart, condemning those who praise what they hear without truly understanding it, and who effectively reduce language to noise or sound, discursive trappings of courtliness without true meaning. Yet the impetus for Calogrenant's journey to the fountain is predicated not upon a genuine desire to uphold the ideals of chivalry that a true knight should embody but rather a pretension to the appearance of knighthood by going through the motions of an appropriate chivalric adventure. Calogrenant's desire for *aventure* is not founded upon a notion of chivalry that is "de cuer entendue" (v. 152) but rather a superficial ideal by which he identifies himself as a knight because he is "Armés de toutes armeüres / Si com chevaliers devoit estre" (vv. 178-79) and seeks to engineer an adventure for himself "... pour esprouver / Ma proeche et mon hardement" (vv. 360-61). The content of Calogrenant's story reveals that he himself fails to accomplish what is demanded by his lofty prologue. Furthermore, the tale of Calogrenant's incompetence as a knight, placed in a privileged position by its enunciation in front of Arthur's court at Pentecost, reaffirms that the idyllic model of chivalry presented by the narrator before the opening scene of the romance is merely a fiction. And just as the author-narrator's effusive praise of the courtliness and virtue of the Arthurian past is immediately contradicted by the disarray of the scene at Arthur's court, the rhetorical loftiness of Calogrenant's exhortation to his audience is juxtaposed with his narration of a story of his own shame, of his abject failure to live up to the promise of his courtly trappings—he sheds the accoutrements of knighthood after his failure at the fountain.

It is worth pausing here to take a closer look at the *mise en abyme* of Calogrenant's telling of his own story of his journey to the fountain. Calogrenant's speech seems to exceed not only his status as a knight (a not very successful knight whose foray into chivalric questing leads to ignominious failure), but also his function as a character, as he appears to voice sentiments and to take on narrative functions that seem more the domain of the author-narrator. Calogrenant, exhorting his audience to give him due attention, offers an extended theorization of how listening and understanding operate through the body:

As oreilles vient le parole,
 Aussi come li vens qui vole,
 Mais n'i arreste ne demore,
 Ains s'en part en mout petit d'ore,
 Se li cuers n'est si estilliés
 C'a prendre soit appareilliés;
 Que chil le puet en son venir
 Prendre et enclorre et retenir.
 Les oreilles sont voie et dois
 Ou par ent y entre la vois;
 Et li cuers prant dedens le ventre
 Le vois qui par l'oreille y entre.
 Et qui or me vaurra entendre,
 Cuer et oreilles me doit rendre,
 Car ne veul pas servir de songe,
 Ne de fable, ne de menchange,
 Dont maint autre vous ont servi,
 Ains conterai que je vi. (vv. 157-74)

The semantic overlap between the language of the romance's beginning and that of Calogrenant's oddly erudite preface to his tale of woe signals this similarity between narrator and character. For example, the narrator laments that "Or est Amours tournee a fable / Pour chou que chil qui riens n'en sentent / Dient qu'il ayment, mes il mentent" (vv. 24-26), a complaint whose sentiment is echoed by Calogrenant's statement that "Or y a tix que che qu'il oent / N'entendent pas, et si le loent" (vv. 153-54). Marie-Louise Ollier observes that despite the fact that the word *amours* never appears in Calogrenant's speech, "le sème du *désir* court pourtant tout au long du prologue" (360), pointing out Calogrenant's abundant use of language pertaining to the semantic field of desire, which links his speech thematically to the author-narrator's self-presentation at the beginning of the romance.²⁰ The identification of Calogrenant with the narrator is also made evident through the fact that it is Calogrenant who is privileged with the task of giving voice to the prologue that one would have expected to receive from the narrator at the beginning of the romance: "Puis qu'i vous plaist, or entendés! / Cuer et oreilles me rendés" (vv. 149-50). Calogrenant reinforces the narrator's expressed purpose to "... reconter / Chose qui faiche a escouter" (vv. 33-34) through his insistence on the worth of his own tale and the need for careful

²⁰ Marie-Louise Ollier, "Le discours en 'abyme' ou la narration equivoque," *Medioevo Romanzo* 1 (1974): 351-64.

discernment in its reception, echoing the narrator's use of the words *fable* and *lie* in opposition to his own endeavor: "... ne veul pas servir de songe, / Ne de fable, ne de menchange" (vv. 171-72).

Thus, we see a kind of correspondence or identification between narrator and character that crosses the boundary separating the intra- and extradiegetic, reminding us that both narrator and character are not discrete essential beings but rather the artful discursive creations of narrative. The curious "duplication" of the prologue in Calogrenant's speech, Calogrenant's adoption of narratorial functions proper to the author-narrator and the romance prologue, and discrepancy between Calogrenant's highflown language and his status as a minor character, mostly notable for having failed on the quest where Yvain will eventually succeed, all serve to highlight this point. Our access to Calogrenant's tale is doubly mediated, in a way that underscores the layering of different levels of narration in the text as well as the double-pronged status of language at the borders of contact between these levels. What we know of Calogrenant's journey to the fountain we have not through direct narrative representation, but only secondhand, through Calogrenant's reluctant account of it after the fact. At the same time, we are reminded that Calogrenant's linguistic production, though represented mimetically as direct discourse, is equally part of Chrétien's poetic output, part of the fabric of the romance that the author-narrator is weaving—and this is the case for all the other characters and all other discourse, direct or otherwise, in the text as well.

The disjunction between Calogrenant's lofty storytelling and his failure as a knight also exposes the discrepancy that exists in the text between the inherent value of discourse and the authority of its source, as well as between the literal meaning of language and its true underlying signification. Calogrenant himself seems to serve as a negative exemplum demonstrating the veracity of his own sermonizing; his investment in the superficial trappings of knighthood, underscored by his removal of his armor after his failure at the fountain, flies in the face of what he says about the necessity of understanding with the heart and not just listening with the ears, of attentiveness to true meaning rather than just to sound. Yet the fact of his chivalric failure does not make the substance of his prologue any less valid. Conversely, despite the authority the narrator wields as the enunciator of the text, his assertions that Arthur and his court represent the ideal model of a courtly, chivalric society are patently false, as is intentionally revealed to the discerning reader.

Yet, we see that the way that Calogrenant theorizes language when he complains about empty language and false understandings is the same way in which language behaves in the fictional story and in the narrative. For instance, the disconnect between the status or reliability of the speaker and the value of his speech is reinforced later in the romance by Gauvain's qualification of his advice to Yvain convincing him to abandon his Lady in favor of seeking adventure: "Et pour che ne le di je mie, / Se j'avoie si bele amie / Com vous avés, sire compains" (vv. 2527-29). Gauvain's declaration that he would not follow the same advice he gives to Yvain were he in Yvain's situation openly exposes his own failure, like that of Calogrenant, to practice what he preaches; Gauvain himself is cognizant of this, adding, "Mais tel conseille bien autrui, / Qu'il ne saroit conseillier lui" (vv. 2533-34), like the preachers who "S'ensengnent et dient le bien / Dont il ne veulent faire rien" (vv. 2537-38). Gauvain's frank admission is an explicit announcement of this hypocrisy, accentuating the disjunction that exists between speaker and speech, a problem about which both the narrator and Calogrenant have complained. Furthermore,

this episode illuminates how speech acquires a significance that is separate from the status of the speaker. Although Gauvain has expressly disqualified his own reliability as a source of advice, Yvain still takes his words to heart and is led astray, resulting in his disgrace and madness when he is rejected by the Lady for failing to honor his promise to her. Similarly, everyone, including Yvain, is well aware of Keu's reputation for mockery that is more a product of his nasty disposition rather than any basis in fact; Yvain says of Keu that "... de ses rampornes, / ... ne me chaut" (vv. 628-29) and adds sarcastically that Keu "Bien set encontre vilenie / Respondre sens et courtoisie, / Si ne fist onques autremant" (vv. 633-35). However, despite his claims to the contrary, Yvain will place tremendous import upon Keu's words, allowing the seneschal's accusation of cowardice to motivate his adventures throughout the entirety of the first part of the romance. Even while in the throes of his infatuation for the Lady of the Fountain, Yvain is obsessively concerned by thoughts of Keu's sharp tongue; contrary to his prior insistence, "Cheles rampornes a sejour / Li sont el cuer batant es fresches" (vv. 1358-59). This obsessive concern leads Yvain to behavior that is inconsistent with the chivalric ideal he claims to represent. Thus, in these two instances, Yvain fails to correctly assess the value of the words of others, demonstrating his lack of the discernment that the narrator wishes and requires the reader to employ.

Hartmann's adaptation, in contrast to Chrétien's poem, seems to stage an apparent resistance to the idea that speech can be anything other than a reflection of the moral rectitude and intention of the speaker, that language can have any value that exceeds that of the person who produces it. Hartmann effaces many of the instances in which linguistic disjunction emerges most sharply in Chrétien—notably, we observe this is in Hartmann's tempering of the contradictions of Chrétien's Calogrenant. Kalogreant is allowed to serve as a voice of authority that is not problematized in the same way as Calogrenant's character is in *Yvain*.²¹ Hartmann's Kalogreant has neither his French counterpart's out-of-place rhetorical loftiness nor his level of abjection and absurdity; he says, in response to the queen's request that he tell his story:

›Sprach ir gebiet, daz ist getân.
 sît ir michs niht welt erlân,
 sô vernemt mit guoten site,
 unde miet mich dâ mite:
 ich sag iu deste gerner vil,
 ob manz ze rehte merken will.
 man verliuset michel sagen,
 man enwellez merken unde dagen.
 maniger biut die ôren dar:
 ern nemes ouch mit dem herzen war,
 sô ne wirt im niuwan der dôz,
 unde ist der schade al ze grôz:
 wan si verlisent beide ir arbeit,

²¹ See Sullivan, "Kalogreant/Calogrenant, Space, and Communication"; Sullivan argues that Hartmann chooses to write a more dignified Kalogreant, and shows how Hartmann reorients the space and the communicative interactions of Kalogreant's adventure in a way that rescues him from the problematic status he occupies in Chrétien's romance.

der dâ hoeret unde der dâ seit.< (vv. 243-56)

[“Whatever you command will be done. Since you will not excuse me, then reward me by listening politely. I will be happier to tell it to you if you listen attentively. A lot of storytelling is wasted when people don’t keep quiet and don’t pay attention. Many listeners lend their ears, but if they don’t pay attention with their hearts, then nothing registers but the sound. It is a great loss, because both parties are wasting their efforts, the listener as well as the narrator.”]

What in Chrétien’s Calogrenant emerges as a problem of sincerity, authenticity, and genuine understanding—echoing the earlier language of the *Yvain* author-narrator in condemning those who misuse love language—becomes in the speech of Hartmann’s Kalogreant the simpler problem of just paying attention and being quiet while someone else is talking. The German adaptation does retain an echo of Calogrenant’s aphoristic rhetoric: the lines “ern nemes ouch mit dem herzen war, / sô ne wirt im niuwan der dôz” (vv. 252-53) reproduce almost exactly the wording of the same sentiment in Chrétien, “... chil n'en ont fors que l'oïe, / Puis que li cuers n'i entent mie” (vv. 155-56). So we see that Hartmann is adapting closely from Chrétien’s text, or *willing* and able to adapt closely from Chrétien’s text, when it suits him to do so—this only makes Hartmann’s choices of what aspects of Chrétien’s text to omit from his adaptation all the more striking. Not only is the lengthy excursus on ears and hearts dramatically reduced, but also, the emphasis on the problem of sincerity is dropped. The main takeaway from Kalogreant’s speech is that storytelling is a waste of both parties’ time if the listener isn’t listening—another example of how Hartmann, in his reworking of an extended problematic in Chrétien, brings the discussion back around to storytelling and to the figure of the storyteller, and in particular, the need to give the storyteller due deference, respect, or attention. Thus, Hartmann’s Kalogreant echoes the sentiments of his author-narrator just as does Chrétien’s Calogrenant.

Another example of how Hartmann smooths over Chrétien’s linguistic and pragmatic disjunctions is in the reworking of the scene in which Gauvain persuades Yvain to attend the tournament that will eventually result in Yvain’s broken promise to return to Laudine. Gauvain’s admission of his own hypocrisy in the French is replaced in Hartmann’s retelling with a reference to the story of Erec and Enide, the other romance of Chrétien’s that Hartmann adapted into German. Thus, Hartmann overwrites Chrétien’s irony, replacing Gauvain’s self-confessed failure to practice what he preaches with an earnest argument backed up by the precedent of the story of another Arthurian hero, one that Hartmann has also rendered into German. Hartmann’s Gawein sternly reminds Iwein (and us) of Erec’s infamous failing (overindulging with Enide and neglecting proper chivalric activities), a deficiency only remedied by undertaking chivalric activity (vv. 2783-98). (This is followed by quite a lengthy elaboration of more than a hundred lines detailing all the perils and pitfalls of being too attached to one’s wife.) Rather than eroding his own authority as a speaker through his speech, Hartmann’s Gawein bolsters his authority by citing another textual authority, to be found in Hartmann’s own *oeuvre*.

It is as if Hartmann cannot abide the idea of this Arthurian hero professing so baldly that his own sentiments don’t match up to the courtly advice he is dispensing. In fact, Hartmann has his characters dispense aphoristic wisdom that quite pointedly counters this kind of disjunction—not just its rightness, but even its possibility. The additions Hartmann makes to the speech of his

characters in his adaptation seem not only to respond to Chrétien's problematization of language by insisting on a fixed, stable position of the "heart" in the production and reception of discourse, but also to pointedly address the very problem that Iwein will face when haunted by Kei's mockery after killing Esclados (a problem that emerges more sharply and explicitly in Hartmann than in Chrétien). For instance, Kalogreant remarks to Kei that because he is the kind of person he is, his words correspondingly have no value:

›ez ist umbe iuch alsô gewant
daz iu daz niemen merken sol,
sprechet ir anders danne wol.
mir ist ein dinc wol kunt:
ezn sprichet niemens munt
wan als in sîn herze lêret:
swen iuwer zunge unêret,
dâ ist daz herze schuldec an.
in der werlde ist manec man
valsch unde wandelbære,
der gerne biderbe wære,
wan daz in sîn herze enlât. (vv. 190-201)

[“Since you are who you are, no one should pay any attention to your criticizing. One thing I know: no one’s mouth speaks other than as his heart advises, for whomever your tongue dishonors, your heart is responsible. Many men in this world are false and fickle who would like to be upright, but their hearts will not let them.”]

This insistence on the importance of the unity of heart and tongue—the correspondence between one’s speech and one’s intentions and interiority—in determining what and whose language we should pay attention to puts one in mind of the language of Chrétien’s accusation against the empty love language of the degraded present, and of Calogrenant’s exhortation to his audience to engage their hearts in understanding. Yet, the worldview Kalogreant expresses here leaves little room for Gauvain’s well-meaning hypocrisy, or for the kind of ambiguous disingenuousness that, as we will soon see, undergirds the language through which Yvain and Laudine effect their courtship in Chrétien. Not only is the speaker accountable for the effects of his language, but the effects of his language are a reflection of the speaker’s moral condition. And it does seem to be a function of some kind of fixed, underlying condition, rather than intention or will, since, according to Kalogreant, even one who would like to be morally upright cannot if his heart will not let him. Thus, linguistic signification is produced involuntarily, and discursive fidelity and stability are not a product of an individual’s intent, but of his value as a person.

This language of unity of heart and tongue is taken up by the queen as well, as she, too, condemns Kei for his malicious speech:

›iuwer zunge müeze gunêrt sîn,
diu allez guot gar verdagt
unde niuwan daz alelr bæste sagt
des iuwer herze erdenken kan.

doch wæn ich daz ich hier an
der zungen unrehte tuo:
iuwer herze twinget si derzuo.
dazn dunket deheiner schalcheit ze vil,
nû muoz si sprechen swaz ez wil.
nû ne mac ich si niht gescheiden,
wan übel geschehe in beiden.
ich will iu daz zwâre sagen,
dem ir den vater het erslagen,
dern vlizze sich des niht mêre
wie er iu alle iuwer êre
benæme, danne si dâ tuot.
habt ez iu eine,
werdez iu guot. (vv. 837-54)

[“Shame on your tongue, which is silent about everything good and says only the worst things you can think up. But I suppose I do your tongue an injustice because it is impelled by your heart, to which no act of malice seems too great. The tongue speaks what the heart commands. I can’t separate them, so I condemn them both. I tell you for sure, if you had killed a man’s father, he would spare no more effort to strip you of all honors than does your tongue. If you alone suffer because of that, you deserve to.”]

Again, language is characterized as the involuntary product of the speaking subject’s moral condition or constitution: the queen regrets condemning Kei’s tongue when it has no choice but to discursively reproduce the malice of the heart—so frequently invoked in medieval romance as the locus of both intellectual understanding and affective investment (for instance, by both Calogrenant and Kalogreant, who both compare the superficial activity of listening with the ears unfavorably to the more sincere, genuine, and meaningful of understanding with the heart). Thus, it is important to note, the queen and Kalogreant do not speak against those whose tongues speak other than what is in their hearts, as one might expect. Rather, in what might be read as a heavy-handed attempt to curtail the possibility of instability in discursive communication and meaning-making, the logic of their condemnation of Kei denies that such a thing is even possible.

This attempt to resolve or level the potential for disjunction, tension, and contradiction between the status and intention of the speaker, on the one hand, and the value and signification of speech, on the other, introduces a couple of paradoxes that threaten to disrupt the neat theory of signification and discursive meaning-making that Kalogreant and the queen propose in their evaluations of Kei and his utterances. The crux of the problem, the stick in the wheel, is false, misleading, or insincere language, language that doesn’t mean what it should—the kind that Chrétien complains about when he condemns those who talk about love without feeling it, and presumably, the kind produced by the false and fickle men of Kalogreant’s example, whose false hearts will not let them be otherwise. In a world of absolute communicative felicity, how can this be? The explanation is that such infelicitous language is produced by false and fickle hearts, and false hearts can only produce unworthy language. The quality of the language mirrors the status of the person who produces it; there is no disjunction between speech and speaker.

Thus, it appears that whereas Chrétien overtly thematizes linguistic instability and disjunction, Hartmann wants to resolve this disruption to the harmony of linguistic signification by suggesting—or rather, having his characters pronounce—that such disjunctive language is a faithful representation of a false speaker. Yet, this rationalization paradoxically makes verbal deception, the deliberate misuse of language to mislead, itself an involuntary act—the false and fickle men of Kalogreant’s example *would like* to be upright, but their hearts won’t let them. The problem inherent to this theory of language is captured by the contradiction of the text’s, and especially the characters’, vivid personifications of that which Kalogreant and the queen are insisting is unified and inseparable as *tongue* and *heart*, agents acting independently of each other and an individual subject. Hence, the queen, even while telling Kei that she can’t separate his heart and tongue, conceptualizes and personifies them not only as separate entities and actors. The author-narrator himself doubles down on this conceptual split in a bit of apology for Kei:

ouch sag ich iu ein mære:
swie schalkhaft Kei wære,
er was doch vil unervorht.
het in sîn zunge niht verworht,
sô gewan der hof nie tiurern helt. (vv. 2565-69)

[I’ll tell you something else: however malicious Kei was, he was still very brave. If his tongue hadn’t ruined him, the court would never have had a worthier hero.]

This contradicts the logic of what the queen says to and about Kei—that his tongue has no choice but to speak the malice that is in his heart. If the queen fears doing Kei’s tongue an injustice because it is compelled by his heart, from which it cannot be separated, the narrator has no such scruples—Hartmann is happy to throw Kei’s tongue under the bus in order to seek some amnesty for Kei himself. Berndt Volkmann argues that Hartmann shows considerably more interest in this opening scene than Chrétien and attempts to integrate Kei and his aggressive behavior persuasively into the narrative sequence.²² But it is that very attempt at “integrating” Kei that leads to the inconsistencies we have observed in this scene. And so, a kind of narrative and discursive disjunction reappears, despite the visible attempts to paste over it that are especially conspicuous to anyone looking closely at the French and German texts in comparison.

In fact, it is Hartmann’s most insistent, conspicuous, heavy-handed attempts at suppressing Chrétien’s problematization of language that ends up creating the contradictions that reintroduce ironic tension and distance back into the text, and producing the disjunctions between language and meaning, speakers and speech, that Hartmann’s characters are so adamant do not exist. If Hartmann’s Kalogreant and Guinevere appear to be speaking back, even pushing back, against Chrétien’s text, in their sharp rebukes of Kei and their defenses of linguistic stability and unity, then it seems their efforts are betrayed by their own author-narrator, who, with apparent unwittingness, contradicts what they say. While in *Yvain*, the characters give lie to the narrator’s words, in *Iwein*, it almost seems to be the opposite. We see that it isn’t that the irony and complexity of the French original escaped the German adaptor—Hartmann’s precise reactions to and rewritings of even small moments in *Yvain* suggests an acute awareness of Chrétien’s narrative play. Rather, Hartmann gives the appearance of suppressing the French

²² Volkmann, “*Costumiers est le dire mal*,” pp. 95-108.

poem's ambiguity and irony by rehabilitating the Arthurian ethos and especially characters such as Kei and Kalogreant, while reproducing and relocating elements of Chrétien's play elsewhere, or in a different way.

IV. The Rhetoric and Representation of Love in *Yvain* and *Iwein*

Up until this point, we have talked about Chrétien's problematization of language, and Hartmann's response to it—but not of the particular object of discourse that makes language a problem: love. Chrétien's lamentation over the deterioration of love in the present time provides us with the conceptual arsenal with which to understand how language is treated by the characters, as we have seen, and how it is used by the narrator himself. This problem of the stability and fixity of discursive meaning-making in Chrétien is not just specific to love language, as we have seen. The criticism of those who speak of love insincerely and thus turn it into *fable* and *mensonge* fulfills a multipronged narrative function, introducing a key problematic that prefigures and informs the development of the story that follows, as well as offering commentary on the characters and events of the story—that is, the virtuous figure of Arthur and the telling of love stories at his court during Pentecost—and providing the author-narrator grounds upon which to bolster his own authority. These functions intersect and coincide most compellingly, though, when we consider that Chrétien's complaint about those who misuse the language of love prefigures the crux and the problem of Yvain's and Laudine's relationship, and the way in which this relationship is negotiated and narratively represented. The fault for which Chrétien condemns his contemporaries in the present time, against his praise for the "disciples of Love" in the virtuous Arthurian past, is the very flaw at the heart of Yvain's union with Laudine, which is eventually exposed by his failure with her, a rupture which is never resolved despite a putative happy ending. Chrétien's complaint about those who say that they love without truly feeling it rather trenchantly prefigures the way in which Yvain and Laudine's union is a transactional reconciliation of each party's self-interest negotiated under cover of the conventional language of love and topoi of courtly romance.

Hunt notes that "[i]n Chrétien the personal relationship of Yvain and Laudine is depicted in terms of a stylised literary fiction—courtly love. There is little human reality in their relationship: they speak to each other in literary metaphors."²³ There are several indications in the text that suggest that the authenticity of this love between Yvain and the Lady, not just narratively represented by generic *topoi* of literary love, but constructed, negotiated and performed by the characters themselves using these *topoi*, is highly questionable beneath the veneer of courtly rhetoric. Both of the characters exhibit extremely self-interested motivations for entering into a romantic relationship. Yvain enters into the castle, the space belonging to and identified with the Lady, in order to obtain some tangible proof of his defeat of Esclados and avoid further mockery from Keu. Even once he has become enamored of Esclados' widow, he does not forget his somewhat undignified preoccupation with recovering a trophy of his exploits and especially with showing up Keu; he is aggrieved to see Esclados's corpse being carried away to be buried, since "... avoir ne puet / Aucune cose qu'il en port / Tesmoing qu'i l'a conquis et mort" (vv. 1346-48), and bemoans the possibility of having to endure more of Keu's derision if

²³ Hunt, "Beginnings, Middles, and Ends," p. 108.

he cannot acquire proof his triumph (vv. 1349-57). Earlier in the text, there is also a suggestion of a strong desire on Yvain's part to prove himself over Keu, and also Gauvain; the reason for Yvain's secretive departure is so that the adventure of the fountain will not be given to either of these two knights, whom Arthur favors. Thus, Yvain's marriage to the Lady of the Fountain is the most trenchant proof of his triumph, not only over Esclados but also over Keu. This triumph over Keu is literalized when Arthur's party arrives at the fountain, and Yvain, unrecognized by Arthur and his court, defeats Keu in combat in his guise as the Lord of the Fountain. The Lady, too, has more practical motivations for accepting Yvain as her new husband. Deep in the throes of her melodramatic mourning, she only becomes receptive to the idea of another marriage once Lunette mentions the necessity of finding a protector for the fountain, and it is clear that this is her reason for agreeing to Lunette's proposal. Having already chastised Lunette for daring to suggest she wed Esclados's slayer, she finds herself forced to reconsider "Qu'ele estoit en grant cuisenson / De sa fontaine garantir" (vv. 1736-37). Her motives are evident during her interview of Yvain, when, after Yvain has explained the depth of his love for her, the next question she poses to him is: "Et oseriez vous entreprendre / Pour moy fontaine a deffendre?" (vv. 2035-36). The union between Yvain and the Lady is shown to be less a conciliation of their deeper feelings than of their mutual self-interests.

Hartmann clearly picks up on this element of self-interest and transactional exchange that undergirds *Yvain*—and in characteristic fashion, both embraces and controverts it. Earlier, we observed how Hartmann's adaptation of scenes from Chrétien seems to deliberately reject and subvert Chrétien's strategies for disrupting the unity of words and things, speakers and speech. Hartmann's Kalogreant speaks in a way that befits his status in the story, neither as rhetorically lofty nor as abjectly degraded as his French counterpart. And he also has a certain moral authority that his French counterpart lacks, which leads to a peculiar kind of role reversal between him and Iwein. Kalogreant's condemnation of Kei's language as meaningless, not worth listening to, almost seems like it could be a warning or admonishment for Iwein, who sets too much store by Kei's words and the threat of his verbal mockery. Kalogreant's insistence that:

›ichn möhte niht geniezen
 iuwers lobes noch iuwer vriuntschaft,
 wan iuwer rede hât niht kraft:
 ouch enwil ich niht engelten
 swaz ir mich mugt geschelten.‹ (vv. 210-14)

["I wouldn't enjoy praise from you, nor your friendship, because your words mean nothing, and I will not be harmed, no matter how you revile me."]

becomes a yardstick against which Iwein's later motivations can be measured and found wanting.

Even moreso than in Chrétien's version, the exception that Iwein takes to Kei's insults and his fear of Kei's mockery are underscored at numerous points throughout the story: foreshadowed here, in Kalogreant's stark declaration of the worthlessness of Kei's words, and repeated explicitly in the narrative when Iwein finds himself in pursuit of Esclados, trying to apprehend his wounded foe before Esclados can escape into the safety of the castle. The text

describes Iwein hunting Esclados down in uncourtly fashion, without appropriate behavior: “Îwein jagte in âne zuht” (v. 1056). It also details the thinking behind Iwein’s desperation to catch him:

dô gedâhte her Îwein, ob er in
niht erslûege ode vienge,
daz ez im danne ergienge
als im her Keî gehiez,
der niemens ungespottet liez:
unde waz im sîn arbeit tôte,
sô er mit niemen möhte
erziugen dise geschiht.
(wand â ne was der liute niht):
sô spræche er im an sîn êre. (vv. 1062-71)

[Sir Iwein thought that if he didn’t kill or capture him, it would turn out as predicted by Sir Kei, who spared no one his mockery. Because no one else was there, what good would his efforts do him when he had no witness to confirm what he had done? And Kei would deny him his honors.]

This narrative explanation spells out explicitly what is latent and implicit in Chrétien. In Chrétien’s version, we see for ourselves that Yvain’s behavior is less than noble; in Hartmann’s text, we are overtly told that it is so. Hartmann’s more black-and-white depiction of Iwein’s behavior and decision-making in this scene (and in his eventual union with Laudine, as we will see) forecloses the space of narrative and ethical ambiguity that Chrétien leaves open in *Yvain*.

Hartmann’s condemnation of Iwein’s behavior allows him to establish a binary opposition between two motivations driving Iwein’s actions: the baser motivation of self-interest and the nobler motivation of love. The way in which this binary opposition plays out as (nearly literal) conflict is emblematic of how Hartmann’s narratorial approach to this scene differs from Chrétien’s:

Swie im sîne sinne
von der kraft der minne
vil sêre wæren überladen,
doch gedâht er an einen schaden,
daz er niht überwunde
den spot den er vunde,
swenner sînen gelingen
mit deheinen schînlihen dingen
ze hove erziugen möhte,
waz im danne tôte
elliu sîn arbeit.
er vorhte eine schalcheit:
er weste wol daz Keî
in niemer gelieze vrî

vor spotte unde vor leide.
 dise sorgen beide
 die taten im geliche wê.
 vil schere wart des einen mê:
 vrou Minne nam die oberhant,
 daz si in vienc unde bant.
 si bestuont in mit überkraft,
 unde twanc in des ir meisterschaft
 daz er herzeminne
 truoc sîner vîendinne,
 diu im zem tôde was gehaz. (vv. 1519-43)

[Although the power of love had seriously overburdened his mind, he still was mindful of one disadvantage he was laboring under: namely, that he could not overcome the mockery he would find at court when he couldn't produce any plausible proof of his success. What good then were all his efforts? And knowing that Kei would never stop mocking him and harming him, he feared being the victim of a trick. These two worries weighed equally on him. Soon, though, one of them prevailed. Lady Love gained the upper hand, seizing and binding him, besetting him irresistibly, and her dominion forced him to ardently love his mortal enemy.]

Hartmann blatantly spells out Iwein's self-interest and explicitly pits it *against* the possibility of true love, rather than tacitly allowing the ambiguous possibility of their going hand-in-hand, as Chrétien does. The negotiation between these motivations in *Yvain* is less overt, as they are not pitted against each other. Rather, one bleeds into the other in a trick of semantic fuzziness enabled by the employment of a conventional topos of literary love (love as combat) and the exploitation of literal and figurative meanings in Yvain's debate with himself over whether Laudine is his *amie* or *anemie*:

Et me doit ele ami clamer?
 Oil voir, pour che que je l'aim.
 Et je m'anemie le claim,
 Qu'ele me het, si n'a pas tort,
 Car che qu'ele amoit li ai mort.
 Et dont sui je ses anemis?
 Nenil, chertes, mais ses amis,
 C'onques mais tant amer ne vaux. (vv. 1458-65)

Yvain and Laudine's fraught transition from mutual antagonists to husband and wife is facilitated by the semantic slippage of these words—between the two words themselves, as suggested by Yvain's wordplay, which highlights their phonetic commonality, and between their literal and figurative meanings, as Laudine goes from Yvain's literal *anemie* to being both his *amie* and his figurative *anemie*, his combatant in love.²⁴ The literalization of the topos of love as

²⁴ Eugene Vance observes that the presence of violence in the literary discourse of love is a well-established tradition, pervasive not only in medieval love literature but as far back as classical

combat resolves Yvain's dilemma and naturalizes the shift between the two opposed positions, enabling Yvain's reconciliation of the two terms to take place in the guise of the generic commonplaces of courtly romance. The rhetorical negotiation of the love relationship papers over other, more mercenary motivations.

In Hartmann, on the other hand, the conflict between Iwein's two motivations is resolved not through rhetorical play and negotiation, but rather *deus ex machina* via personification allegory. Presenting Iwein's dilemma as a conflict between two opposing forces—his desire to be recognized for his success and to gain the upper hand over Kei, on the one hand, and his love for Laudine, on the other—presents the reader with both motivations as possible interpretations of Iwein's actions, and suggests that one undermines the other. We are told that Love gets the upper hand in Iwein's inner conflict, but this declaration does not put the issue to rest—either in the mind of the reader, for whom suspicions over Iwein's motivations have already been raised much more starkly than in Chrétien's version, or in the narrative itself, since the same problem rears its head again some two hundred lines later:

sus was mîn her Îwein
mit disen nœten zwein
sêre betwungen:
swie wol im was gelungen,
sô wærer doch gunêret,
wærer ze hove gekêret
âne geziuc sîner geschiht,
wande man geloupt im sîn niht.
dô begunde in an strîten
ze den andern sîten
daz im gar unmære
elliu diu êre wære
diu im anders mœhte geschehen,
ern müese sîne vrouwen sehen,
von der er was gevangen. (vv. 1723-37)

[Thus Sir Iwein was sorely pressed by these two afflictions. However well the matter had turned out for him, he would still be dishonored if he should return to court without proof of his story, for it would simply not be believed. On the other hand, he was disturbed by the feeling that he would in no way value all the honor that might otherwise come his way unless he could see the lady who was holding him prisoner.]

Hartmann thus explicitly names and reconciles the two forces or desires at play here, the slippage between which is the source of this scene's ambiguity in Chrétien. Hartmann's framing of Iwein's dilemma allows the reader to take the events of story as proof that Iwein chooses love of Laudine over worldly honor. But it also makes it rather difficult for it to escape the reader's

antiquity, during which “les poètes ont établi entre l'amour et la guerre un rapport direct de cause à effet, ou bien un rapport d'identité, les deux phénomènes étant considérés comme des équivalents exacts”; “Le combat érotique chez Chrétien de Troyes,” *Poétique* 12 (1972): 544.

notice that both desires can be satisfied by a single means—is marrying Laudine, the wife of his slain enemy, not the greatest proof of his triumph?

Yet, even as Hartmann's elaboration allows us to see more clearly the way in which the trappings of one possible motivation (love for Laudine) satisfy perfectly the demands of the other, less courtly and more self-interested, motivation (the desire to best Kei), the logic of Hartmann's narrative presentation of Iwein's warring impulses forecloses the possibility that both motivations can be in play at once. Hartmann's description of Iwein drawn in opposing directions by two conflicting forces acknowledges the multiplicity of motivation in this scene, but explicitly and forcefully subordinates the one to the other: love wins out, defeating more mercenary motivations. This not only effaces the ambiguity that undergirds this scene in Chrétien, but also, by describing these motivations as if warring against one another ("vrou Minne nam die oberhant"), Hartmann represents as mutually exclusive and opposed what is actually mutually enabling. That is to say, Hartmann poses the problem as a decision that Iwein has to and does eventually make: he chooses love. It is implied that the other motivation, Iwein's concern about Kei's mockery and his own reputation, is left behind. But in Chrétien, Yvain's two potential motivations do not war against one another but rather feed into each other. This creates a situation of interpretive ambiguity—how to understand the characters's use of the courtly language of love, language that both enables and conceals Yvain's and Laudine's assertions of self-interest? How to understand the author-narrator's conventional courtly framing of their love story, when we have already had cause to distrust the surface-level appearance of Chrétien's presentation of events, his courtly narrative trappings that cover and conceal something altogether less courtly underneath? This interpretive ambiguity is not absent from *Iwein*, either—it is only that the author-narrator's account does not acknowledge it and tries to level it, framing the situation as a problem that Hartmann can narratively resolve through the intervention of *vrou Minne*, Lady Love, who wins the day over any opposing forces in play. The intervention of the personification of love imposes interpretive determinacy and discursive stability almost by force, not unlike how Kalogreant and the queen try to reign in Kei's chaotic language by insisting on a fixed, unified system of communicating and understanding meaning in speech.

Thus, Hartmann voids this scene of the rhetorical slipperiness that runs through the language of love used in Chrétien to not only represent, but also enable and enact Yvain and Laudine's union. In Chrétien's version, it is the characters who use the conventional topoi of love to facilitate and negotiate relations between them. The characters' deft use of the rhetoric of literary love serves a dual function, supplying a more surface-level explanation for how their marriage comes about, while underneath the surface, suggesting a union also driven by more mercenary motivations. There is an interpretive space left open here where readers can gauge for themselves the nature of the dynamics between the knight and lady, and room for the coexistence of multiple interpretations of the same language: the enactment of romance through the double-pronged dialogue of the characters leaves us adrift and forces us to find our own moorings somewhere in the gray area between "Yvain and Laudine are motivated by nothing besides perfect, true love" and "Yvain and Laudine are not in love at all, and their use of love language is pure pretense to conceal their self-interest." This space is foreclosed in *Iwein*, or at least, the gestures of the author-narrator himself *attempt* to foreclose it. Opposing motivations (and with them, opposing interpretations) duel, with one clearly emerging triumphant over the other. It is Hartmann who declares love's unequivocal victory here, and indeed, Hartmann, rather than the

characters themselves, whose language seems to enact and even enforce the union between Iwein and Laudine through narratorial intervention. Just as we saw in the previous passages narrating Iwein's internal conflict, the text's description of Laudine's dilemma shows how the abstract concept of *Minne* is used as a narrative device that externally facilitates the union between Iwein and Laudine:

sus brâhte siz in ir gemüete
ze suone unde ze güete,
unde machte in unschuldec wider si.
dô was bereit dâ bî
diu gewaltige Minne,
ein rehtiu süenærinne
under manne und under wîbe. (vv. 2050-57)

[In this way she prepared her mind to be kind and conciliatory and absolved him of doing her any wrong. Mighty Lady Love was ready to hand, a true conciliator between men and women.]

Again, *Minne* is the agent here, not Iwein or Laudine. Their relations do not arise through rhetorical negotiation between the characters, as in the case in Chrétien's version, but rather, are effected narratively through extradiegetic intervention—*Minne* does not appear as a character who interfaces with the lovers, but rather seems external to their world, a way for the author-narrator to account for the events of the story in his narration of them, and, as we will soon see later in the chapter, an interlocutor with whom Hartmann himself will engage in dialogue, in debate over the narration and interpretation of the very story that Hartmann is in the progress of telling.

Rather than providing openings in the narrative for the reader's interpretation, Hartmann fills in these gaps with the rhetorical work of his own narratorial intervention—work that, however, leaves a space of its own between narrative surface and narrated object, or in other words, between Hartmann's storytelling and the story that Hartmann tells. Thus, the scrutiny we applied to the characters' use of language in Chrétien shifts to the author-narrator's use of language in Hartmann, in this perhaps subtler example the tendencies we noted earlier in the chapter: the way in which Hartmann effaces Chrétien's ironies and interpretive problematics only to quietly reproduce them elsewhere in the text, and how he introduces a sense of distance between the individual narrator and what he is narrating. We can observe now with this example how it is the latter that enables Hartmann to do the former, and later in the chapter, we will look at what happens when this distance between Hartmann and his text is blown open completely, as Hartmann debates the personified *Minne* about the correct narration and interpretation of his own poem.

Because Hartmann is uninterested in sustaining the double-pronged ambiguity that undergirds Yvain and Laudine's dialogue in the French, his characters are free to spell out what in Chrétien are only implicit suggestions, pointing to the source of ambiguity in Chrétien in a way that levels that ambiguity. Hartmann has Laudine explain barefacedly to Iwein:

›ir hâbt mir selch leit getân,
 stüende mîn ahte unde mîn *guot*
 als ez andern vrouwen tuot,
 daz ich iuwer enwolde
 sô gâhes, noch solde
 gnâde gevâhen.
 nû muoz ich leider gâhen:
 wandez ist mir alsô gewant,
 ich mac verliesen wol mîn lant
 hiute ode morgen.
 daz muoz ich ê besorgen
 mit einem manne der ez wer:
 der ist niender in mînem her,
 sît mir der kûnec erslagen:
 des muoz ich in vil kurzen tagen
 mir einen herren kiesen
 ode daz lant verliesen. < (vv. 2304-19)

[“You have done me such harm that I would not and should not be in such haste to pardon you, if I had my status and my property, as other ladies do. Now I am compelled to hurry because I am in such a situation that today or tomorrow I can easily lose my country. Before then I must provide my country with a husband who will defend it for me. Since the killing of the king there is no one in my army to do that. So within a very few days I must choose a husband or else lose my land.”]

Laudine provides an explicit and specific explanation for her actions, offering up answers where in Chrétien’s version, we are left with questions for which we must supply our own answers based on our reading and interpretation of the text, connecting the dots with lines that Chrétien does not draw for us. This explanation helpfully brings to the surface aspects of Laudine and Iwein’s, and indeed, Laudine and Yvain’s relationship that a hasty reader might have missed—and also offers suggestive evidence of the cast of Hartmann’s own reading and understanding of this relationship in Chrétien. And even as Laudine’s statement here levels one kind of interpretive complexity that crops up in Chrétien’s poem, this forthright admission of motive introduces new tensions into Hartmann’s narrative, as it starkly belies Hartmann’s own narrative account of Laudine and Iwein’s union. As we noted earlier, Hartmann had declared that *Minne* was the force that overcame Laudine and Iwein’s enmity and brought them together: “ein rehtiu süenærinne / under manne und under wîbe” [a true conciliator between men and women] (vv. 2056-57). Laudine’s statement unequivocally establishes that something else quite other than love has brought about the conciliation in her case.

Thus, we see that Hartmann has taken a different path to bring us to a familiar place. Even as he declares love’s power (*diu gewaltige Minne*) to temper the hostile Laudine, Laudine herself gives lie to the author-narrator’s account. This contradiction surfaces clearly when even Hartmann’s own words confirm the truth of Laudine’s declaration, in a way that seems contrary to his previous representation of the couple. Describing Laudine’s mindset after Iwein comes through for her and successfully defends her fountain, Hartmann says:

von schulden vreute si sich:
wan si was unz an die zît
niuwan nâch wâne *wol* gehât:
nû was dehein wân dar an:
alrêst liebet ir der man. (vv. 2670-74)

[She had good reason to be happy, because until this moment she wasn't certain that she had married well. Now there was no doubt about it, and for the first time she was truly fond of her husband.]

We might well be surprised by this statement. This revelation about Laudine's feelings seems at odds with Hartmann's previous portrayal of her softening up under the powerful conciliatory influence of love. But perhaps we saw this coming after all, and this passage is only explicit confirmation of what we already suspected about the order of priority between love and other motivations and interests. A confirmation, and an elucidation of one possibility for orienting ourselves in Chrétien's interpretive gray area, and for positioning ourselves against Hartmann's emergent narratorial irony: that rather than love and self-interest being mutually exclusive, they are mutually enabling, and rather than the problem being that the love between Yvain/Iwein and Laudine is untrue or inauthentic, it is that the literary conception of love itself is prone to sort of illusion, or even self-delusion, or even a sort of illusory reality, one that creates and enacts its own truths while concealing others from view.

On this point, though, Hartmann's treatment of love contains significant departures from Chrétien, and this is nowhere clearer than in the romance's ending. Chrétien, who has repeatedly strained, challenged, undermined, and appropriated the rhetoric of literary love throughout his text, ultimately confirms and doubles down on the disconnect between the language used to describe the love between Yvain and Laudine and the reality of their relationship by concluding with a narratively clever but emotionally underwhelming and dissatisfying ending. Tricked by Lunette into accepting the Knight of the Lion as her husband without knowing exactly who it is she's agreeing to marry, the Lady of the Fountain declares romantically that "... parjure seroie / Se tout mon pooir n'en faisoie / De pais faire entre vous et moi" (vv. 6791-83), and thus only grudgingly agrees to take Yvain back. Despite how the conventional trappings of romance narrative frame this reunion as a happy ending, the re-marriage of Yvain and Laudine is predicated on nothing more than a verbal sleight of hand, which obligates the otherwise unwilling lady to accept back a man she does not want lest she forfeit her honor by perjuring herself. (Another example of discursive disjunction, as Laudine does not know the true referent of Lunette's proposition, and thus makes and is held to a promise whose true meaning she is not aware of, and would not have made if she had been.) Fredric L. Cheyette and Howell Chickering have argued that this ending is a reflection of medieval ethics and aesthetics, and that those who have read it as an example of Chrétien's trademark ambiguity and irony are only imposing their own modern perspectives and desires upon the reunion scene.²⁵ But if that really is the case, then why do both Hartmann and the author of the Old Swedish adaptation, *Herr Ivan*, both depart

²⁵ Fredric L. Cheyette and Howell Chickering, "Love, Anger, and Peace: Social Practice and Poetic Play in the Ending of *Yvain*," *Speculum* 80 (2005): 75-117.

from Chrétien's ambivalent ending, overwriting the tension of Laudine's begrudging acceptance with a more unambiguously happy and mutual reunion?²⁶ For indeed, Hartmann's depiction of this reunion differs notably from Chrétien's. The problem of Laudine's oath obligating her to accept Iwein back despite her reluctance is foregrounded much more clearly and explicitly in Hartmann's version, a pattern we have seen elsewhere in the adaptation from the French. Laudine accuses Lunete of entrapping her and asks outright if this means she's now stuck with someone who has no respect for her. What was left latent in Chrétien's poem is brought out into the open in Hartmann—and not only that, but also finds explicit resolution. After Iwein apologizes to Laudine for his behavior, she, incredibly, asks *his* forgiveness in turn, saying that she regrets his suffering on her account. Iwein's assurance that she is not to blame, and that he lost her affection through his own wrongdoing, assuages her anger, and the two rekindle their mutual love.

Thus, Hartmann rehabilitates love—the courtly language and discourse of love, romance's generic construction and representation of love—, rescuing it from the disrepute that Chrétien's ironizing and rhetorical play cast upon it. Chrétien takes the familiar conventions and forms of courtly romance and, even while employing them to construct his narrative and compose his poem, exposes their artifice and dismantles their illusions. This is why love language specifically is the kind of language whose meaning and meaning-making are particularly fraught; by interrogating the relationship between means and object of representation in romance, Chrétien reveals how the courtly language of romance produces the object it purports to represent—except that object is not there, as we see when we take a careful look at what is happening in the story, and love language and romance convention, the means, themselves become the object of the text's representation, and of its scrutiny. While Hartmann reproduces much of Chrétien's language and rhetoric closely in his adaptation, in his framing of the story through the lens of the *laudatio* topos, he notably omits the part that is specifically about love—Chrétien's complaint about those who abuse the language of love is nowhere found in Hartmann's reworking. While Chrétien exposes the machinery of courtly romance, the work done by generic conventions and topoi of love, Hartmann's narrative strategy focuses instead on the thematization of the distance between narrator and story, which is a key element of the narrative production of irony, but also takes on added significance in his role of translator and adaptor of Chrétien's text for a very different audience.

V. Conclusion: The Location of Irony and Thematization of Difference in Hartmann

We can make sense of Hartmann's departures from Chrétien, and his seemingly contradictory impulses in adapting the French poem's ironic and self-reflexive gestures, as part of Hartmann's strategy for "translating" Chrétien's text (its story, as well as its irony and narrative play), as well as signaling and thematizing his own poem's status as an adaptation, and work of adaptation, for an audience not necessarily familiar with Chrétien's version or with the French romance tradition. As we have seen, this means that irony is not gone from Hartmann's adaptation, even while he intentionally effaces moments of it that appear in Chrétien, but rather, occurs differently, concentrated in different places in Hartmann's text. The presence of this differently

²⁶ I thank Joseph Sullivan for sharing this insight with me.

located irony and rhetorical play is oftentimes quite blatant, and that it could still be overlooked perhaps only attributable to the long shadow cast by Chrétien over any who draw comparison to him. For example, Hartmann has Kei say with a startling lack of self-awareness:

›Ez swachet manec böese man
den biderben swâ er iemer kan:
ern begêt deheine vrümcheit,
unde ist im gar ein herzeleit
swem dehein êre geschiht.
nû seht, desn tuon ich niht,
wan ich einem iegelîchen man
sîner êren wol gan:
ich prîse in swâ er rehte tuot,
under verswîge sîn laster: daz ist guot.
ez ist reht daz mir gelinge:
wan ezn sprichet ze dem dinge
niemen minre danne ich.
iedoch sô vürdert er sich,
swâ sich der böese selbe lobt;
wande niemen gerne vür in tobt,
dêr sîn hövscheit prîse.
der herre Îwein ist niht wise:
er möhte swîgen als ich.‹ (vv. 2485-2503)

["Many worthless men debase the virtuous on any occasion they can. Performing no brave deeds themselves, it is a source of grief to them if honor accrues to someone else. But look! I don't do that; for I am happy to grant honor to every man, I praise him when he does things right and I keep quiet when he runs into misfortune—that is only right. It is also right that I should be successful, because no one speaks of his own deeds less than I do. Still, the worthless man gets ahead by praising himself, for no one likes to make a fool of himself by praising another's incompetence. Sir Iwein is not wise. If he were, he would be able to keep silent, as I do."]

Irony abounds in this speech, as the reader notes that Kei is guilty of that which he condemns, and that his actions in the romance are exactly the opposite of his own description of his behavior. If that were not heavy-handed enough, the flourish added by Kei's claims that he speaks very little of his own deeds and that only worthless men praise themselves—coming as they do at the conclusion of a protracted speech praising himself for his own behavior—clearly signals the dual function of this speech as wry, metatextual commentary on the extradiegetic level.

And even while we marvel at Kei's absurd lack of self-awareness, it is nevertheless important to note that Kei is, in a sense, right—only not in the way that the intradiegetic character clearly intends. The validity of Kei's sentiment is evidenced in the romance story, as Kei himself bears out the truth of his own words. (It is a truth that Iwein, perhaps, does not sufficiently internalize, as he subsequently sets much store by Kei's opinion of him and is

bothered by the idea of Kei's mockery—a clear contrast to Kalogreant's certainty in declaring that Kei's words mean nothing.) We also catch a glimpse here of an echo of Chrétien's technique, realized in the figure of Calogrenant of putting perceptive language in the mouth of a character who has no authority to be making such statements. We see hints of a very Chrétien-like sort of irony as Kei claims to be keeping silent while literally talking—but a sort of irony that notably does not depend on the reader's familiarity with Chrétien or with conventions of the French verse romance genre for its effect. In fact, Kei's speech here makes an interesting comparison to that of his counterpart in Chrétien's version. In *Yvain*, Keu, mocking Yvain for what he supposes to be Yvain's empty boasting, condemns the *mauvez* who sings his own praises, as opposed to the *preu*, who would be upset to hear others praising his good qualities (vv. 2181-200). Keu then adds sarcastically that he in fact takes the part of the *mauvez*:

Et pour ce certez bien m'acort
 Au malvaiz, qu'il n'a mie tort
 Et c'il se prise et c'il se vante,
 Qu'il ne trueve qui pour li mente.
 Së il n'en dit, qui l'en dira?
 Tuit s'en taissent, nes li hira
 Qui des vaillanz crie le ban
 Et les mavaiz giete a un van. (vv. 2201-08)

Hartmann, while retaining the broad thematic strokes of Keu's speech in the French version, makes a significant change to the dynamics of Kei's language when he replaces Keu's sarcastic praise of the *mauvez* who praises himself with Kei's own un-self-aware self-praise. The injection of the first-person subject turns Kei's speech against Kei himself; rather than the ironist, he instead becomes the lampooned object of the text's irony. Whereas in Chrétien's text, we observe a productive discrepancy between what the author-narrator says is happening and what we actually witness occurring in the story, in Hartmann, this dynamic is transferred to Kei's speech, where we clearly see that his behavior is the opposite of what he is claiming it to be.

Hartmann, then, shows that he is attuned to the irony of Chrétien's French original, but chooses to realize that irony in a different way in his adaptation. His choice to distinguish and distance his narratorial voice from that of Chrétien is foregrounded and thematized in the text itself. Revisiting a passage we examined earlier—Hartmann's adaptation and response to Chrétien's commentary on Laudine's recalcitrance in resisting marriage to Iwein—reveals a compelling example of how the first-person voice distances itself not only from the very text it is in the course of narrating, but also from the voices of others who inaugurated the textual tradition in question. Hartmann contrasts the opinion of “vil maniger” with what “dunket ez mich,” and insists that the former are all mistaken in condemning women for always acting contrary to what reason tells them is right. Out of the question, though, for Hartmann to dispense with this little misogynistic generalization altogether—rather, he seems almost less concerned with the defense of women and more with putting himself forward as a man who knows better than other men, a man who is a courtly and gallant, if not entirely convincing, champion of womankind. The ironic distance between narrator and text manifests itself not a discrepancy between what the narrator tells us and what we see occurring in the story, but rather, between what the narrator tells us extradiegetically and his own, apparently limited understanding of what he is narrating.

The clumsiness of Hartmann's defense of women here underscores this dynamic, as Hartmann both parrots the little misogynistic aphorism as if it were fact, but then swerves to try to recuperate himself with an off-kilter alternative re-interpretation. In our earlier discussion of this passage, we had noted Hartmann's strategy of following Chrétien's text and commentary closely, and then signaling his personal divergence from what he has just reproduced in his text. But more than just that, the intervention of the first-person voice here brings to the fore the question of Hartmann's positionality as an adaptor of Chrétien. This little passage from Hartmann does it all: a faithful adaptation, a metatextual commentary that reworks and reinterprets the original text, and a disavowal of and distancing from the adaptor's predecessors. For, when Hartmann insists that he is not a follower of those who accuse women of inconstancy, does it not logically follow that he is claiming not to be a follower of Chrétien, the originator of the misogynistic sentiment? This is not, I would argue, the real historical author Hartmann von Aue, anxiety-of-influence-ridden, trying to assert the originality or importance of his own literary contribution. Rather, I see this as part of a rhetorical strategy of narratorial distance that thematizes the work of adaptation and reception, and that uses the tension between adaptation and original to produce a kind of irony that does not depend on the reader's familiarity with Chrétien's original, or with the French romance tradition, for purchase.

Hartmann thus relocates the irony of Chrétien's original in a way that renders it legible to his German audience, who are not necessarily coming to his text with the same horizon of expectations, the same generic knowledge and familiarity and even wariness and fatigue, as readers of French texts like the *Bel Inconnu* and *Amadas et Ydoine*. Through the over-articulation of narratorial distance, the first-person narrator takes on, or mimes or even at times parodies, the perspective of an uninitiated reader, modeling and thematizing the encounter with the unfamiliar genre—often, in a way that allows Hartmann to position the reader of his romance text as a better, more knowledgeable and more astute reader than Hartmann himself is. One particularly striking instance of this is the dialogue in which Hartmann gets in an argument with *vrou Minne* about what exactly happens to Iwein and Laudine, and their respective hearts, in the story, as Iwein and his wife are parted shortly after their marriage:²⁷

Dô vrâgte mich vrou Minne
des ich von mînem sinne
niht geantwurten kan.
si sprach : ›sage an, Hartman,
gihestû daz der kûnec Artûs
den hern Îweinen vuorte zu hûs
unde lieze sin wîp wider varn?‹
dône kunde ich mich niht baz bewarn,

²⁷ Buschinger notes how this detail of the exchange of hearts is part of Hartmann's conception of and emphasis on reciprocal love (in Chrétien, rather than husband and wife exchanging hearts, the text describes how Yvain's heart remains with his Lady, while his body goes with Arthur); Buschinger, p. 43. It is notable, though, that it is this moment, that Hartmann's voice interrupts the narrative to call into question the premises of its figurative language—another dilemma that only the personified *Minne* can resolve.

wan ich sagt irz vür die warheit :
 ez was ouch mir vür wâr geseit.
 si sprach, unde sach mich twerhes an :
 ›dûne hâst niht wâr, Hartman.‹
 ›vrouwe, ich hân.‹ si sprach : ›nein.‹
 der strît was lanc under uns zwein,
 unz si mich brâhte ûf die vart
 daz ich ir nâch jehnde wart.
 er vuorte daz wîp unde den man,
 unde volget im doch dewederz dan ;
 als ich iu nû bescheide.
 si wehselten beide
 der herzen under in zwein,
 diu vrouwe unde her Îwein :
 im volget ir herze under sîn lîp,
 unde beleip sîn herze unde daz wîp. (vv. 2971-94)

[Lady Love then put a question to me that I was not clever enough to answer. “Tell me, Hartmann,” she said, “do you claim that King Arthur took Sir Iwein to his castle and let his wife ride back home?” I could only defend myself by saying it was true, for it was told me as fact. Looking at me askance, she said, “You have it wrong, Hartmann.” “Lady, I have it right.” “No,” she replied, and our dispute continued for quite a while before she got me onto the right track, so that I could agree with her. Arthur had led both the man and wife away, and yet neither of them followed him, as I will now explain to you. They exchanged hearts between them, the lady and Sir Iwein. Her heart in Iwein’s breast followed the king, while Iwein’s heart in her body remained behind.]

Previously, we had observed how Hartmann seems to employ *vrou Minne* as an extradiegetic presence, a force external to the text, in order to orchestrate the love affair between Iwein and Laudine *ex machina*. Here, we once again see how the text finds recourse in personification, and specifically that of the personification of love, to justify and realize its narrative workings, in an even more blatant instance of Lady Love’s heavy hand in the text’s narrative fashioning, as she must wrangle with the narrator himself to correct his limited understanding and get the narrative back on track. The first-person voice positions the narrator as a follower, limited not only in his understanding of but also in his agency over the text he is attempting to narrate for his audience. His misinterpretation of what has been told to him as fact—his failure to grasp the figurative meaning of language—leads to a narrative derailing (as we see by the lengthy diversion from the story represented by the dialogue) that Lady Love must forcibly set to rights. And indeed, it is only by force that she does set him straight; at one point, she tells him to shut his mouth, and he notes that he doesn’t dare question her further. When Hartmann is at last made to see the truth—or at least made to agree to it—he endeavors to pass on that explanation to his reader, to ensure no further narrative erring, thus drawing an implicit parallel between the reader’s position and his own, and between Love’s instruction of him and his own narration and commentary.

For the reader who has the ability to grasp figurative language, the explanation is not only superfluous, it is distracting. Hartmann, on the other hand, does not convincingly demonstrate

that he has fully grasped the idea of figurative meaning here, as the explanation he ends up offering the reader is not so much a clarification of his dispute with Lady Love and of the disjunction between literal and figurative meaning as much as it is a concession of a version of events different from the one he had tried earlier. There is still something distressingly literal about Hartmann's explanation that Iwein and Laudine exchanged hearts, the heart of each in the body of the other, as if Hartmann has not so much truly understood as much as been browbeaten into conceding to his betters (as he admits himself when noting he is not clever enough to answer Lady Love's question).

Although Hartmann plays dumb, his dialogue with Lady Love is nevertheless instructive: it represents a perspective alienated from romance convention, one that calls the premises of romance convention into question. While in Chrétien, this effect of alienation occurs by the author-narrator's and characters' adroit use of the discourse of love to covertly do and mean things besides what is apparent on the surface, in this passage from Hartmann, it is the author-narrator's *lack* of adroitness that raises questions about the semantic fullness of this language. What does it mean for two people to exchange hearts? What does it mean for one person's heart to reside in another's chest? We accept such statements as comprehensible because we are familiar with these conventional rhetorical expressions of love—but what do they actually mean here? We may know, or think we do, but it isn't clear that Hartmann does. And his inability to grasp the figurative meaning of the love language of courtly romance convention, even while he parrots the discursive example of it he is provided by *vrou Minne*, apes the approach Hartmann the author-narrator takes in adapting and responding to Chrétien's text in the passages we have examined—closely mimicking the language and rhetorical gestures of the French, while showing in various ways that he hasn't gotten (or has chosen not to get) the point. Critics have accused Hartmann of not being clever enough to understand (and therefore to retain and transmit) Chrétien's irony and ambiguity. But rather, it seems Hartmann foregrounds his adoption of the *posture* of an author-narrator not clever enough to fully understand the story he is adapting and its literary devices, and in doing so, points out to the reader precisely the stakes of what is otherwise, in terms of plot, an extremely close adaptation of Chrétien's *Yvain*. He also demonstrates the truth of what Calogrenant/Kalogreant intimates in his exhortation to the audience listening to him tell his tale: that reception without understanding reduces language to sound, to an artifact, a thing. And yet, as we see in the romance (and as Chrétien bemoans when talking about the fate of love in the present), that *thing* has a life of its own that allows it to conceal the absence of, to displace, and even to work against what it purports to represent.

The question of Hartmann's narratorial competence is revisited later in the text, in another extradiegetic, metatextual dialogue discussing the figurative language of the narrative, this one embedded in an episode that Hartmann copies from Chrétien: the description of the personifications of Love and Hate during Iwein's combat versus Gawain. In this dialogue, Hartmann fends off questions from his reader about how Love and Hate can possibly cohabit, as Hartmann describes. Without the aid of *vrou Minne* to get him on the right track this time, Hartmann is able to take charge of explaining to us the apparent contradiction of love and hate inhabiting the same vessel:

[E]z dunket die andern unde mich
lîhte unmügelich

daz iemer minne unde haz
 ensamt sô besitzen ein vaz
 daz minne bî hazze
 belîbe in dem vazze.
 zwâre ob minne unde haz
 nie mê besâzen ein vaz,
 doch wonte in disem vazze
 minne bî hazze
 sô daz minne noch *haz*
 gerûmden gâhes daz vaz.
 ›ich wæne, vriunt Hartman,
 dû missedenkest daran.
 warumbe sprichestû daz
 daz beide minne une haz
 ensamt bûwen ein vaz?
 wan bendekestû dich baz?
 w iar minne unde hazze
 zenge in einem vazze.
 wan swâ der haz wirt inne
 ernsthafter minne,
 dâ rûmet der haz
 vroum Minnen daz vaz:
 swâ abe gehûset der haz,
 dâ wirt diu minne laz.‹
 nû wil ich iu bescheiden daz,
 wie herzeminne unde bitter haz
 ein vil engez vaz besaz. (vv. 7015-43)

[It seems more or less impossible to me—and not only to me—that one vessel could contain both love and hate, that love could reside along hate in a single vessel. But even if love and hate never before occupied a single vessel, in this particular vessel love did dwell alongside hate, and neither love nor hate was in any hurry to vacate the vessel.

"Friend Hartmann, I think you are wrong about that. Why do you say that love and hate both inhabit one vessel? Think it over. Love and hate would be crowded in a single vessel, for hate, upon perceiving true love, abandons the vessel in favor of Lady Love, and where hate dwells, love leaves."

I'll explain it clearly to you how true love and bitter hate occupied a single crowded vessel.]

In a shifting of roles, the dialogue now takes place between Hartmann and the reader, with Hartmann, now with a more confident grasp on his narrative, taking the role of preceptor, and the reader taking Hartmann's place as the one needing interpretive assistance to make sense of the text's use of figurative language. Yet signs of Hartmann's earlier narrative equivocation are still evident, as Hartmann confesses to being of like mind to his interlocutor, having admitted that it seems impossible to him (and not only him, he adds) for hate and love to occupy one vessel. Having just himself inhabited this role of clueless reader in his earlier interchange with Lady

Love, we might wonder at the sincerity of his understanding, as, just as in the explanation of Iwein's heart in Laudine's body and vice versa, Hartmann seems rather strained in his explanation, like a parent trying to answer a child's questions about why the sky is blue without actually knowing the scientific answer. Or, perhaps, rather like a parent unable to find a good justification for an arbitrary decision in the face of the child's eminently logical reasoning. Even if this thing seems generally impossible, Hartmann seems to be saying as he concedes that even to him it seems so, in this particular case it did happen just this way—even if love and hate never before occupied a single vessel, in this particular vessel they did! One gets the sense of an author-narrator toeing the party line of the story.

But of course, it is important to clarify that these remarks about the author-narrator's lack of understanding are comments on a figure who is as much the object of representation in the text as any of the Arthurian characters—not to be confused with the real, historical person of Hartmann von Aue. The juxtaposition of this passage and the artistry and artifice of the dialogue in which Hartmann is the one asking the questions and *vrou Minne*, a poetic device of Hartmann's own narrative fashioning, is answering them, so as to guide the composition and progression of the narrative in which she appears as a figure, makes that amply clear. Both of these dialogues signal loudly to us the text's interest in portraying its own language, and Hartmann as producer of that language, as not just means but also object of representation.

Both dialogues, too, offer intriguing suggestions of how the reader might interpret the figure of Hartmann as narrator and as adaptor. We noted earlier that in the second dialogue, Hartmann is able to take on narratorial authority as he explains the text's figurative language to his reader. And though it seems his understanding wavers, we do see that he seems to have acquired a newfound proficiency, if not quite mastery, in wielding figurative language. Perhaps he has realized that the solution to the problem of his inability to reconcile literal and figurative meanings is allegory:

si hât aber underslagen
ein want, als ich iu wil sagen,
daz haz der minne niene weiz.
si tæte im anders also heiz
daz nâch schanden der haz
müese rumen daz vaz;
unde rûmet ez doch vroun Minnen,
wirt er ir bî im inne.
diu unkunde was diu want
diu ir herze underbant (vv. 7047-56)

[But a wall separated them, as I will tell you, so that hate did not know about love. Otherwise love would have made life so miserable for hate that hate would have had to abandon the vessel in disgrace. And if hate finds Lady Love close by inside the vessel, he will leave in any case. Ignorance was the wall that divided their hearts....]

This allegorical representation of ignorance is how Hartmann makes sense of the problem of the co-existence of love and hate. The Hartmann who earlier in the romance could not make sense of

two people could exchange hearts, how a heart could reside outside a body, now is at least able to take a literal fact of the heart's anatomy and use it as a platform to develop figurative meaning, in order to make sense of a seemingly contradictory claim he is tasked with defending.

“A wall, as I will tell you”—as if in direct response to the questioning reader. We have seen how the intrusion of the first person often serves as a signal of reaction to the “story,” and implicitly, Chrétien. Hartmann is showing that his text is necessarily different from Chrétien's—because he is *not* Chrétien—and exploring the stakes of that difference, to and for an audience that doesn't necessarily know the text from which Hartmann is distinguishing himself. Thus, for example, a reader may not recognize that Hartmann's misogynistic remark about women and reason is a parroted line from Chrétien, as discussed above; but Hartmann's intervention, using the first-person voice to foreground his individual and idiosyncratic departure from the aphorism he has just reproduced, signals to the reader that Hartmann is reacting to and reinterpreting the received wisdom of the “story” in a way that is particular to this narrative persona. In many of the examples we examined from earlier in the romance, it is clear that Hartmann's first-person reactions demonstrate a lack of true understanding of the very material he is adapting—nowhere underscored more starkly than in Hartmann's dialogue with *vrou Minne*. Rather than a narrative gambit that relies on the reader's spotting discrepancies between what the author-narrator says and what the text does, and recognizing the ways in which these discrepancies belie conventional claims and representations, Hartmann uses the device of the first-person narratorial intervention to invite the reader to consider the adaptor's own positionality and language. Whereas before, the first-person voice foregrounded the author-narrator's clumsiness and inability to grasp the figurative meaning and true significance of the language used to construct the romance narrative, here, in Hartmann's allegory of *minne* and *haz*, and in the exchange with the interrogating reader that proceeds it, we see the first-person voice underscoring its own explanatory and narratorial capabilities.

This more capable narratorial voice leaves room for the development of subtler, more complex reactions to and reworkings of Chrétien. A particularly compelling example is what Hartmann makes of the logic of economy that undergirds *Yvain*, mostly implicitly, but sometimes exploding to the surface of the text—for example, in the episode at the castle of Pesme Aventure, where three hundred impoverished maidens kept in captivity and forced to labor in embroidery and textiles for the profit of the king, receiving a meager wage that represents a fraction of the value of the goods they produce.²⁸ This detail, which has fascinated readers and scholars of Chrétien, disappears completely in Hartmann. Nevertheless, as we perhaps have come to expect from Hartmann, he does not efface this unusual, conspicuous source of productive tension in Chrétien without allowing elements of the Pesme Aventure episode's problematization of the romance's generic conventions to bleed back into his adaptation. Hartmann picks up on the economic and transactional undercurrent of romance

²⁸ See, for example, the discussion of the maidens' captivity analyzed as “what Marxist economic theory calls the abduction of surplus value from the proletariat” in Peter Haidu, “The Hermit's Pottage: Deconstruction and History in *Yvain*,” *Romanic Review* 74 (1983): 1-15; in the context of a broader exploration of logic of economy that undergirds the romance, see Eugene Vance, “Chrétien's *Yvain* and the Ideologies of Change and Exchange,” *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): 42-62.

courtliness and chivalry, which emerges in *Iwein* not as an unusual episode or event in the story, but rather, in the language of the characters themselves and especially in the poetic language of the author-narrator. For instance, in the lengthy excursus describing the scene of combat between Gawein and the disguised Iwein, Hartmann narrates the events of their fight through an allegory of financial exchange: “[S]wer gerne gilet, daz ist guot: / wan hât er borgens muot, / sô mag er wol borgen” [It is a good idea to repay loans promptly, because when one wants to borrow again, he can easily do so] (vv. 7147-49).

If the logic of this allegory doesn’t seem to quite hold up under scrutiny (Hartmann describes the delivery of physical blows as loans, to be repaid), figurative and literal meanings nevertheless intersect in thematically important ways here. The relation between courtliness and economy is suggested earlier (in *Yvain*, but more heavily-handedly in *Iwein*) and here stated outright, albeit in a roundabout way, as Hartmann describes the combatants as moneylenders profiting from their combat:

si wâren zwêne mære
 vil karge wehselære,
 si entlihen ûz ir varnde guot
 ûf einen seltsænen muot.
 unde nâmen dâ wuocher an
 sam zwêne werbende man,
 si pflâgen zir gewinne
 harte vremder sinne.
 Dehein koufman het ir site,
 Ern verdürbe dâ mite:
 Dâ wurden si rîche abe.
 si entlihen niemen ir habe,
 in enwære leit, galt er in. (vv. 7189-7201)

[The two, well known as clever moneylenders, made loans from their stock in trade in a strange way. They made a profit from it, like two entrepreneurs. Their orientation to gain was very odd. If any merchant had used their method, it would have ruined him. But these two grew rich from it. They made loans, all right, but repayment would have distressed him.]

If, again, the logic of the allegory seems thin here—and in fact, the text itself highlights the places where the allegory breaks down—the statement makes more sense in a different context, one in which Hartmann is picking up the threads of Chrétien’s probing at the economic relations undergirding courtliness and chivalry. In *Yvain*, we have love (between Yvain and Laudine) described through the language of combat, and combat (between Yvain and Gauvain) described through language of love. Hartmann adapts these into his own narrative, and also gives us combat and chivalric adventure described through the language of economy. In the play of figurative and literal meanings that Hartmann sets up, he leads us back in his own meandering way to phenomenon of the language of love used to disguise the logic of economy, which we noted in Chrétien from the start and saw attenuated and denatured in Hartmann, and to courtly or

chivalric ideology used to disguise the logic of economy and economic exploitation, which emerges in sharp relief in the Pesme Aventure episode, omitted in Hartmann.

Hartmann shows his poetic prowess not in his authorial persona's increasingly more confident grasp on allegory, no longer relying on *vrou Minne* for guidance and correction, but rather, in his ability to play between different levels of figurative and literal meaning. While the first-person author-narrator constructs a mostly sound, if not totally convincing allegorical narrative in order to describe Gawein and Iwein's combat, the true thematic significance of this passage emerges not in the author-narrator's newfound capacity to use figurative language, but rather, the way in which this figurative language is able to produce other meanings. Seemingly inadvertently and unwittingly on the part of the authorial persona, the terms of the allegory of economy leave themselves open to the suggestion of alternate interpretations that are somehow more convincing and thematically fitting, as encapsulated by this statement about Iwein's and Gawein's willingness to lend their chivalric abilities to others' causes:

ir wehsel was sô bereit
daze r nie wart verseit
manne noch wibe
sine wehselten mi dem lîbe
arbeit umbe êre. (vv. 7209-13)

[Their banking services were so readily available that they never turned down anyone's proposal for them to exchange their risky labor for fame and honor.]

The ostensibly purely figurative language of the allegory of Gawein and Iwein's combat becomes something else, gesturing to the logic of economic exchange that Hartmann mutes when he excises the details of the Pesme Aventure episode, but which he amplifies in such conspicuous fashion here. With his habitual signals to the reader, Hartmann overtly foregrounds his compensation for what is lost in translation from Chrétien by reintroducing this thematic on the extradiegetic narrative level. Even to a reader unfamiliar with the subtleties and details of Chrétien's text, Hartmann's use of his habitual narratorial signals—the intrusion of the first-person voice, the device of the author-narrator's dialogue with another party, the extended length and slight clumsiness of the excursus—all draw attention to the work of adaption and innovation that is taking place here, and which perhaps eclipses the events of the plot in importance.

The way in which Hartmann plays with polysemy and multi-referentiality across different narrative levels might remind us of some of the techniques that the French texts from the previous chapter use to respond to the generic conventions of a previous generation of romance: the personification allegory in the first-person interventions of *Silence*, or the metanarrative of covering and uncovering in *Amadas*. We see that in spite of significant differences between Hartmann's Middle High German adaptation and Chrétien's original, and between *Iwein* and the work of the French romancers who followed in Chrétien's footsteps, Hartmann employs many of the same strategies that his French counterparts use—or else, manages to find a different way of achieving similar thematic or rhetorical effects. Hartmann's *Iwein* illustrates the importance of reading difference between languages and traditions, without allowing that difference to pre-determine conclusions about individual texts or to suppress recognition and analysis of rhetorical

and narrative complexities in adapted or translated texts. Direct imitation is not the only way in which one text can translate another. Hartmann's adaptation of Chrétien's text shows how Hartmann runs up against the narrative conventions of French romance and Chrétien's own particular style of rhetorical play, and how Hartmann reworks these in a way that might make their effects more readily accessible to an uninitiated audience, or else, and perhaps even at the same time, draw attention to them through their strategic and conspicuous undoing and omission—a kind of compensation for translation loss, and evidence for a genre's conventions, forms, and readerly expectations beyond that of the texts of that genre itself.

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