

# Jean De Meun's Narrative Stylistics and Readership

Lee Dongchoon

## [Abstract]

Unlike a popular narrative, meanings in Jean de Meun's narratives cannot be pursued by simply following the omniscient narrator's guideline. His narrator intends to keep distance between himself and his audience rather than a perfect accord in understanding a tale or figuring out the authorial meaning. It is through the various narrative devices that Jean de Meun frustrates his audience from accepting the narrator's words and attitudes at face value. By calling his narrator's trustworthiness into question, he offers his audience the chance to rely on the judicious and thoughtful independence of the mind in sorting out the complex messages within a narrative. The effect of distancing between the narrator and the audience through the storytelling devices is to make it possible for them to exert their own imagination and intelligence in grasping the meaning. In short, the audience with keen perception and intelligence are required actively to mine for meaning or decide upon the truth or authenticity among multiple voices. Reading Jean de Meun demands of the audience an act of will.

**Key Words:** Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, Rhetorical Devices, Narratology, Readership

Although it might be difficult to demonstrate the full extent of Ovid's influence on Jean de Meun, we can see the glimpses of Ovid in Jean de Meun's work, *Le Roman de la Rose* on a variety of levels. First, Jean de Meun's debt to Ovid is immense in the former's borrowings of such Ovidian myths as the story of Venus and Adonis (15645-737) and the Pygmalion story (20787-21184).<sup>1)</sup> In fact, the critics have been wrestling over how and why Jean de Meun adapted the Ovidian myths in his tale.<sup>2)</sup> Besides Ovid's role as a provider of storytelling materials for the French raconteur, Ovid's influence on Jean de Meun on the level of narrative technique is found in Jean de Meun's work as well. The stylistic features--the non-judgmental position of the poet-narrator, the psychological depth of the character, the creation of the dialogic craftsmanship, and the structural pattern of dilation and delay--in Ovid's works are discovered in Jean de Meun's narrative.

Moreover, Jean de Meun's intention of manipulating these stylistic devices, as in Ovid's works, does not aim at the reader's naive understanding of the narrative, but at the reader's critical response to it. When we consider Ovid's pivotal role as a provider of the classical stories as well as of the narrative styles to Chaucer, Jean de Meun's close affinity with Ovid in terms of the source-material and the narrative method indicates that Jean's narrative strategies and his intention for the audience in *Le Roman de la Rose* are closely akin to those of Chaucer in his tales. Indeed, Jean's *Roman de la Rose*, as F. N. Robinson points out, "probably exerted on Chaucer a more lasting and more important influence than any other work in the vernacular literature of either France or England."<sup>3)</sup> The main concern in my discussion of French storyteller's work lies in revealing his stylistic affinities and their effects upon the audience.

## I. Psychological Interiority of Characters

Guillaume de Lorris starts *Le Roman de la Rose* by establishing the narrative situation and characterizing it about to unfold (21-44). Here, Guillaume defines his work as a “romance” which deals with an “art of love”: “Et se nule ne nus demande/comant je veil que li romanz/soit apelez que je comanz,/ce est li *Romanz de la Rose*, ou l’art d’Amors est tote enclose” (33-8) [And if anyone asks what I wish the romance to be called, which I begin here, it is the Romance of the Rose, in which the whole art of love is contained] (31). The former part of *Le Roman de la Rose* written by Guillaume might be characterized as a romance in terms of the theme and the structure. But Jean de Meun, continuing Guillaume’s unfinished work, overturns romance conventions in countless ways. Though Jean de Meun understands Guillaume’s purpose and takes his theme of courtly love romance, Jean de Meun’s narrative stylistics and his intention for the audience is opposed to Guillaume’s. Jean de Meun infuses the Ovidian narrative strategies with Guillaume’s mold of courtly romance and creates the effects which we cannot expect from Guillaume’s narrative. Among the Ovidian narrative techniques in Jean’s narrative, the treatment of the psychological interiority of the character makes the most obvious difference between Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun.

Jean de Meun invests Amanz with some of the psychological complexity which is not observed in Guillaume’s portrayal of Amanz. Since Jean de Meun’s Amanz is somewhat limited by the nature of allegory, we cannot see the emotional depth and the individuated feelings we have seen in such Ovidian heroines as Medea, Myrrha, and Atalanta. However, compared with Guillaume’s treatment of Amanz, Jean de Meun’s Amanz is presented as a more humanlike character in terms of the visualization of his warring interiority. Unlike Guillaume’s Amanz whose

psychological state is consistently presented from start to finish, Jean de Meun's is marked by the psychological struggle between reason and passion. Jean de Meun's modification of the figure of Amanz from Guillaume's iconic representation of a certain human type into a figure of psychological complications brings the effect of making the allegorical figure of Amanz more humanlike and down-to-earth, though he is far from being the flesh-and-blooded type of characters, like Criseyde and the Wife of Bath, with the emotional depth and sophisticated acts.

Furthermore, rather than characterizing Amanz directly through his statements, Jean de Meun builds more ambivalence into the character of Amanz through Amanz's lament and debate with Reson. Amanz's complaint consists of two contrary points of view, and his psychological turmoil results from the conflict between his arguments against love and in favor of it. Amanz's lament (4029-190) begins with his bitter complaints of Esperance's deceits. Amanz, left outside the castle of Jalousie, despairs at the loss of the Rose brought on by his kiss and regrets his naive trust in Esperance:

Mains en deciet par sa promesse,  
 qu'el promest tel chose souvent  
 dom el ne tendra ja couvent;  
 .....  
 L'en ne s'en set a coi tenir,  
 qu'el ne set qu'est a avenir.  
 Por ce est fors qui trop s'an aprime; (4044-46; 4051-53)

[With her promise, she deceives many of love, for she often makes promises which she will never keep.... No one knows what to hold to since he doesn't know what will happen, and thus he who draws too near to Hope is a fool (91)<sup>4)</sup>

Following Amanz's complaints about Esperance comes Amanz's numbering of enemies surrounding him: Dangier, Poor, Honte, Jalousie, and Malebouche. Furthermore, Amanz realizes that all gifts given to him by the God of Love are lost and even Bel Acueil is held in the prison. Once again, he falls into despair and chides himself as prey to "folly." Finally, Amanz's despair and woe in his service to the God of Love drives him to remind himself of Reson, who has earlier warned him of the troubles in the amorous quest (4117-20). From this moment on, Amanz's psychological conflict between his amorous quest and reason begins, and he eventually changes his mind against love:

Droit ot Reson de moi blasmer  
quant onques m'entremis d'amer.  
Trop griés maus m'en convient sentir;  
je m'en veill, ce croi, repentir. (4121-24)

[Reason was right to blame me for ever setting out to love. It is fitting that  
I should feel these burdensome woes, and, believe me, I want to repent (92)]

Right after the lines quoted above, however, Amanz's mind through his internal debate changes again in favor of the God of Love (4125-44). Amanz admits that the fault lies certainly in himself, and he decides to persevere in his amorous quest.

## II. The Role of Narrator

Following Amanz's internal debates between the pros and the cons of love, Amanz enters into a lengthy debate with Reson (4221-28), which functions as an

extension of his own interiority. Besides, it is through the device of the Ovidian narrator in Reson's discourse to Amanz that Jean de Meun makes the reader cast a doubt on Reson's authority and on his revelation of the concept of love. More precisely, like Ovid and Chaucer, Jean de Meun does not bestow the authorial position on any figure, and, furthermore, does not impose a single viewpoint on any argument or definition. Accordingly, no characters, including Reson, in his poem can be said to be a mouthpiece of Jean de Meun's own conception of perfect *amor*. As Michael Cherniss has observed, various opinions or views on the concept of *amor* are put forward by figures, but no one view is wholly adequate or is an embodiment of Jean de Meun's idea of love (Cherniss 228). To put this in Bakhtinian terms, Jean de Meun's "ultimate semantic authority" is to be found in the whole through the "hidden polemic" of the characters, but may not be expressed by any character. Jean de Meun lets the innumerable voices issue from the whole vast wall of Deduit's garden and expects the reader to sort out the multiple voices for himself.

The critics note the similarity between Amanz's debate with Reson and the discussions both of the narrator and Lady Philosophy in Boethius' *De consolacione philosophiae* and of the narrator and Natura in Alan de Lille's *De planctu naturae*.<sup>5)</sup> But the striking difference between them resides in the position of the counseling figure. While the figures of Lady Philosophy and of Natura are omniscient and authorial, the extent of Reson's authority in *Le Roman de la Rose* is considerably ambiguous, and Reson is an inadequate instructor on the subject of *amor*. In order to instruct Amanz and describe the nature of love to him first, Reson uses a long list of oxymorons which elucidate its essentially contradictory nature:

c'est Caribdis la perilleuse,  
desagraable et gracieuse;  
c'est langueur toute santeïve,

c'est santé toute maladive;  
 c'est fain saoule en habondance,  
 c'est covoitouse souffisance;  
 .....  
 c'est faus deliz, c'est tristeur liee,  
 c'est leesce la courrouciee;  
 douz mal, douceur malicieuse, (4273-78; 4281-83)

[It is the treacherous Charybdis, repellent but attractive. It is a healthful languor and diseased health, a hunger satiated in the midst of abundance, a sufficiency always covetous... False delight, joyous sorrow, enraged happiness, sweet ill, malicious sweetness (94-5)]

So confused is Amanz by Reson's problematic definition of love through the oxymoronic statements that he requests her to tell him a precise definition of love once again: "prier vos veill dou defenir,/si qu'il m'en puist mieuz sovenir" (4343-44) [I beg you to define it in such a way that I may better remember it] (95). At this time, Reson explains to Amanz love in terms of a dichotomy between the carnal and the procreative. She further argues that love corrupts nature by perverting the procreative sexual act into a lustful one:

...venanz a genz par ardeur nee  
 de vision desordenee,  
 pour acoler et pour besier  
 pour els chamelment aesier.  
 Amant autre chose n'entant,  
 ainz s'art et se delite en tant.  
 De fruit avoir ne fet il force,  
 au deliter sanz plus s'esforce. (4351-58)

[(Love) arises among people from the burning desire, born of disordinate glances, to embrace and kiss each other and to have the solace of one another's body. A lover so burns and is so enraptured that he thinks of nothing else; he takes no account of bearing fruit, but strives only for delight (96)]

Through Reson's definition of love, Jean de Meun might parody or condemn Amanz's erotic quest. But just because Jean de Meun creates a burlesque of the medieval lover and of his blind passion for *amor*, we cannot make the abrupt judgment that Jean de Meun is condemning outright sexual love which does not directly result in "bearing fruit." In short, Reson's rationalism against Amanz's eroticism is not an authoritative, valid definition of *amor*. That this is merely Reson's self-stylized voice on *amor* is revealed in Jean de Meun's condemnatory tone in describing the Myrrha tale.

As I shall discuss in detail later, Jean de Meun, according to the mythical genealogy, places the Myrrha tale next to the Pygmalion. It is told that the union of Pygmalion and his wife results in "bearing the fruit [Cinyras]." But the birth of Cinyras, eventually, leads to the incestuous relationship between him and his daughter, Myrrha; the offspring of this incestuous union is Adonis whose relationship with Venus also ends tragically. In his re-telling of the Ovidian myths, Jean de Meun's intention depends not on emphasizing Pygmalion's procreation of offspring, but on parodying the outcome of Amanz's erotic pilgrimage, as implied in the tragic result of the union between Pygmalion and his wife. When we consider Jean de Meun's ironic recasting of Pygmalion's "bearing fruit" and its fatal outcome, Reson's rational wisdom on love based on the generation of species is not Jean de Meun's authorial voice on *amor*, but merely an alternative to Amanz's eroticism.

Reson simply presents his self-styled authority on *amor*, whose opinion conflicts with Amanz's. Furthermore, although Reson can be Amanz's counterpart to contradict

the latter's skirt-chasing through a rational alternative to Amanz's erotic love, she cannot be a good counselor to persuade Amanz to pursue a more virtuous kind of love, because she does not understand irrational passion. Winthrop Wetherbee draws attention to the very problem which Reson faces. According to him, in her ignorance of human emotions, Reson within her own ideas on amor does not see the self-contradiction between the renunciation of an erotic passion and the necessity of procreation in obedience to Nature (271-72).

### III. Rhetorical Devices and Their Effects

#### 1. Opposition and Juxtaposition

As we have discussed above, if Jean de Meun expects the reader to view even his most authoritative figure, Reason, and her discourse on amor within a ironic context or simply as a counter-opinion against Amanz's eroticism, where is Jean de Meun's genuine voice on amor? and how does he voice it? Like the polyphonic storytellers, such as Ovid and Chaucer, Jean de Meun does not directly put forward his own views on amor, but he draws all the characters into the arena of polemic and lets them profess whatever they know on the subject. Furthermore, Jean de Meun arranges the arguments or definitions on *amor* which are put forward by the figures through the device of opposition. Reson's rational wisdom of age contrasts with Amanz's irrationality of youth (4400-4598), and true friendship with its opposite (4655-4866). Ami presents the contrast between the erotic life of the Golden Age and that of his own time through the mouthpiece of the Jealous Husband (8323-9648). Faux Semblant through his own confession embodies an opposition between his

appearance and reality (10973-11984).

In particular, La Vieille's authority and her endorsement of Free Love, as in the case of Ami, are opposed to the thoughts held by the poet-narrator, Jean de Meun (12706-14516). In addition, Jean de Meun does not allow his other authoritative figure, Nature, to present her own ideas straightforwardly from the vantage point of authority. As Michael Cherniss points out, Jean de Meun introduces Nature by contrasting her works with the inferior products of Art (15983-16118). Following the narrative pattern of opposition, Nature juxtaposes "the decorous natural behavior of all realms of the created world" with "the unnatural conduct of man" in her confession (Cherniss 235). Jean de Meun's rhetorical device of opposition in order to define amor culminates in Genius's final evaluation of Dedit's garden by contrast to its heavenly part of the Lamb (19839-20667).

Jean de Meun's narrative style of presenting the theme through the opposites functions to create the multiplicity of voice and the plurality of theme and to train a reader to grope for meaning from various sides. To put this another way, for Jean de Meun, like Chaucer, meaning or truth is not exposed to a reader straightforwardly, but the reader should grope through the veil of the outer story for its kernel. Interestingly, Jean de Meun's theory of how to approach his work is echoed in Pandarus' proverbial wisdom in *Troilus and Cryseyde*--"By his contrarie is every thyng declared" (Bk I. 637). Jean de Meun's theoretical statement about the method of defining the theme of his work is revealed ironically through Amanz, who is unaware of the implications of his statement:

Ainsinc va des contreres choses,  
les unes sunt des autres gloses,  
et qui l'une an veust defenir,  
de l'autre li doit souvenir,

ou ja, par nule antacion,  
n'i metra diffinicion;  
car qui des. II. n'a connoissance,  
ja n'i connoistra differance,  
sans quoi ne peut venir en place  
diffinicion que l'an face. (21543-52)

[Thus things go by contraries; one is the gloss of the other. If one wants to define one of the pair, he must remember the other, or he will never, by any intention, assign a definition to it; for he who has no understanding of the two will never understand the difference between them, and without this difference no definition that one may make can come to anything (351)]

Though we, like the befuddled Amanz, were somewhat bewildered by Reson's elusive way of defining *amor* through the oxymoronic statements, Reson's description of *amor* in its opposites might be what Jean de Meun really intended us to know. In short, Jean de Meun guides us to learn the true meaning of *amor* by what it is not. In Jean de Meun's portion of *Le Roman de la Rose*, the true love which he supports is neither the eroticism of Amanz, nor the rationalism of Reson, nor the love of Nature. Nothing appears final and sacred. Rosemond Tuve epitomizes well this feature of Jean's narrative style as follows: "we find ourselves building a definition for love by negatives, as we progress through the ironic presentation of unrelieved inadequacies and deceptions and rationalizations and errors" (262).

## 2. Digressions: Irony and Ambiguity

In order to effect "building a definition for love by negatives," Jean de Meun repeatedly employs Ovidian narrative strategy. In La Vieille's speech, Jean de Meun,

following Ovid's structural mannerism, constructs the elaborate series of exempla as a set of sub-digressions within the Mars/Venus free love digression so as not to elaborate on Amanz's erotic pursuit for the Rose, but to underscore it. It is through the poetic technique of irony that Jean de Meun produces the Bakhtinian dialogic craftsmanship. His innovative use of the Ovidian storytelling method for creating the satirical effect coincides with Chaucer's aim of inserting various digressions for countering the Chaucerian storyteller's seemingly authorial voice. La Vieille as a go-between and storyteller enters Jean de Meun's section of the poem after Faux Semblant has cut out Malebouche's tongue. La Vieille, afraid of Malebouche, hesitates to accept the offerings of Amanz's aides as a reward for her role. The role of La Vieille is to prepare Bel Acueil for Amanz's visit and to tempt her into accepting the chaplet that Amanz is sending to her. Feeling relieved to be told of the incapacity of Malebouche, the duenna has become a go-between for Amanz, and eventually convinces Bel Acueil and makes her accept Amanz and his love. After fulfilling her role as a go-between, her attitude changes abruptly into an authoritative teacher who tells the story of her life and indoctrinates the art of love to Bel Acueil. Toward the end of her prolonged lecture, La Vieille begins to tell the story of Vulcan, Venus, and Mars as the frame-exemplum to justify her argument that free love is virtuous and even Nature urges it.

Before discussing Jean de Meun's intention of inserting a series of digressions into her personal history, it will be useful to see how he elaborately constructs La Vieille's story. La Vieille exhorts her student, Bel Acueil, to be as deceitful as man and enumerates a list of specific devices to win man's love. And then her story digresses into the tale of Mars' adultery with Venus to emphasize her theme of free love. In the midst of telling the myth of Venus/Mars/Vulcan, the sub-digressions consisting of a series of exempla occur for several hundred lines, and then La Vieille

returns to the myth and completes her speech. The outline of her speech can be drawn as follows:

The Beginning: La Vieille's personal history and lecture on how to win man's love begins (ll. 12731-13804).

*The First Digression:* Venus/Mars/Vulcan Story (ll. 13805-14156)

*The Second Digression* [sub-digressions within the first digression]

--exposition on women's rights to free love in general

--bird in cage

--monk in cloister

--fish in net

--the man who takes vows

--cat/mouse

--colt

--other animals seeking mates

--exposition on women's rights to free love in general

*Returning to Venus/Mars story and conclusion*

The Conclusion: La Vieille's personal history and lecture end (ll. 14157-516).

Here we can see how Jean de Meun, as in Ovid's tale of Orpheus and Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, pays attention to the narrative technique of *inuncturae dictionum* which was taught in twelfth-century French schools (Freeman 158-60). In particular,

the Wife of Bath's Prologue, as in La Vieille's autobiography, is structured so as to match a rose's floral dilation: beginning with the theme of "the woe that is in marriage," the Wife's discourse, through the digressions and the sub-digression, returns to the topic again. Above all, Jean's innovative use of this technique resides not only in amplifying or clarifying the surrounding context of a certain event, but in creating the effect of irony.<sup>6)</sup> It is through the manipulation of digressions that Jean de Meun separates the ideas advanced by La Vieille from his own ideas. Furthermore, Jean de Meun's digressions here, as do those in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Prologue and his other narratives, function to create the comic effect through the gap between the true meaning of the authoritative texts the narrator quotes and her misquotation or twisting of them for the defense of her argument. They, drawing our attention to the shallowness of the story-teller, La Vieille, and of her story, eventually help us to come to right judgment on the narrator's voice without the poet-narrator's explicit guidance.

First of all, the story of Mars and Venus that La Vieille quotes to endorse her theme of free love alerts the readers familiar with the conventional meaning of the story to compare her reading with the traditional one. That is, La Vieille's distortion of the traditional meaning of the story for her own poetic goal leads the reader to judge her words. The story of Mars' adultery with Venus had been conventionally glossed in the Middle Ages as warning against the metaphorical chains of illicit and irrational desire. Thus, La Vieille's urging of free love through the frame myth draws the reader to doubt her authority and her further arguments. Furthermore, Jean de Meun subverts La Vieille's position and her arguments through the narrative context of the story of Mars/Venus. As Thomas Hill has observed, La Vieille begins to digress on the exempla right after Mars and Venus are captured in Vulcan's net (Hill 114). While she discusses the freedom in love through the exempla and even until

she returns to the story of Mars and Venus again, the two adulterers are still caught in the net. La Vieille's string of exempla illuminating one's rights to enjoy love freely makes an incongruity with the enchained state of the two lovers, who have pursued their love without bondage. It is through the suspension of their love-making in the "chained" state that Jean provides the reader with humor and counters La Vieille's theme comically.

In addition to Jean's ingenuity of placing the frame myth within the larger context of La Vieille's story in order to create a jarring effect with her intention of endorsing the theme of free love, the sub-digressions within the frame myth also serve to show the inadequacy of La Vieille's arguments and the shallowness of her position. The first exempla, that of the bird in the cage, was borrowed from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (13940-66). As in the case of the story of Mars/Venus, Jean de Meun's intention lies in creating a contradictory effect through contrasting La Vieille's intention of endorsing the free love and the true meaning in Boethius' work. As Chauncey Wood points out, Boethius' point of referring a bird in the cage is opposed to La Vieille's allusion to it (Wood 338-40). What Boethius intends to tell through the image of a caged bird is that man, as a creature of the earth, naturally seeks the good. On the contrary, La Vieille, twisting the original meaning of her source material, deliberately uses the image as an exemplum to show that Nature urges promiscuity. As the image of the caged bird in Boethius' work is intended to show the natural desire of man to seek the good, the monk in the cloister is a person who, following God's orders, performs the virtuous life with his free will. In this regard, La Vieille's arguments through the parallels drawn from the successive exempla are inadequate and faulty. John Fleming also captures something incongruous in La Vieille's equation of a man with an animal and notes it as a "copybook example of *sophisma*." He further concludes that La Vieille's arguments in

her speech “demonstrably and comically faulty” (Fleming 182 & 184). In short, Jean de Meun’s elaborate structure and digressions in La Vieille’s story is not to second La Vieille’s theme of free love, but to subvert it.

As in La Vieille’s autobiography, Jean de Meun’s style of placing the digressions within a narrative in order to undermine or complicate the surface meaning of the plot occurs in the Venus and Adonis episode (15645-734). Similar to Chaucer’s technique of adding the non-narrative materials, especially the inset tales, into the narratives in order to create ambiguity or the bathetic effects toward the storyteller’s voice, Jean de Meun’s myth as a digression serves to play down the narrator’s general concern about Amanz’s erotic quest for the Rose. The episode of Venus and Adonis in Jean de Meun’s narrative is placed in between the two parts of Amors’s abortive attempt to infiltrate Jealousy’s castle. After Amors and his aides are repulsed, Amors intervenes to ask his aides to call for Venus’ help. Right after this scene, Jean de Meun places a digression describing Venus and her dallying with Adonis and her counsel to him. On her returning, Venus learns that Amors needs her help, and she rushes off in aid of her son. Considering Jean de Meun’s digression within a larger context, we can get the answer to the question why Jean de Meun has placed this tragic myth about “loss” at this point. Jean de Meun makes the reader associate the myth of Venus/Adonis with the conventional quality of tragedy which results from Venus’ failure in counseling Adonis, and guides the reader’s imagination to connect the lack of Venus’ power with Amors’s penultimate battle for the Rose. If Venus, the goddess of love, fails in love, who can succeed? Through his adding of the myth which is incongruent to the larger context of the plot, Jean de Meun casts ambivalence on Amanz’s erotic quest for the Rose and even satirizes it.

In spite of our suspicion of Amanz’s success in attaining the Rose with the help of Venus, however, Amanz accomplishes it at the end of the *Roman*. But although

Amanz apparently enjoys the pleasure with the Rose after his success, the final part of the *Roman* is not entirely straightforward in Jean de Meun's purpose. As in the example of the story of Venus/Adonis as a digression, both the tale of Pygmalion and the tale of Cinyras and Myrrha function to burlesque the character of Amanz and his pursuit of the Rose. Not only the tale of Cinyras and Myrrha that is negatively associated with an incestuous desire and its tragic outcome, but the story of Pygmalion, which had been conventionally glossed in the Middle Ages as an example of the artificial and adulterous love, is placed on the way to Amanz's erotic pilgrimage to the Rose. Rather than directly revealing the incongruity or the ambivalence between the conventional qualities of the myth and Amanz's pursuit for the Rose, Jean de Meun expects the reader to find the ironic tone for himself and to understand his intention of burlesquing Amanz's anxieties before, as Pygmalion does, and after attaining his goal, as implied in the myth of Cinyras and Myrrha.

In addition to the narrative technique of a digression, the juxtaposition of the serious with the comic scenes in the myth of Pygmalion contributes to creating the bathetic effect for Amanz's love-quest. It is through the parallel between the state of Pygmalion and that of Amanz that Jean de Meun indirectly ridicules Amanz's love as folly and idolatry. As in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Jean de Meun turns the overall atmosphere of seriousness in the myth of Pygmalion into a somewhat delightful and comic one. In the scene of describing Pygmalion's laments, Jean de Meun consciously manipulates his laments with a light-hearted and ridiculous tone:

car quante je me veull aesier  
et d'acoler et de besier,  
je truis m'amie autresinc roide  
comme est uns pex, et si tres froide  
que, quant por lui besier I touche,

toute me refredist la bouche.  
Ha! trop ai parlé rudement.  
Merci, douce amie.... (20871-78)

[When I want to ease myself, to embrace and to kiss, I find my love as rigid as a post and so very cold that my mouth is chilled when I touch her to kiss her. Ah! I have spoken too rudely. I ask your grace, sweet friend... (341-2)]

Pygmalion's above laments might be heard somewhat sympathetically. But the deluded state of Pygmalion and his words to the lifeless object invite the reader to the unnatural and mocking atmosphere. Jean de Meun further invites the reader to the more humorous atmosphere through the scene of Pygmalion trying to impress his unresponsive lady as he "espingue et sautele et bale/et fiert du pié par mi la sale,/et la prant par la main et dance" (21023-25) [danced various dances, the espingue, the sautelle, and the balle, and kicked up his heels throughout the hall] (344). Jean de Meun's intention of placing the humorous scenes in the overall serious atmosphere of the myth is closely akin to that of Chaucer. Chaucer's placement of the comic scenes within the seriousness of the narrative, or, in a broader sense, his juxtaposition of different elements within a narrative serves as a bathetic function to reduce the story-teller's seemingly authoritative voice and theme. Similarly, Jean de Meun, through the comic and ridiculous scenes, intends to bring Pygmalion's negative strain in his love toward the lady in relief and to interrupt the reader's romantic involvement into Pygmalion's state. However, Jean's ultimate intention resides in parodying Amantz's way to his goal and his union with the Rose.

## IV. Conclusion

Like Ovid and Chaucer, Jean de Meun writes nonlinear stories that must be read as unfolding symbolic structures playing on the contrast between what is and what men see. Jean de Meun's story-telling style, in its convolution, contrasts with that of a popular story-teller. Unlike the popular narratives in which there is no gap between an "outer story" and an "inner meaning," what his tales say is not necessarily what they mean. Meaning, or his complex point of view, is wrapped and diffusely hidden within an ostensible story. As in a popular narrative, meaning cannot be found by simply following the omniscient narrator's guideline. While the storyteller of a popular narrative attempts to make some gestures in order to effect a physical proximity with the audience through various popular tale formulae--such as calling for a prayer or drinking, or similar devices for closing the recital--the story-teller of Jean de Meun's tale intends to put a distance between himself and his audience rather than a perfect accord in understanding a tale. To put this another way, Jean de Meun does not want his audience to accept his narrator's words and attitude at face value through the narrative devices that have been discussed so far. By calling his narrator's trustworthiness into question, Jean de Meun offers his audience the chance of relying on judicious and thoughtful independence of mind in sorting out the complex messages within a narrative. The effect of distancing between the narrator and the audience enables them to exert their own imagination and intelligence in grasping what Jean de Meun conveys to the audience. In a dialogic tale like Jean de Meun's, a narrator ceases to exercise monologic control over the meaning of the tale. Or despite a narrator's obvious control of his narrative, the poet persistently tries to shift responsibility for events in the narrative to the readers.

Jean de Meun, as does Ovid, avoids the burden of responsibility as a poet that he

should direct or indoctrinate his audience into taking the narrative told by his narrator at face value. In order to free himself from that burden, he employs the narrative strategies that we have studied so far and consistently awakens his audience from being involved in the dramatic illusion of the narrative. That is, it is through the narrative techniques that Jean de Meun creates the gap between what his narrator says and what Jean de Meun himself intends and demands a reader's subjective and critical role in filling in the gap. Or they are required to recognize gaps left by a narrator and to treat cautiously any "filling" proposed by him. In short, reading Jean de Meun's tales demands of readers an act of will.

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#### Notes

- 1) Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1965-70), 3 vols. Translation by Charles Dahlberg, *The Romance of the Rose* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972). All subsequent citations will be from the French text.
- 2) Beginning with the pioneering work of Ernest Langlois, *Origines et sources du "Roman de la Rose"* (Paris: Thorin, 1891), 119-21 and 181-85; see also F. W. A. George, "Jean de Meun and the Myth of the Golden Age in the Classical Tradition" in *French Literature: Essays* presented to R. C. Knight by Colleagues, Pupils and Friends, ed. H.T. Barnwell, et al (Edinburgh: Authors, 1977), 31-9; Kevin Brownlee, "Orpheus' Song Re-sung: Jean de Meun's Reworking of Metamorphoses X," *Romance Philology* 36 (1982): 201-9; Eric M. Steinle, "Versions of Authority in the *Roman de la Rose*: Remarks on the Use of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun," *Mediaevalia* 13 (1987): 189-206.
- 3) F. N. Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 564. All subsequent citations concerning Chaucer's works will be from this text.
- 4) *Le Roman de la Rose* edited by Félix Lecoy (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1965-70). Quotations of *Le Roman de la Rose* are from this edition; modern translations of *Le Roman de a Rose* are from Charles Dahlberg's *The Romance of the Rose* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972).
- 5) See John Fleming, *Reason and the Lover* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 54-7; Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979), 85;

Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Late Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), 125.

- 6) There exists a broad spectrum of interpretations on La Vieille's speech on free love. But Lionel Friedman and John Fleming are the representative critics who interpret La Vieille's speech as irony; Lionel J. Friedman, "'Jean de Meun,' 'Antifeminism,' and 'Bourgeois Realism,'" *Modern Philology* 57 (1959-60): 13-23; John V. Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969), 184. On the problems of irony in general, see Charles Dahlberg's introductory remarks to his translation of *The Romance of the Rose* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971), 5-10. In addition, for further interpretation of La Vieille's speech as an example of irony, see Thomas D. Hill, "La Vieille's Digression on Free Love: A Note on Rhetorical Structure in the *Romance of the Rose*," in *Romance Notes*, III (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1966-67), 113-15; Chauncey Wood, "La Vieille, Free Love and Boethius in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Revue et Littérature Comparée* 3 (1977): 336-42.

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## 국문초록

## 장 드 멩의 내러티브 스타일과 독자

이 동 춘 (대구대학교)

장 드 멩의 내러티브에서 의미는 전지적 위치에 있는 화자가 이끄는 방향으로 독자가 단순히 따라가는 것으로는 파악될 수 없다. 장 드 멩의 내러티브의 화자는 작가의 의미나 의도를 이해하는데 있어서 화자와 독자사이의 완벽한 일치보다는 둘 사이에 의도적으로 거리를 두려고 한다. 무엇보다, 다양한 내러티브 기법들을 동원하여 장 드 멩은 자신의 독자들이 이야기의 화자가 하는 말이나 화자의 태도를 있는 그대로 받아들이는 것을 원치 않는다. 예를 들어, 대립적(반대) 구조내지 스타일(opposites)을 통하여 장 드 멩은 하나가 아니라 다양한 주제들과 복합적인 목소리를 독자들에게 제시하여 독자들로 스스로 다양한 관점에서 의미를 탐색하도록 한다. 병렬내지 병치의 기법(juxtaposition) 역시 독자들이 화자가 전하는 이야기의 이른바 ‘극적 환상’에 빠져드는 것을 막는 동시에 화자가 하는 이야기를 액면 그대로 받아들이는 것을 방해하는 역할을 한다. 이밖에도 이야기 본질에서 벗어나는 듯 보이는 이야기 내용(digression)을 삽입하는 기법으로 아이러니 효과와 코믹한 분위기를 유발시켜 작가가 실제로 전달하려는 의미와 겉으로 나타나는 의미 사이에 차이를 만들기도 한다. 심지어 이야기 화자의 신뢰성에 의문을 제기해가며 장 드 멩은 독자들에게 내러티브 속에 있는 복잡한 메시지들을 찾아내는데 있어서 독자의 비판적인 사고와 판단력을 요구한다. 한마디로, 장 드 멩의 내러티브에서 작가가 전달하려는 의미 혹은 작가의 관점은 표면적으로 이야기 속에서 들어나기 보다는 여러 가지 방식으로 감추어져 있어 독자의 비판적인 사고 능력과 지적인 의지를 필요로 한다.

주제어 : 장 드 멩, 『장미의 로망스』, 수사학적 기법, 내러탈리지, 독자의 역할

논문접수일: 2016.5.16

심사완료일: 2016.6.16

게재 확정일: 2016.6.20

이름: 이동춘

소속: 대구대학교

주소: (38453) 경상북도 경산시 진량읍 대구대로 201 (내리리, 대구대학교 경산캠퍼스)

영어영문학과

이메일: dclee@taegu.ac.kr

