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## AN ALLEGORICAL MIRROR: THE POOL OF NARCISSUS IN GUILLAUME DE LORRIS' ROMANCE OF THE ROSE

Borrowing from the allegorical tradition of dream narratives the figure of the *cheminement*, the *Romance of the Rose* stages an "I" who from the very beginning of the dream walks. This walk is no aimless wandering. The "I" in the dream (a *persona* to which I shall refer for the sake of convenience as the "Lover") is indeed beckoned, without his knowledge, toward the pool of Narcissus that the *Romance of the Rose* excises from the narrative to which it apparently belongs, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in order to graft it at the very core of its own oneiric space. While the Ovidian pool was the site of a deadly self-reflection, such is not its function in the *Romance of the Rose*. As he looks into the pool, the Lover discovers two crystals where the garden is reflected, as in a mirror. The crystalline mirror of the *Romance of the Rose* substitutes for the reflecting surface that the silvery water provided in Ovid's text. It becomes the *speculum mundi* where the Lover sees the entire garden reflected. But since the Lover has already "searched and seen" "*tot l'afere et tot l'estre*," "the entire condition and nature of the garden," when he comes upon the fountain:<sup>1</sup>

*Mes j'alai tant destre et senestre  
que j'oi tot l'afere et tot l'estre  
dou vergier cerchié et veu.  
[1415-17 - emphasis mine]*

(I wandered to right and to left until I had seen the whole garden and explored all its features. [p. 23])

Why should he see this "*estre*" one more time reflected in the pool?

As we shall see, the mirror of the pool does not provide a mere reflection of the garden. The pool takes on a new function, which has not so far been

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1. All references to the Old French text of the *Romance of the Rose* are to the line number of: Félix Lecoy, ed., *Le Roman de la Rose*, (Paris: Champion, 1974); all references to the English translation are to Frances Horgan, trans. *The Romance of the Rose*, (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1994).

sufficiently recognized: it becomes the site where the text reflects its own allegorical "vision." This self-reflection is critical in several respects for it implicitly calls into question the distinction between perception and allegory as well as the status of the lyric "I" as the source of the allegorical "vision" that the text claims to be.

Critics have proposed varied interpretations of the crystals that the *Romance of the Rose*, in a rather provocative move, grafts onto the Ovidian pool. For C.S. Lewis, they figure the poetic image of the lady's eyes; for others, they figure the lover's eyes, or the reflection of his own eyes in those of the lady.<sup>2</sup> Pursuing this line of investigation, more recent interpretations have read the crystals as an allegory for the speculum that the eye is supposed to be. According to medieval optics, the eye provides the reflective surface upon which the images of the world are received, reflected and imprinted. As to the part of the eye which reflects the shape, medieval optics will mostly localize it in the crystalline "humor;" that is, in the glass-like lens suspended in the watery substance which, according to Aristotle, makes up the eye. As Knoespel points out, the existence of the crystalline lens (that Galen called the crystalline humor) was known to the Latin West since the beginning of the 12th century, thanks to Hunain ibn Ishaq's *Liber de oculis*.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Liber de oculis*:<sup>4</sup>

The eye is composed of many different parts. Vision, however, arises from only one of these parts which is called the crystalline humor. The rest of the humors and small tissues exist only to aid the crystalline humor. [ . . . ] The crystalline humor is white and luminous. It is not completely round, however, because it is somewhat flat. It is situated in the middle of the eye. It is white and shiny so that it may quietly receive a variety of colors. With its white and shiny quality, it rapidly reflects colors just as we find in clear glass.

A receptacle of images, the fountain is, according to Knoespel, "a representation of the human eye,"<sup>5</sup> and more specifically, of the crystalline humor which

2. The crystals of the *Romance of the Rose* have given rise to a wide range of interpretations. Erich Köhler, Jean Frappier, and C. S. Lewis identify the crystals with the eyes of the lady. Another group of critics (Michelle A. Freeman and Jean Rychner) identify them with the Lover's eyes.

3. Knoespel notes that: "It was Hunain ibn Ishaq (d. 877), also known to the West as Johannitius, who first taught the Latin Middle Ages about the crystalline humor in a work known today as *The Ten Treatises on the Eye*. The work was known in the Middle Ages as the *Liber de oculis*, in a translation attributed to Constantinus Africanus at the end of the eleventh century." Kenneth J Knoespel, *Narcissus and the Invention of Personal History*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc, 1985) p.86.

4. Knoespel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 86.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

functions as the receptacle for color and form as well as the means by which they are conveyed to the optical nerve and brain:

Hunain's description of the eye's structure provides an important detail for our understanding of Guillaume's fountain, for it indicates that the crystals beneath the water, with their ability to receive color from the sun's rays, are most likely a physical allegory of the crystalline humor situated within the watery substance of the eye. The crystals' receptivity to color, their ability to order the visual imagery of the garden, and their inability to reflect the entire garden at once, point to the process of vision as understood at the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Knoespel suggests that the allegory could be extended to include all the innovations that the *Romance of the Rose* inserts within the Ovidian pool:

The bubbling source passing through the silvery gravel [ . . . ] may be a representation of the visual spirit issuing from the optic nerve and passing through vitreous and crystalline humors. [ . . . ] The two channels correspond to the two crystals and seem to be a representation of the optic nerves leading to the eyes.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that the *Romance of the Rose* "drowns" the reflection can also be accounted for in terms of the Aristotelian conception of vision as a reflection which takes place not *on* the eye but *in* the eye, and specifically within the crystalline humor:

Vision is possible not because the eye reflects external objects on its surface that may be seen by an external observer, but because objects are reflected within the perceiving eye. Guillaume's description of the reflective ability of the crystals must be seen in regard to this distinction. The image reflected by the crystals should be understood not as the images which rebound off the smooth surface of the eye, but as images which are reflected within the eye.<sup>8</sup>

While Knoespel reads the crystalline mirror of the *Romance of the Rose* as a physical allegory for the crystalline lens which reflects the shapes of the world, Giorgio Agamben inflects this allegorical reading toward the more imaginative

6. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

pole of vision. According to Agamben, the pool is an "allégorie de la psychophysiologie décrite par Averroès,"<sup>9</sup> a psycho-physiology of vision that he traces back primarily to Aristotle (his *De anima* in particular) with significant contributions from stoicism and neo-platonism. An allegory of the speculum that the eye is, the mirror of the *Romance of the Rose* would remember that Aristotle's psychology grants to the notion of phantasm "une fonction capitale sur laquelle devait s'exercer avec une vigueur particulière le travail d'exégèse du Moyen Age." As a result of this exegesis, the Middle Ages devise a "phantasmatology" that Agamben summarizes as follows:<sup>10</sup>

les objets sensibles impriment leur forme dans les sens; cette impression sensible, ou image, ou fantasma, (comme l'appellent de préférence les philosophes du Moyen Age, dans le sillage d'Aristote) est ensuite reçue par l'imagination, ou vertu imaginative, qui la conserve même en l'absence de l'objet qui l'a produite.

The motion or "passion" produced by sensation is transmitted to what Aristotle calls "*phantasia*," that is, "imagination," because it alone is capable of producing a "phantasm," an image, in the absence of the thing perceived. Unlike sensation, which receives but cannot retain, imagination retains the imprint of the image after sensation has ceased to act, as when, for instance, we close our eyes, dream or remember.<sup>11</sup> Avicenna and Averroes, two major contributors to medieval optics, remember this mnemonic quality of the phantasm.<sup>12</sup> For Avicenna, sensible experience receives the shapes that imprint them-

9. Agamben *Stanze* (Paris: Bourgois, 1977) Note 21 p. 139.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

11. Agamben refers to *De anima*, 428 a. As he points out, this conception of imagination is already embedded in Plato's *Philebus* [40 a]: "l'artiste qui dessine dans l'âme les images (eikonas) des choses est l'imagination (phantasia), et ces 'icônes' prennent un peu plus loin le nom de 'fantasmes' (phantasmata)."

12. Agamben calls our attention to this "fantasmatic" interpretation of memory both in Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscencia* where memory is defined as "the having of an image [phantasma] regarded as a copy of that of which it is an image" [451 a] (in *Aristotle's On Memory* trans. by Richard Sorabji [Providence: Brown University Press, 1972] p.52) and in Plato's *Theaetetus* where memory is compared to a wax surface: "We make impression upon this of everything we wish to remember among the things we have seen or heard or thought of ourselves; we hold the wax under our perceptions and thoughts and take a stamp from them, in the way in which we take the imprints of signet rings. Whatever is impressed upon the wax we remember and know so long as the image remains in the wax; whatever is obliterated or cannot be impressed, we forget and do not know." [191 d-e] *Theaetetus* in Plato's *Complete Works* ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1997) p. 212.

selves in the five senses; imagination retains that which sensible experience only perceived and keeps it, even after all sensible objects have withdrawn. As for Averroes, as soon as the "common sense" has seen the shape of the visible thing reflected on the crystalline humor of the eye which functions like a mirror, it transmits it to the "*vertu imaginative*," which receives it in a more spiritual fashion since it does not need "the presence of the outside object" in order to give "presence" to its form. According to Averroes, we cannot contemplate at the same time the phantasm produced by the imagination and the form of the object produced by sensation. We must see one or the other. Commenting on the fact that the protagonist can see in the crystal of the pool only one half of the garden at a time, Agamben interprets this split vision as an allegory for the double vision of sensation and imagination. As he bends over the crystalline mirror, the Lover of the *Romance of the Rose* would be looking not in the mirror of sensation, but in the mirror of imagination.

The crystalline mirror that the *Romance of the Rose* inserts in the Ovidian pool does appeal to the medieval conception of vision that both Knoespel and Agamben explore. It reminds us, first of all, that vision is not an immediate perception but a complex and indirect "speculation," since it is condemned to take place in the mirror, the "speculum" of the eye. The medieval conception of the eye as a mirror shatters any illusion of a direct, immediate vision that we may have entertained. We never look directly at the world; we always look at it in a mirror, and as a mirror-image. We never see the world itself; we only see the images and phantasms of the world reflected in our eyes.

While it can be read within the optical context that both Knoespel and Agamben outline, the crystalline mirror of the *Romance of the Rose* is nevertheless endowed with singular optical properties which cannot be accounted for in terms of pure physics. In the psychophysiology that Agamben describes, visual perception occurs in two distinct stages. First, we have the visual sensation which is described as the faithful reproduction of the object and second, the production of a phantasm which is described as the mere preservation of this reproduction. The speculum of the *Romance of the Rose* is not, however, a simple reproduction. As we shall see, it functions as a highly inventive apparatus which goes far beyond a simple allegory of perception to allegorize the mirror of allegory itself as well as the specific kind of vision that this mirror provides. Furthermore, this allegorical vision retroactively defines perception itself as thoroughly allegorical.

The source of the light that allows the dream to appear in the midst of a forgotten night, the sun suddenly rises in the middle of the text:

*Mes une chose vous dirai  
qu'a merveille, ce cuit, tendroiz  
maintenant que vos l'entendroiz.  
Quant li solaus, qui tot aguiete,  
ses rais en la fontaine giete  
et la clarte aval descent,*

*lors perent colors plus de cent  
ou cristal, qui par le soleil  
devient inde, jaune et vermeil.  
[1538-47]*

(And I shall tell you something that will, I think, seem marvelous to you when you hear it. When the all-seeing sun sends down its rays into the spring, and light descends into its depths, more than a hundred colours appear in the crystal, which turns blue and yellow and red in the sunlight. [p. 25])

As it falls into the pool, the sunlight accomplishes that which is presented as a true wonder, a "*merveille*." No sooner does it hit the crystalline mirror than it "makes a hundred colors *appear* in it." The solar refraction exemplifies the particular kind of power that the *Romance of the Rose* grants to its crystalline mirror. The miracle of a shapeless, colorless and therefore invisible sunlight refracting itself in a multitude of colors is meant to illustrate the "strength" of the mirror. The solar refraction staged in the *Romance of the Rose* could be said to summarize the medieval understanding of the generation of colors. For both Plato and Aristotle, colors proceed from light. While Plato in his *Timaeus* (67 c) defines colors as being born out of a kind of fire, Aristotle singles out what he calls the "diaphaneous" as their essential cause. Colorless and invisible, the diaphaneous is a pure *dynamis*, which takes on different colors as it traverses physical bodies.

The crystal which diffracts the sunlight into a profusion of colors is later compared to a mirror which "shows," without "*couverture*," the "colors" and "figures" of the world:

*Et por la chose feire entendre,  
un essample vos voil aprendre:  
ausi con li mireors montre  
les choses qui sont a l'encontre  
et i voit l'en sanz couverture  
et lor color et lor figure,  
tot autresi vos di por voir  
que li cristaus sanz decevoir  
tot l'estre dou vergier encuse  
a celui qui en l'eve muse;  
([1551-60])*

(To help you understand the phenomenon I shall give you an illustration. Just as things placed in front of a mirror are reflected in it, and their appearance and colour are seen quite plainly, exactly so, I assure you, does the crystal truly disclose the whole of the garden to him who gazes into the water. [p. 25.]

The repetition of the verb "*paroir*" implicitly links the mirror's capacity for "showing" the figures of the natural world to its refracting capacity. As the sunlight makes a hundred colors "appear" ("*lors perent colors plus de cent*"), so the garden "appears" on the surface of the crystal: "*pert tot a orne*" (1550) (is revealed there in due order [p. 24]). These two "appearances" are of a different nature: one refers to the refraction of light into colors, the other, to the representation of forms and figures. The repetition of the verb "*paroir*" connects, however, the coloring and mimetic power of the mirror; it in fact suggests that the shapes of the world appear *because* of the colors that the solar refraction generates in the crystal. Again, this difficulty could be solved by appealing to the physics of optics and, specifically, to the role that colors play in this physics. As it passes through a singular body, the indeterminate and invisible diaphaneous substance takes on colors that determine and particularize the surface of this body. Light refracts itself in colors on the surface of bodies that it, in turn, defines for our gaze. Our vision thus results from a double alteration: the diaphaneous light alters the bodies that it penetrates, while at the same time being altered by them. According to this theory, the colored refraction of light brings to visibility the shapes of the world reflected on the crystalline mirror; it alone allows them to "appear."

The "wonder" of refraction that the *Romance of the Rose* describes in this scene rewrites a specific passage from Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès* where Alexandre, having just fallen in love with Soredamors, describes the process of vision in the following terms:<sup>13</sup>

*Car es ialz se fiert la luiserne  
Ou li cuers se remire, et voit  
l'œuvre de fors, quex qu'ele soit;  
Si voit maintes œuvres diverses,  
Les unes verz, les autres perses,  
L'une vermoille et l'autre bloe  
[726–31]*

(for the light strikes the eyes in which the heart is accustomed to gaze, and lo! it sees some light outside, and many other things, some green, some purple, others red or blue.)

The colors of the natural world are indeed, as Chrétien suggested, an "*œuvre*." Light works itself into colors in the mirror of our eyes. This work of light allows us to see the shapes of the world reflected on the optical speculum. Like Alexandre, who sees on the speculum of his eyes "*maintes œuvres diverses*,"/Les

13. References to the Old French text are to the line numbers of Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, Alexandre Micha, ed., (Paris: Champion, 1970). The translations are from: Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, W. W. Comfort, trans., (Everyman's Library, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), pp. 100–101.

*unes verz, les autres perses, L'une vermoille et l'autre bloe*" (and many other things, some green, some purple, others red or blue), the Lover of the *Romance of the Rose* sees the shapes of the natural world thanks to the colors that the solar light generates in the crystalline mirror.

The crystalline mirror does not only color that which it shows, thereby bringing it to visibility, it also has the uncanny power of *ordering* it. Everything in the garden "*pert tot a orne,*" (1550) upon its surface. This optical ordering seems to refer to another property of the visual imagination, one that Agamben does not mention but that Umberto Eco recalls. As he points out, imagination is not just the passive faculty that retains the imprint left by sensation. Besides being a receptacle of images, it is quite capable of modifying and combining with one another the images that it gathers. Thus, Avicenna describes the fifth power as a free rearranging of elements, as an inventive power that composes and divides imagined forms, "as when from the image of gold and mountain we compose a golden mountain which we have never seen." This imaginative and inventive combination occurs especially in sleep, where new forms are engendered by collecting and rearranging several remembered things. The dream vision exemplifies the combinatory potential of imagination, which is not simply a mimetic mirror but an innovative rearrangement.<sup>14</sup>

While the ordering power of the crystalline mirror already stretches the allegory of optics to the point where we begin to cross into a dream vision, its last property takes us even further from visual perception. In order to illustrate the "ordering" power of the crystal, the *Romance of the Rose* relies on a comparison. Just as a mirror "shows," "*montre,*" the "*color et figure*" of things which are in front of it without "*couverture,*" "without cover," so does the crystal "*encuse,*" "shows," the entire garden:

*les choses qui sont a l'encontre  
et i voit l'en sanz couverture  
et lor color et lor figure,  
tot autresi vos di por voir  
que li cristaus sanz decevoir*

14. In the thirteenth century, this inventive combination will become a distinctive characteristic of the aesthetic perception. As Umberto Eco points out, Alhazen's *De Aspectibus* or *Perspectiva* (c. tenth, eleventh centuries) will be taken up in the thirteenth century by Witelo's *De Perspectiva* as well as in a work entitled *Liber de Intelligentiis* which explains the sense of sight on the model of reflected light: a luminous object emits rays of light and a passive potency, like a mirror, receives the light and reflects it. In human consciousness, this passive potency adapts itself to the active force of the stimulus, an adaptation which is experienced as pure pleasure, pure *delectatio*. Witelo distinguishes two types of perception: first, the simple perception of light and color and second, a perception which *compares* the perceived forms with one another and *gathers* the visual data in a perceptual field. According to Witelo, the aesthetic perception of beauty arises from a subjective focusing i.e. a play of distance or nearness which



*tot l'estre dou vergier encuse  
a celui qui en l'ave muse;  
[1554-60]]*

(Just as things placed in front of a mirror are reflected in it, and their appearance and colour are seen quite plainly, exactly so, I assure you, does the crystal truly disclose the whole of the garden to him who gazes into the water. [p. 25])

The ability of the mirror to show "without cover" the color and figures of the world obliquely refers to the "*claudere*" (i.e., to close, to conceal) of allegorical expression, a term which the Prologue of the *Romance of the Rose* quotes. While the allegorical speculum relies on a tropological "covering" in order to "show," to manifest its truth, the crystalline mirror presents itself as a purely mimetic mirror which does not "cover" that which it shows. Not only does it not "cover" the things that it reflects, it "shows" the "smallest thing," however "*reposte*" ("hidden") or "*enclouse*" ("enclosed") it might be:

*si n'i a si petite chose,  
tant soit reposte ne enclouse,  
dont demontrance ne soit faite  
con s'ele ert ou cristal portrete.  
[1565-68]*

(And so there is nothing so small, so secret, or so hidden that it is not displayed there, as if it were etched in the crystal. [p. 25])

While the faculty of revealing the hidden could still be attributed to the optical properties of a magnifying glass, the ability of revealing the enclosed takes us far away from optics. The mirror does not reflect the garden; it *reveals* it, since it is endowed with the singular property of dis-covering that which is covered, of showing that which *cannot* be seen: the enclosed. Read retroactively, the "*sans couverture*" no longer means that the crystal does not *add* a covering but that it dis-covers, that is, *removes* a previous covering. We begin to understand why the Lover must see the garden (that he has already thoroughly explored) painted on the surface of the crystals. The mirror functions as a marvelous optical prosthesis, which supplements his naked eye. Far from duplicating his previous vision of the garden, it refines and increases his perception by providing a clearer and more complete image of the garden than

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changes the perception of the objects, and from the *conjunction* of several observations with one another. The aesthetic *visio* situates itself as a middle point in between sensible perception and intellectual abstraction. Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, translated by Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 53-54.

his visual perception could afford. It in effect remedies the blindness of his previous "naked" perception.

In a strange reversal, direct perception is thus redefined as a covered vision, while the mediated vision provided by the mirror is redefined as an "open" vision, which lifts the veils that blinded the naked eye. This open vision constitutes one more oblique reference to allegorical terminology. It cites the "*aperire*" of allegorical exegesis, that is, the moment where the exegete discovers the truth, the meaning, which the allegorical text both covered and enclosed. The reference to allegorical exegesis is compounded by the use of the expression "*sans decevoir*." As a mirror shows "*sans couverture*," (without covering) so does the crystal show "*sans decevoir*" (without deception). The rhyme between "*voir*" and "*decevoir*" highlights the homophonic proximity between "to see," "*voir*," and "truth," "*voir*." The vision, the "*voir*," that the crystal provides is a "true" vision, a vision of the truth, the "*voir*," which was previously covered.

Although the mirror claims to discover that which allegory covers, this promise is deceptive. The mirror which is supposed to show us the world without the rhetorical veils of allegory is indeed the same mirror which refracted light into colors, a refraction which the text singles out for scrutiny by calling it a "*merveille*," a "wonder." This "wonder" illustrates the "strength" of the mirror. The strength of the mirror, however, is more rhetorical than optical. The colors that the solar refraction generates in the crystalline mirror stand, I believe, for the rhetorical "colors" or tropes that allegory uses in order to veil its meaning, and that the *Romance of the Rose*, a self-proclaimed allegorical dream, applies onto itself.

The text has called attention upon this rhetorical coloring in the sequence that precedes the discovery of the pool. We should note that "colors" are the first detail to be mentioned in the description of Nature's "dress," the very same dress that the mirror of the pool presumably reflects. With the coming of Spring, Nature proudly adorns herself with a metaphorical "dress" composed of a multitude of flowers. These "flowers" (which prefigure the allegorical flower, the rose, with which the Lover falls in love) only appear as a profusion of "colors":

*lors devient la terre si gobe  
 qu'el velt avoir novele robe,  
 si set si cointe robe feire  
 que de colors i a .c. peire;  
 l'erbe et les flors blanches et perses  
 et de maintes colors diverses,  
 c'est la robe que je devise,  
 por quoi la terre mielz se prise.*  
 [59-66]

(Then the earth becomes so proud that it wants a new robe; and it knows how to make a robe so ornate that there are a hundred pairs

of colors in it. I mean, of course, the robe of grass and flowers, blue, white, and many other colors, by which the earth enriches itself. [p. 32])

While this description brings forth the spectacle of a luxuriant natural growth, it simultaneously quotes the key metaphors that rhetoric uses to describe its own rather unnatural production. Medieval rhetoric repeatedly compares its figural language to a "dress," a "*superficialis ornatus verborum*" that "clothes" a thought presumed to exist independently from it. Defined as a purely formal art, rhetoric "informs" language, it shapes it, thanks to its rhetorical tropes, which are, according to Geoffrey of Vinsauf, its "verbal flowers" as well as its "colors." These "flowers" and "colors" are meant to "enrich" and to "illuminate" language, to give it all the brilliance that the medieval stylistic canon requires.

The pseudo-natural colors found on the dress of Nature clearly metaphorize the rhetorical colors that compose the allegorical dress that the text implicitly claims to be. Nature's dress is indeed only the first in a series of dresses. All other dresses are worn by allegorical characters. These dresses thematize, within the text, the allegorical "dress" that the text as whole claims to be. The figuration of allegory as a dress can be traced back to Macrobius, the authority on allegory that the *Romance of the Rose* uses in the Prologue as a guarantee for its own allegorical project. Macrobius repeatedly compares the tropes or "colors" of allegory to a veil through which truth signifies itself. Expanding on this metaphorical equation, the dresses worn by the allegorical characters of the *Romance of the Rose* mirror the text's own allegorical dress. We should also note that, among these allegorical dresses, the dress worn by the god of love is strikingly similar to the dress of Nature. The God of love, like Nature, is richly adorned with a dress entirely made of multi-colored flowers:

*Nul flor en esté ne nest  
qui n'i fust, nes flors de jenest,  
ne violete ne parvenche,  
ne nule flor noire ne blanche,  
ne flor jaunë, ynde ne perse,  
ne nule flor, tant fu diverse;  
s'i ot par leus entremellees  
feuilles de roses granz et lees.*  
[885-94]

(There were flowers of many sorts, placed with great skill. No flower born in the summertime was missing from it, not even the flower of the broom, the violet, the periwinkle, or any yellow, indigo, or white flower. Intermingled in places there were large, wide rose leaves. [p. 42])

The similarity between the flowers and colors that make up Nature and Love's dress suggest that "natural" colors take, in the *Romance of the Rose*, an added rhetorical coloring. Nature, its colors and flowers, is anything but natural. It has been de-natured by the rhetorical colors of allegory.

This rhetorical coloring prepares the appearance of colors on the Ovidian mirror. It provides as it were the allegorical and rhetorical context within which these colors must be read. Although it is presented as a miracle of nature, the refraction of sunlight into colors allegorizes in natural terms the tropological labor of allegory, that is, its ability to generate figures which "color," and "cover" truth. The Ovidian mirror thus turns into a rhetorical apparatus, a rhetorical twist that was already announced at the very threshold of the dream. Oiseuse, we may recall, stands at the gate of the dream, and of the text, with a mirror in one hand, and a comb in the other. Oiseuse's mirror cites, at the beginning of the dream and in miniature fashion as it were, the Ovidian mirror which we later find at its center. Like Narcissus looking at himself in the Ovidian mirror, she looks at herself in her mirror. The citation of the Ovidian mirror at the very entrance of the dream suggests that, as he enters the dream through the gate that Oiseuse opens, the protagonist is in effect entering into a mirror. In other words, the Ovidian mirror thematizes the text as being itself a mirror of sorts. This textual mirror, however, is not a simple mimetic apparatus that would faithfully represent that which it reflects. Rhetoric disrupts from the start any pretence to a faithful and unadorned representation: Oiseuse holds indeed a mirror and a comb. The comb that she uses to braid her hair is one more metaphor that rhetoric uses to describe its own beautifying work:<sup>15</sup>

*Sermonem discute quis sit virtus  
Crudus an excoctus, succosus an aridus, hirtus  
An comptus, rudis an excultus, inops an optimus.*

(Consider whether your discourse is raw or well done; juicy or arid; shaggy or combed; rude or cultivated; poor or rich. [915-917])

The comb of rhetoric must go through the "shaggy head" of language in order to braid it, that is, to embellish it, as Oiseuse braids her hair. The comb thus implicitly defines the Ovidian mirror as the site of a rhetorical embellishment: far from merely representing things as they are, the mirror beautifies them by using all the resources of rhetoric. And, among these resources, the "colors" of rhetorical tropes figure prominently, as the lavish profusion of colors which marks the first half of the text suggests. Oiseuse's mirror both announces and cites the speculum of the pool. It warns us that the Ovidian speculum reflects

15. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*.

the text as being itself a mirror, but a mirror which "colors," "tropes," that which it claims to represent without any "cover."

The crystalline mirror of the pool which "shows" the color and figures of the world does not therefore discover these figures as it deceptively claims. It generates them as precisely "colors," "figures," that is, tropological "covers." The open, revelatory vision of the crystal ends up being one more version of the covert vision of allegory. The crystal discovers covered figures; it discloses allegorical enclosures. It only reveals figures, allegorical "*demontrances*." The expression "*feire demontrance*" is yet another allegorical citation. "*Demontrance*" means in Old French the act of showing as well as the object being shown. Theology gives a particular twist to this "showing" by claiming that the visible - that which can be shown - is a "*demontrance*" of that which cannot be shown. The visible "*demonstre*" by transporting us, via a network of resemblances, to the invisible.<sup>16</sup> The images painted on the surface of the crystal present themselves as allegorical "*demontrances*" for a "truth," an enigma, which cannot be represented. They open the representation toward that which escapes representation. Furthermore, since "*demontrance*" also means in Old French an "*indice*" (the "*demostreur*" names the index which shows), the visible becomes an index pointed toward an enigmatic and invisible truth.

The crystalline mirror thus turns out to allegorize the mirror of allegory itself. Allegory is indeed repeatedly compared to a mirror. We find this comparison in the most famous citation from Paul, a citation that dominates the medieval conception of allegory:<sup>17</sup>

Now we see indistinctly [in *aenigmate*], as in a mirror [*per speculum*]; then we shall see face to face. My knowledge is imperfect [partial] now; then I shall know as I am known.

To see "*per speculum*" means, according to Hughes of Saint-Victor, that one cannot see God face to face but always in a mediated fashion.<sup>18</sup> We see God "*per speculum*" because we can only apprehend Him in, through, and according to ("*per*") images, figures. No more than the splendor of the sun can be seen face to face, can the splendor of God be seen without the mediation of images such as the visible world itself. The sensible world is the *speculum* where an invisible God imprints Himself in a visible image, which is to be understood as a mere resemblance, a metaphor. Nor is the world the only spec-

16. Robert Javelet cites this use of "demontrance" in *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle: de Saint Anselme à Alain de Lille* (Editions Letouzey and Ané, 1967), p. 86.

17. Paul, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, XIII,12. We find a similar formulation in Tertullian: "Ipse enim (Deus filius) et ad humana semper colloquia descendit ab Adam usque at patriarchas et prophetas in visione, in somnio, in speculo, in aenigmate." *Adv. Praxeam*, 16.

18. On this question, see Robert Javelet, *op. cit.*, p.377.

ulum where the image of God imprints itself. Constituted as an "*imago Dei*," the Christian subject views himself as a mirror where a divine Other reflects Himself. The mirror that I am is nevertheless endowed with both the ability of seeing the image that I reflect and the desire to go through this image toward the "*res*" that it figures. To see God "*per speculum*" - in the mirror of the universe or in the mirror that we are - means then, that we can only see Him allegorically; that is, *otherwise*, in a metaphor which both resembles and dissembles. We never see the "*res*" itself; we only see the "*res*" in and through metaphors, figures; that is, indirectly and imperfectly. And it is this mediated, analogical and imperfect vision that the "mirror" figures. The Paulinian mirror is itself a figure for our inherently figural, mediated apprehension of God, the ultimate Truth.

An allegory for the mirror of allegory, the crystalline mirror allegorizes the dream vision within which it is inserted. The crystalline mirror is indeed set at the center of a dream that from the very beginning has presented itself as being first and foremost a vision. The narrator recounts a dream that he did not dream but merely *saw*: "I saw a dream in my sleep," "*et vi un songe en mon dormant*" (30). As for this vision, it is, as the Prologue claimed, thoroughly allegorical. Against the general opinion, which does not believe in the truth value of dreams, the Narrator believes:

*que songes est senefiance  
des biens az genz et des anuiz  
[16-17]*

(that a dream may signify the good and ill that may befall people  
[p.3])

A senefiance of things to come, good or bad, dreams do not *represent* future events: they *signify* them. Moreover, they signify them "covertly." This "covert" vision is opposed to an "open" vision: during the night, the dreamer dreams covertly things that he "later" sees "*apertement*," "openly" or "clearly." The coupling (at the rhyme) of the two expressions "*covertement*" / "*apertement*" cites the two key terms of medieval figural interpretation. While "covertly" refers to the "*claudere*" (to close, to conceal) of allegorical expression, "*apertement*" refers to the "opening," to the "*aperire*" that an interpretation is supposed to perform.<sup>19</sup> Borrowed from the figural interpretation of the Bible, these two key terms found their way into secular literature where they became the trademark of allegorical expression.

19. Auerbach points out that "*aperire*" along with *exponere* and *revelare* is the term traditionally used for figural interpretation. As for "*claudere*," it is used in recollection of *Isa. 22:22* and *Revelations 3:7*. At a later date, Peter Lombard in his *Commentarium* in Ps., 146, 6 (*Patrologia Latina*, Vol 191, col. 1276) uses the expression "clausa

We now understand why the lover must see in a mirror the garden that he has already seen with his naked eye. The *speculum* of the pool mirrors the mediation of his own previous "naked" vision. The truth that the mirror "reveals" is that, when the lover saw the garden with his naked eye, he was already seeing "*per speculum*," that is, through the *speculum* of allegory. Another detail confirms this suggestion. As he bends over the *speculum* of the pool, the Lover cannot see the whole picture all at once but only one half at a time. In order to see the rest, he must turn himself:

*car torjors, quel que part qu'il soit,  
l'une moitié dou vergier voit;  
et c'il se torne, maintenant  
porra veoir le rememnant;*  
[1561-64]

(For whichever side he is on, he can always see half of the garden, and by turning he is at once able to see the remainder. [p. 25])

The lover must split that which is meant to be seen as a whole; he is condemned to "see double." Agamben accounts for this curious doubling by claiming that it figures the optical split between sensation and imagination. I believe, however, that the Lover's double vision allegorizes another split: the split vision of allegory. Allegory is a double vision not only because it posits a double meaning (one clear and one obscure as the saying goes), but also because, according to Augustine, it temporalizes that which should be apprehended all at once. The allegorical *speculum* forces us to see "one thing and then another." In so doing, it splits into discreet and separate moments a whole that should be seen "all at once, quite apart from the ebb and flow of time."<sup>20</sup>

The vision "*per speculum*" that the lover performs at the center of the *Romance of the Rose* thus reiterates, within the allegorical dream, the dreamer's vision of the dream as well as our own "vision" of the text.<sup>21</sup> While believing that he is seeing the true colors and figures of the natural world, he is,

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Dei" to mean "what God has concealed by obscurity of expression." In Auerbach's "Figura" in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Meridian Books, Inc: New York, 1959) note 90 p. 233.

20. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Books, 1961) (Book XII,13) p. 289. "Heaven" here means the Heaven of Heavens - that is, the intellectual heaven, where the intellect is privileged to know all at once, not in part only, not as if it were looking at a confused reflection in a mirror, but as a whole, clearly, face to face; not first one thing and then another but, as I have said, all at once, quite apart from the ebb and flow of time [ ... ]."

unbeknownst to him, looking obliquely and indirectly at the enigmatic truth that figures itself in the natural images of the landscape. Placed at the core of a dream which has defined itself as an allegorical vision, the speculum of the pool mirrors, within the dream, the vision "*per speculum*" that produces the dream vision in its entirety. It is, as it were, a mirror within the mirror, an allegory for the allegorical vision, the allegorical speculum, within which it is inserted. In this sense, it is not unlike these mirrors that we will later find in Dutch paintings which duplicate, within the painting, the painting as being itself a kind of "mirror." Like them, it mirrors within the text the allegorical "mirror" that is the dream. Jean de Meun understood this point when, in his own rewriting of the *Romance of the Rose*, he decided to rename the text the "mirror for lovers" thereby turning the entire dream into a mirror, a speculum. In so doing, he only brought forward the speculum that the dream and, with it, the text, had already become in Guillaume de Lorris's part of the story.

The crystalline mirror thus figures the allegorical gaze as a peculiar kind of mirror. And it is in this light that its distinctive properties must be reinterpreted. The mirror of the pool does not merely reflect the world; it also has the power of *ordering* it. Although we may have been tempted to understand this "ordering" as a faithful reproduction (everything would appear in the mirror in the same order that they have in the garden), more is at stake since the ability to make everything appear "*a orne*," "in due order," is described as a marvelous "force," a nearly miraculous power. This power does not refer to the order of a faithful mimesis but to the power, the "force," of an inventive conjunction.

Like the crystal which refracts the sunlight in a profusion of colors, the speculum of the dream vision "colors" that which it "orders." The colors that the sunlight generates in the crystal metaphorize the rhetorical colors that the text applies on an otherwise common language. As the natural colors shape the visible world so does rhetoric shape language into a description that gives the reader something to see on the condition that he remains blind to its rhetorical quality. The crystalline mirror reminds us that the images of the dream vision are not mimetic representations but allegorical figurations. The crystal where the true colors and figures of the world are revealed "*sans decevoir*" is, however, as the Narrator claims, a deceptive mirror for it presents as if it were a mimetic painting that which is in effect an allegorical description.

An allegory of the allegorical gaze that writer, dreamer and Lover share, the sequence of the pool must account for yet another problem. If the eye functions

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21. It is worth noting that the Lover washes his face in the water of the river at the very beginning of text. I believe that this gesture indicates that he is seeing the dream through the clear veil of water of the river, a water which itself cites the water of Narcissus' pool. In other words, the text indicates at the very threshold of the garden that the Lover is looking "per," through the deceptively clear allegorical mirror of the pool.



as an allegorical speculum where the world tropes itself, how does this speculum "see?" How does one generate a gaze in a speculum? And what kind of gaze?

The theological solution to this problem consists in saying that I see because I am an *imago Dei*; that is, both the mirror where God reflects Himself and the mirror-image that He imprints on this mirror. Since the Ego is originally created not as a source but as an allegorical mirror-image, a mere resemblance, it cannot be the source of his own vision. His vision must also be generated as a mirror-image of sorts, as the reflection of a divine vision which both precedes it and makes it possible. I see at the precise point where the divine ray reflects itself on the speculum that I am and creates me as a divine resemblance. This divine resemblance "participates" in that which it reflects. And it is this participation which accounts for the genesis of my gaze. I derive from a God who "illuminates," and sees by illuminating, the power of seeing all the allegorical images that He imprints as being indeed images to be referred to the light, the divine source, from which they originate. Thus, to quote only this example which is by no means unique, Richard of Saint-Victor compares the soul to a speculum where the divine ray reflects itself. The reflection of this ray opens the "gaze" of the "intelligence." This interior eye is capable of reading the images that it sees imprinted on the speculum as being indeed images, reflections of the divine Other.<sup>22</sup>

The *Romance of the Rose* parodies this theological genesis. The sun which suddenly rises takes on the shape of an eye: "*Quant li solaus, qui tot aguiete*" [1941] "the sun which *observes* everything" (emphasis added). The sun turns into a gigantic eye, from which flows a stream of light that illuminates the speculum of the pool. Light, the invisible medium within which our vision takes place, is given the power of "seeing" that which it illuminates and brings to visibility. The medium of vision is made to coincide with vision.

Illuminated by the sun, the speculum of the pool, in turn, illuminates. As it reflects the sunlight, the speculum itself starts to illuminate like the sun; it becomes a mirror-image of the solar eye shining above it, a diminutive sun. If light "sees," then the speculum which reflects this seeing light can analogically participate in the solar vision that it reflects; it can derive from it its own vision. Like the sun, the speculum illuminates. And, like the sun, it sees in the process of illuminating.

While constituting the human eye as a diminutive metaphor of the divine eye, the text suggests at the same time that the divine eye may be itself but a metaphor for the human eye, a metaphor which it must posit in order to derive from it its very faculty of seeing. The speculum can see that which it reflects because light gave it this power. And light cannot impart to the speculum of the eye this power unless it is first itself endowed with vision. In other

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22. See on this question Javelet, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

words, we transfer to light our power to see in order to derive this power from this very same light. The solar eye is the metaphorical premise without which we could not account for the genesis of our own vision. We know why we see only if we grant to light the vision that we enjoy.

The vision granted to light does not only explain the genesis of our own vision, it also defines it as an illumination: if light "sees" when it illuminates, then the eye "illuminates" when it sees. By turning light into a "vision," we turn our own vision into an "illumination." Thanks to this exchange of properties, we know what seeing does and what it means: to see means to shed light upon what we see. The position of an original and illuminating vision enables us to derive and define our own vision as an illuminating power which, in sensible terms, brings to visibility and, in intellectual terms, brings to intelligibility. All obscurity has been banished and, first and foremost, our ignorance as to what "seeing" may do or what "clarity" may name: seeing is understood as a clarification; as for "clarity," it is itself understood as a promise of total visibility and intelligibility, as pure transparency.

The *Romance of the Rose* inflicts an erotic twist to the divine gaze that it borrows in order to account for the genesis of its own vision. The sun does not just look; it "aguiete," it "observes" and even "guette," "spies." This irradiating and spying solar gaze replicates another gaze: the gaze that Amors, at that very moment, fixes upon the Lover. Throughout his exploration of the garden of Deduit, the Lover has been under the discreet surveillance of the God of Love who, following him "like the hunter follows the beast," patiently waited for him to find his way toward the fountain of Narcissus [1418–22]. While Antiquity blindfolds Eros, the *Romance of the Rose* removes the blindfold to reveal his fixed and persecutory gaze. In the *Romance of the Rose*, Amors is not a blinded figure but a hunter who keeps the Lover in his sight at all times much like the sun spies over the visible world. Thanks to this metaphorical bind, Amors's gaze upon the lover is implicitly assimilated to the solar gaze which shines over the crystalline speculum: as the sun spies, "aguiete", on the whole spectacle, so does Amors spy ("aguetant") on the Lover; as the sun throws its rays, so is Love about to irradiate the Lover, not with sun rays, however, but with arrows.

Amors carries indeed two sets of arrows. One set, composed of ugly and unadorned arrows, is designed to drive love away while the other set, composed of arrows endowed with golden tips, is designed to inflict the wound of love [930–34]. And it is this second gilded set that Amors later uses on the Lover. The *Romance of the Rose* borrows from Ovid the two sets of arrows as well as the golden tips of the arrows of love. It also remembers the connotation attached to these golden tips. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Cupid takes one of his golden arrows and aims it at Phoebus, the sun, who immediately starts "burning" with lust. As Alh points out, the sun is, par excellence, the golden god. (For Ovid as well as for Virgil and Lucretius, its fire and its sun are "golden.") Furthermore, the arrow "fulget," "gleams," a word associated with the golden brilliance of the sun. Ovid's text assimilates Cupid's golden

arrow to the light and fire that proceed from the sun. Phoebus, set in fire by this arrow, "is struck by his own weapons and by his own fire."<sup>23</sup>

The *Romance of the Rose* borrows from Ovid the topos of Amors's golden arrows as well as the metaphorical bind between arrows and sunrays. It even expands on the Ovidian metaphorical association between love and sun since the solar gold does not only gild Amors's arrows but his bow as well. The solar rays, which proceed from the golden globe of the sun, are thus proposed as a metaphor for the wounding arrows that Love will only later shoot at Lover from his golden bow. The solar illumination and the wounds that Love later inflicts upon the Lover are presented as two allegorical versions of the same scene. Arrows and rays are bound by a metaphorical relation which turns the solar rays into wounding arrows while at the same time turning the arrows of love into a solar illumination, an "enlightening vision."

Thanks to this Ovidian metaphorical bind, the *Romance of the Rose* eroticizes the sun. The sun, which traditionally figures the eye of God, is now made to figure a much more secular gaze: the gaze of the god of love. It becomes the figure for Eros itself.

While the sun replicates Amors's gaze, Amors's gaze itself replicates the Lover's gaze. As Amors spies on the Lover so has the Lover spied on the garden as he relentlessly searched its deepest recesses. As for Amors's hunting gaze, it replicates the no less hunting gaze of the Lover. The solar gaze is thus inscribed in an intricate system of metaphors. The sequence stages three gazes (the Lover's gaze, the solar gaze, Amors's gaze) which are enigmatically bound together to the extent that they share the same "spying" quality. The solar gaze spies like Amors's gaze which itself spies like the Lover's gaze. This analogical sequence suggests that it is in fact the Lover's hunting and spying gaze that is replicated in Amors's gaze as well as in the solar gaze.

Amors's gaze doubles the hunting and the spying quality of the Lover's gaze while at the same time projecting it outside of him. In so doing, it indicates that the desire which hunts and spies within the Lover's gaze is to be conceived of as an "outside," an "alien" force. As for the figure of the sun, it further specifies this alien desire as the "light" which ignites the speculum of the eye and gives it the power of seeing. And here the text begins to quote another passage from Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès* which constitutes, I believe, the subtext of the entire sequence:<sup>24</sup>

*Car es ialz se fiert la luiserne  
Ou li cuers se remire, et voit  
l'uevre de fors, quex qu'ele soit;  
Si voit maintes oevres diverses,*

23. Frederick Ahl, *Metaformations: Soundplay and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) p. 131.

24. Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, pp. 100-101.

*Les unes verz, les autres perses,  
L'une vermoille et l'autre bloe*  
[726–31]

(for the light strikes the eyes in which the heart is accustomed to gaze, and lo! it sees some light outside, and many other things, some green, some purple, others red or blue.) [translation mine]

Charles Méla remarks that the optical model staged in this passage provides a distinctively medieval “theory of the subject.” This theory does not conceive of the subject as the source of his own vision but as a mirror which owes to an exterior source of light its capacity to see the diversity of the world:<sup>25</sup>

Dieu, le soleil ou la Dame font donc seuls de nous des miroirs éclairés. Encore faut-il supposer quelqu’un qui lise l’image ainsi reproduite dans le miroir passif de nos yeux. Cligès: “les yeux servent de miroir au cœur (704),” autrement dit, ce sont les yeux du cœur qui voient ce que leur représente le miroir des yeux [ . . . ] Sans cette disposition du cœur [ . . . ] l’homme n’est qu’un miroir aveugle. Mais qui lui ouvre les yeux du cœur? Un rai (ou roi) de lumière, émané de sa dame, qui l’enflamme intérieurement: il devient alors ce cœur d’amour épris, qui brille au fond de ses yeux comme la chandelle au creux de la lanterne. La vision est le produit de cette double lumière, d’un soleil au dehors pour un embrasement au dedans.

As Méla points out, for the speculum of the eye to become a speculum endowed with the power of seeing that which it reflects, a ray must ignite the heart. The outside light penetrates within to light up the heart, which begins to burn like a candle, to turn into a diminutive sun. The outside light does not only generate an inside light; by turning the heart into a diminutive sun, it gives to this heart the power of seeing. The light of the sun and the light of the heart are set in a metaphorical relation which prefigures the metaphorical relation that the *Romance of the Rose* posits between the illuminating gaze of the sun and the illuminating speculum of the pool. While suggesting that the heart derives its light and its vision from the sun, Chrétien de Troyes at the same time invites us to consider the sun as a metaphor for the “light” that the heart (that is, Eros) sheds on the picture of the world. It is the heart, that is, desire itself, which allows me to see as the light is the medium which allows things to become visible.

25. Charles Méla, “Le Miroir périlleux ou l’alchimie de la rose” in *Europe, Revue littéraire mensuelle* 654 (October 1983), p. 80.

Expanding on Chrétien's scene, the *Romance of the Rose* uses the sunlight to allegorize Eros both as "light" and as a divine power, an exterior force. The outside sun figures Eros as the alien power which does not originate from me but from elsewhere, from an obscure site that no subject can claim to comprehend or control. I am not the origin of the desire that operates within my vision; it is from Eros that I derive the libidinal quality of my gaze which eroticizes the world. As the Lover's gaze falls on the world, it emits a light, a desire, which the Lover does not claim as his own but as the desire of the Other, Amors, who stands for the entire lyric tradition which spoke the desire that each lyric lover and writer in turn reiterates. In this sense, the desire which operates within the Lover's and the dreamer's vision, is indeed the desire of the Other.

In the figure of the sun, the text also allegorizes desire as the very medium that allows the Lover, the dreamer and the writer to "see." The clear light which bathes the dream figures desire as the medium which falls on the entire natural world and "brings it to light," allows it to appear by coloring it. This desire, like the sun, colors the picture of the natural world that the speculum of the eye reflects. As the sunrays color the picture that the mirror/eye reflects, so does desire color the picture that the Lover and the dreamer see on the speculum of their vision. The sun coloring itself in the speculum stands for the desire which dwells in my heart and which shapes itself in the colored figures that I see appearing on the speculum of my eye, my dream, or my text. The world in its entirety becomes an allegorical self-portrait of my desire, a suggestion that we find already embedded in Chrétien de Troyes's text where the heart does not only illuminate but also "looks," "*se remire*" in the speculum of the eye. "*Se remire*" literally means that the heart sees in the mirror of the eye the reflection of the outside world. The verb "*se remirer*" suggests, however, that the heart does not merely look in the speculum but reflects itself upon it. As light brings objects to visibility by refracting itself in colors which shape and define their outlines, so does desire refract itself in colors which define the shape of a world for us. In other words, the natural world becomes visible only to the extent that it has been colored; that is, troped by our desire, which denaturalizes it, turns it into the trope through which it signifies itself. It is our desire as it tropes and mirrors itself through the natural figures which brings them to visibility.

The sun refracting itself in hundreds of colors describes the genesis of the erotic vision that the dream claims to be. This erotic vision does not proceed, however, from the dreamer, no more than the text proceeds from the writer. The Lover, the dreamer, and, for that matter, the writer, are but the crystalline surface, the speculum, where Love tropes, "colors," and articulates itself in a specific vision, in a definite picture. It is Amors, and Amors alone, who creates the spectacle, the "vision," that the lover contemplates, that the dreamer dreams, and that the writer writes. It is Amors, and Amors alone, who gives to this vision its distinctive erotic "look." Amors's bow is indeed held by *Douz Regard*. The arrows of light hitting the speculum of the pool compose a colored picture, which is implicitly defined as the "sweet regard" of love. This

"regard" is not to be understood in the modern sense of the word. "Regard" does not refer to my gaze upon the thing but to the way this thing "looks" to me; that is, to the aspect that Love gives to it. The colored picture painted over the pool figures the "Regard" of love, that is, the way Eros shapes itself in a certain look, in a certain aspect. It figures the look, the aspect, which Love gives to things.

The sunrays refracting themselves in colors give indeed a certain erotic look to the picture of the garden which "looks" to the Lover, and this from the very beginning, as the promise of a sensual paradise. The *Romance of the Rose* describes the erotic gaze that Lover, dreamer and writer share, as a gaze inhabited by an alien power which orders, shapes and colors, unbeknownst to them, what they see. Their vision is structured by, and derived from, an outside force of which they know nothing, an outside power which constitutes in fact their blind spot: as they contemplate the spectacle imprinted on the speculum of the eye, the dream, or the text, they cannot see that which makes them see things the way they do; they are blind to the "desire" which orders, colors, and shapes their vision. The spectacle that the lover, the dreamer, and the poet contemplate on their respective speculum must therefore be reassessed as the colored imprint left by the lyric desire which inhabits and informs their vision, a desire which writes itself allegorically, obliquely, through the figures of the natural world.

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