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Visions and Visionaries

8 December 2016

*Romance of the Rose's* Two Authors: Manuscript Tradition and Medieval Fan Fiction

What makes a literary work “original?” This is one of many questions that float within my mind when I read literature. These thoughts of a work’s authenticity and intent typically occur when I read a story that I have seen once before, most notably in medieval texts. Huge swaths of *Romance of the Rose* enter into great detail on the smallest literary reference, be it from the Bible or from Homer. The retelling of myths, legends, and tales was a trend that I did not quite understand. Why does Reason spend line after line talking about “Nero, the great emperor himself” and then switch to another story concerning the Lydian king Croesus, who “could in no way hold back [Fortune’s] wheel from turning both below and above” (*Romance* 125-126)? It was easy for me to forget that literature was treated in a very different way in the past compared to modern day. Today, authors claim ownership over their works through copyright laws, declaring to the world that what they have written is theirs and theirs alone. In fact, there *were* no “authors” in medieval and early Renaissance Europe. There were scribes, poets, playwrights, and orators, but they were contributing to a larger canvas of literary works for every other creator to draw from. Works were seen as an action by the “auctor,” the writer, and not as a part of the “auctor”. It was this manuscript tradition

that provoked Guillaume de Lorris to recreate the story of Narcissus and to begin his dream vision with an invocation of Macrobius's dream of Scipio while also drawing Jean de Meun to continue Guillaume's text after it had been abandoned by de Lorris. Yet, while both Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun continue the medieval manuscript tradition in their respective halves of *Romance of the Rose*, Jean de Meun takes and transforms Guillaume de Lorris's characters and world in a fashion similar to modern-day fanfiction.

Jean de Meun, of course, did not intend to create fan fiction in the modern sense of the term, as the phrase "fan fiction" is a fairly recent addition to the English language. *The Oxford English Dictionary* can trace its use in print to as early as 1944 to distinguish between publications within a fan magazine and works of fiction written by fans of a certain story, though the phrase "fan fiction" was most likely used in smaller literary circles and orally before then (*OED*). These types of works take numerous forms, and they are of questionable legality in literary circles. Some works of fanfiction, such as P.D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley* (a fan fiction of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*), are heralded and praised for their unique take on established people and characters. Others are viscerally thrashed by critics, authors, and other fans. An excellent example of the latter is the oft-derided novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*, which is a slight rewording of E.L. James's *Twilight* "Alternate Universe/All Human (AU/AH) Edward/Bella fan work *Masters of the Universe I and II*" (Brennan and Large 27). Fanfiction rides the line between being an original work and a plagiarized work by using the established characters, settings, and events of other works to create brand new stories.

Fan fiction is hard to define, as it is often described by what it is *not* rather than what it is. For the modern author, fan fiction is *not* to be confused for their own works. For the lawyer, fan fiction is *not* infringing on copyright laws as long as it is not being created for commercial purposes. For the critic, fan fiction is *not* “real” literature since it is not original and focuses too much on popular culture. The common literary reader would also assume that fan fiction is *not* to be read by outsiders and that, as Jacqueline Lipton of the University of Houston Law Center states, “it is directed primarily at an audience of fans of the original work who will be familiar with the settings and characters employed in the secondary works” (428). While the former statements are, as Daniel Brewer of Columbia University describes, “‘literary’ questions [which] seem now to require framing in terms that are insistently and explicitly social, historical, economic, and political in nature,” the last thought—that fan fiction is inherently insular—is a false one (285). Unfortunately for many literary critics, it is somewhat difficult to easily set works of literature apart as if they were in a void, wholly separate from all outside influences.

While fan fiction often liberally uses the elements of another author’s works within its new text, what is to be said about literature that pays homage to previous authors by taking similar plotlines? Ian McEwan’s novel *Atonement* could hardly be described as a work of fan fiction, but his epigraph from *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen indicates the literary thread upon which this newer novel was written. In both novels, a young woman devoted to literature misconstrues the events around her, believing them to be part of a larger narrative that, in reality, does not exist. This was done by Austen first in her 1818 novel, but McEwan clearly borrows this element of

Austen's story for his own. What separates *Atonement* from *Northanger Abbey* is how this element was used. If *Atonement* was true fan fiction, the reader would have encountered characters such as Catherine Morland or Mr. Tilney, and they would be more or less identical to their appearance in Austen's work. Instead, McEwan only uses the concept of misplaced narrative in *Atonement*; all other elements of the novel are original or, at the very least, inspired by other works of literature.

There are also works that have at this point become so well-known that other authors have borrowed from or alluded to them, despite the fact that many of those works are fan fictions themselves. *Paradise Lost* by John Milton and *The Divine Comedy* by Dante are examples of this. Milton's epic poem takes the story of the Fall of Man from the Christian Bible; recreates the characters of Adam, Eve, God, and Satan; introduces new characters either created by the author or taken from other works (i.e. the many demons of Hell and the angelic armies of Heaven); and expands the original story's content through new events and plot lines, all of which would constitute the standard fan fiction. Dante's *Divine Comedy* follows a similar vein, only this time Dante has the Roman poet Virgil take him on a trip to Hell and Purgatory before leaving the author to traverse Heaven with his deceased lover Beatrice. This would not be the only real-life person he would encounter on his journey, as Dante meets many a historical figure and contemporary ally or enemy. There is no doubt that Dante would find making such a work in this modern age a very difficult task since it is not considered in good taste (or legal, for that matter) to create fictions about persons still living.

No author, regardless of talent or renown, creates truly "unique" work of literature, since everyone receives information and experience from other people. Such

is the nature of human beings, for we are social animals that are constantly learning and adapting in relation to the world around us. As Lipton writes, authors “have always had generations of past human creation on which to base their efforts” (432). Even the originality of the narrative form has been questioned. Joseph Campbell in his famous work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* created a plot structure that nearly every myth and tale ever told follows called the “monomyth.” He began his work with a simple statement:

Whether we listen with aloof amusement to the dreamlike mumbo jumbo of some red-eyed witch doctor of the Congo, or read with cultivated rapture thin translations from the sonnets of the mystic Lao-tse; now and again crack the hard nutshell of an argument of Aquinas, or catch suddenly the shining meaning of a bizarre Eskimo fairy tale: it will always be the one, shape-shifting yet marvelously constant story that we find, together with a challengingly persistent suggestion of more remaining to be experienced than will ever be known or told. (Campbell 1)

This monomyth is the story of a person who leaves what they knew behind, adventures into the unknown, and returns to the home they once knew as a changed hero. Even medieval dream visions like *Romance of the Rose* follow this narrative, as the dreamer falls asleep to dream about wonders unheard of only to return to their mortal frames and the physical world with the memories of their other-worldly experience. Is to say that all works of literature are actually fan fictions of some singular tale, doomed to follow the lines set in stone by the progenitor? On the contrary, as Campbell writes, “the democratic ideal of the self-determining individual, the invention of the power-driven machine, and the development of the scientific method of research have so transformed

human life that the long-inherited, timeless universe of symbols has collapsed” (333). The old stories were written while the world was so unknown and the sky was the limit, but humanity has discovered so much knowledge about the universe that “man himself is now the crucial mystery” (Campbell 337). And one of the greatest mysteries of mankind is the role of the author.

The role of the author in society has shifted repeatedly throughout the past millennia. In the medieval and early Renaissance of Europe, the works of authors would have fallen into two categories: religious or commissioned. That is not to say that religious literature was never funded by a wealthy patron or that an author could only create if given money, but religious institutions and patronage were the core methods of obtaining all the materials necessary to create a manuscript. The author or, rather, the “auctor” of the time, according to Steve Moyer of *Humanities* magazine, was to be “a person who possessed *auctoritas*,” meaning “someone with expertise on a particular subject” (Moyer). Therefore, “auctors” who wrote dream visions were often given the tools necessary to create manuscripts solely because they were well-known for their dream visions or well-versed in them. This also means that someone in medieval Europe wanted a manuscript of *Romance of the Rose*, be it copied from the original text by Guillaume de Lorris or the extended text by Jean de Meun.

After the creation of the printing press around 1440, however, it became easier to create and publish manuscripts, though “auctors” still retained their classic purpose for much longer. Instead, it was the *works* that were heralded and examined. According to Mark Rose of the University of Minnesota, “it was usual to think of a text as an action rather than a thing” (199). While the work that was created by the author could be

anything from a patronizing piece for a patron to a heretical religious text, the manuscript was valued more for what it could *do* rather than any statement made therein (Rose 199). It was not until the early eighteenth century that the author as we know it today began to take shape. The most famous example of the early modern author was Alexander Pope, whose actions and lawsuits eventually paved the way for modern copyright laws. Specifically, *Pope v. Curl* in 1741 began as an attempt by Pope to keep publishing houses from distributing his personal letters without his consent, and the court ruled that “copyright in a letter belongs to the writer” (Rose 197). From this point on to today, the author began to shift from “a craftsman... a master of a body of rules, preserved and handed down to him in rhetoric and poetics” and the “inspired” hand of a Muse or God to “an individual who is solely responsible—and therefore exclusively deserving of credit—for the production of a unique work” (Woodmansee 426-427).

Yet, even today’s definition of the author is being deconstructed and reanalyzed by literary theorists. Roland Barthes, the author of “The Death of the Author,” wrote that “[t]he image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions... The *explanation* of the work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, ... the voice of a single person, the *author* ‘confiding’ in us” (Barthes 1322, original emphasis). For Barthes, the written word eliminates the author, who is “never more than the instance writing,” and instead allows the reader to shift into the now empty space (1323). He also writes, “We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning... but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of

writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes 1324). This statement works in tandem with Campbell’s thesis, as literature is inherently full of references and callbacks to other authors and works. Michel Foucault expands on Barthes’s “death of the author,” stating in his essay “What Is an Author?,” “‘literary’ discourse was acceptable only if it carried an author’s name; every text of poetry or fiction was obliged to state its *author* and the date, place, and *circumstance of its writing*. The meaning and value attributed to the text *depended on this information*” (Foucault 1482, emphasis mine). This is especially important since there are many works of literature that simply have no identifiable author. We do not know who wrote *Pearl*, but we attribute texts to “the *Pearl*-poet” as if that were a suitable substitute for a name. In order for a text to be considered important, there has to be an author involved in the discussion. If there is no author or if the author is not famous in any way, the text is often forgotten or disavowed. This could easily be another issue that fan fiction faces, as many works are posted online via pseudonyms or anonymous submissions. Even then, as Foucault writes, “[l]iterary anonymity was of interest only as a puzzle to be solved” (1483). Once *who* wrote the work has been established, it is then judged.

*The Book of Margery Kempe* is an excellent instance of this behavior in medieval texts. In it, Margery Kempe goes on multiple pilgrimages as she converses with Christ through visions. The work can easily fall under the banner of fan fiction since, as Anna Wilson describes in her essay “Full-body Reading,” “Kempe imagines herself into the Gospels as a speaking character, interacting with the Holy family and the disciples, in her own fanfiction of Christ’s crucifixion” (Wilson). Kempe’s emotional connection to the story of the Passion and her very intimate relationship with Christ—at one point,



Kempe envisions a marriage between herself and Jesus!—has led many critics to attribute to her “all kinds of mental disorders, from severe post-natal depression to schizophrenia, which accords with a refusal to take her seriously as a mystic or theologian” (Wilson). hilariously, this happens to be a running theme throughout *The Book of Margery Kempe*, as many priests and authority figures condemn her for her overzealous emotions. In any case, this does not change the fact that there are many medievalists who condemn *Margery Kempe* for many of the same reasons that fan fictions are judged so harshly; their authors are not well-known, the contents of the works are more emotional and less analytical than most accepted works of literature, and they co-opt the characters and stories of other works for the author’s new purposes.

With *The Book of Margery Kempe* in mind, the manuscript tradition of Europe has fostered many works that could, at first glance, be considered fan fiction. This is especially true if the definition of what makes a work “fan fiction” is as broad as Rebecca Tushnet’s in her article “Legal Fictions: Copyright, Fan Fiction, and a New Common Law,” which states that fan fiction is “any kind of written creativity that is based on an identifiable segment of popular culture...and is not produced as ‘professional’ writing” (Tushnet 655). Such a definition can encompass most classic works of literature. *Romance of the Rose* would be under fire for its use of the Narcissus myth among many other Greco-Roman myths. The *Pearl*-poet could be sued for plagiarizing the story of Jonah in *Patience*. Even Shakespeare would be a target, as many of his works are based either on real people (i.e. *Richard II*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*) or on folk tales and legends (i.e. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*). This is why it is important to establish what an “author” really is, even as critics like Barthes and

Foucault question the role of the author in literature. If we think of authors as “being responsible for that work being the way it is,” then it does not matter who writes or retells the stories of Narcissus, Oberon and Titania, or Jonah (Uidhir 385). The *Pearl*-poet does not claim to have created the story of Jonah but instead pledges to “recite the whole story as Scripture reports” (*Patience* line 60). He is instead the “auctor,” one who knows the story. The character of Jonah and the scenario that he is subjected to are the same, but the words of the story in *Patience* do differ from that of the biblical text from which the story originates. In other words, the story only has slight literary differences between the two works. Likewise, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun do not claim to have invented any of their literary allusions and are instead constantly reaffirming that these are stories that are known to some in the manuscript culture and should be told and retold in a manner similar to oral tradition.

What separates works following the manuscript tradition from true fan fiction stems in how the stories are told. The medieval manuscript tradition stems from the fact that manuscripts were hand-crafted from scratch. Ink had to be procured, animal skins had to be transformed into vellum, and a scribe or author would spend weeks, months, or years crafting a single work, which would be filled with prose/poetry, gloss, and images to illuminate the text (“The Making of a Medieval Book”). Each manuscript was unique, and scribes copying a single work would often create new images or provide rubrication, commentary on the work they were transferring. *Romance of the Rose* alone has almost 300 manuscripts that we know of, and each one has rubrication that either “articulate[s] the narrative by providing brief summaries at the beginning of each episode,” “explain[s] the poem’s joint authorship,” or “identif[ies] which character is

speaking during dialogue passages” (Huot 42-43). This commentary comes from the scribes as they communicate with other scribes, annotating texts with comments and explanations much like footnotes in modern texts. These “glosses,” as they were called, were “[r]arely spontaneous reactions by a reader to the text,” but were instead “more commonly copied from another manuscript along with the main text” (Clemens and Graham 39). The gloss of medieval manuscripts is very similar to footnotes in more modern texts. Authors were not exempt from commenting on works either, sometimes providing gloss within their own text. Jean de Meun explains that his account of the fall of Nero comes from “the old book called *The Twelve Caesars* ... as Suetonius wrote it” and even tells others to “look up the words of the unlawful man” to back up his retold narrative (*Romance* 126). This tradition of citing or retelling the works of other authors continues to this day. This entire essay is filled with them! A more literary example of this can be found in Chaucer’s dream vision poem *The Book of the Duchess* in which he describes seeing windows “peynted, bothe text and glose, / of all the Romaunce of the Rose” (*Duchess* lines 333-334). Note that over one hundred years separated the earliest manuscript of the French poem *Romance of the Rose* and Chaucer’s Middle English poem. This shows the lasting power of the manuscript tradition, as it keeps bringing stories that could be lost to time or in translation into the minds of their readers.

When it comes to *Romance of the Rose*, however, the manuscript tradition is called into question, especially when it is faced with modern theories of fan fiction and authorship. One of the biggest issues that arise against those studying this work is identifying exactly who Guillaume de Lorris was. Any attempts by scholars to discover biographic information on Guillaume have “proved fruitless,” and the closest guess that

anyone can make is that “it is likely that Guillaume was a literate member of a northern French court who composed poetry for the pleasure and titillation of a noble patron and his entourage” and possibly “a native of the Loiret” (Guynn 633). This could easily describe any number of authors in France in the thirteenth century. Some scholars have even called into question the existence of Guillaume himself since he “does not in fact sign his own poem but is instead referred to in passing by his successor Jean de Meun” (Guynn 633). At roughly the mid-point of the poem, the God of Love prophesizes, “For when Guillaume shall cease, more than forty years after his death—may I not lie—Jean will continue it” (*Romance* 188). This is exceedingly important, as it is one of the few medieval works that deliberately “steps out of medieval tradition to point to [Jean de Meun] as ‘author’” (Martin 3). It also happens to be one of the defining indications of *Romance of the Rose*’s second part being a work of fan fiction. Throughout the God of Love’s rallying speech before the assault on Jealousy’s castle, Jean de Meun is emphasizing the fact that *he* is now writing the *Romance of the Rose* and not Guillaume de Lorris while also naming the character of the Lover as Guillaume. Jean de Meun has written himself into the text, like Margery Kempe and many a fan fiction writer has done before and after him, and he is experiencing for himself the world that Guillaume de Lorris had created.

Jean de Meun’s authorship of over half of *Romance of the Rose* is especially peculiar due to the fact that there exists little proof that Guillaume de Lorris even existed. If Jean de Meun wanted to, he could have never brought up the fact that the hand that held the quill had changed. He could have remained silent, adding his work to the name of de Lorris without any confusion. Truth be told, he waited quite a while into

the poem to let us know, as there are roughly six thousand lines between the end of Guillaume's original work and Jean's revelation that it was Guillaume who wrote the beginning of the poem. There are also no records of any other work Guillaume was responsible, while many manuscripts of *Romance of the Rose* contain other works by Jean de Meun ("Roman de la Rose"). There is little evidence to support any claims that Jean simply created Guillaume to further his reputation, but his assertion of authorship does provide readers with a discussion of what it means to be an author.

Assuming that Guillaume de Lorris did create the first part of *Romance of the Rose*, the authorship of Jean de Meun needs to be examined. This is where the discourse of fan fiction comes into play. It is true that fan fiction is a product of modern times, as authors only really had possession of their works once copyright law became enacted across the globe. Because of this, it would be anachronistic to attribute Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Romance of the Rose* as fan fiction. Yet, there are many other elements of fan fiction that Jean de Meun mirrors in his work here, such as the lack of the original author's consent and the appropriation of established characters, plots, and settings in a fundamentally new work. The former hinges on the fact that Jean de Meun himself states that he does not pick up the pen Guillaume puts down until "more than forty years after his death" (*Romance* 188). Do recall that Guillaume at no point in his narrative mentions Jean nor does he give any indication that his work has more to add. There is no clear answer as to why Guillaume stopped where he did, as one scribe commented in a late thirteenth-century manuscript of *Romance* that the original author ceased writing "either because he did not want to, or because he could not" (Huot 43). The dreamer of the text also does not awaken, as is typical of dream vision narratives,

and is still dreaming by the end of Guillaume's dream vision, which indicates that the work remained unfinished when Jean de Meun took it upon himself to complete it. Whether he, as some believe, died before he could add more or just gave up on it may never be known.

There is a specific genre of fan fiction known as "continuation fic", which takes an established canon and expands the scope of the narrative beyond the original author's intent. As Lipton states, this type of fan fiction "derives from the tendency of humans to want to know 'what happened next' or 'what would happen if'" (432). This is the other indicator that Jean de Meun's section of *Romance of the Rose* has elements of modern fan fiction. Jean has taken it upon himself to replace Guillaume's role as narrator while somehow claiming to maintain Guillaume's authorship of the narrative as a whole. This would be the equivalent of another poet including a ten-thousand-line extension to Homer's *Odyssey* without telling the reader until line 4578 that this section is not by Homer but that it is what he would have wanted. If we consider Guillaume's *Romance of the Rose* as a singular, albeit incomplete work, then Jean's continuation is a fan fiction-like narrative that takes the characters of the Lover, the God of Love, and the denizens of the garden and repurposes them for his own ends.

The most notable example of Jean de Meun overriding the characters of Guillaume de Lorris comes in the form of Reason. In de Lorris's original work, Reason makes a brief appearance, only speaking for roughly a little under 100 lines. He describes her as "neither young nor white with age, neither too tall nor too short, neither too thin nor too fat; the eyes in her head shown like two stars, and she wore a crown on her head... By her appearance and her face it seemed that she was made in paradise, for

Nature would not have known how to make a work of such regularity” (*Romance* 73). Reason is so symmetrical because “God made her personally in his likeness and in his image” and he gave her “the power and the lordship to keep man from folly, provided he be such that he believe her” (73). Note the wording here, as de Lorris specifically states that Reason can only help those who place their faith in her, much like how God/Christ can only help those who believe in him. Also like Christ, she descends from her tower on high to the earthy ground below as she attempts to reason with the Lover, who has been banned from being with his Rose and is depressed as a result. She then states to the Lover, “Fair friend, folly and childishness have brought you this suffering and dismay” (73). She then goes on to explain to the Lover that entering the garden and the party of Distraction was a mistake and that continuing to ally himself with the God of Love will only end in an even worse fate, for her children Resistance, Shame, and Foul Mouth will ruin him as a result of his pursuit of the Rose. She ends her speech by pleading the Lover to forgo his quest: “Take the bit hard in your teeth; subdue and curb your heart. You must pit your strength and resistance against the thoughts of your heart. He who always believes his heart cannot keep from committing acts of folly” (*Romance* 74). By at least thinking before he acts, the Lover, according to Reason, has an opportunity to save himself from even greater pain, but he simply replies,

“Lady, I very much want to beg you to give over lecturing me. You tell me that I should curb my heart, so that Love may no longer subjugate it. Do you think then that Love would agree that I should curb and subdue the heart which is his in full and complete possession? What you say cannot be. ... Now let me be immediately, for you could waste your French idleness. I would rather die thus

than that Love should have accused me of falsity or treason. I want to be praised or blamed, at the end, for having loved well. *Anyone who lectures me annoys me.*" (*Romance* 74, emphasis mine)

This statement is particularly interesting, as it is as if the Lover is speaking to a *voice* of Reason. And a voice of Reason is all that is found in de Lorriss's text, as the staunch defiance of the Lover convinces her that he could not be reasoned with. Afterward, all that Reason declared would happen comes true. Jealousy, accompanied by Reason's children, barricade the Rose within a castle, and the Lover falls into despair.

I emphasize how much is spoken between Reason and the Lover because Jean de Meun takes this brief conversation and devotes over 3000 lines in a drastic retelling of this very conversation. Just this one section alone rivals the length of de Lorriss's own text! Mimicking de Lorriss, de Meun has Reason address the Lover as "fair friend," like she did in her first address to him (93). From here, however, the similarities begin to make way for the differences between the two Reasons, as this new Reason engages in a Socratic dialogue with the Lover on the nature of Love, types of love, false love, Justice, Charity, and many, many other topics and stories. It becomes painfully clear that de Meun has a negative view of Reason, as what she says is so long-winded and complicated. Unlike her concise counterpart in Part I, de Meun's Reason describes love as "hateful peace and loving hate" among many other paradoxes, so much so that the Lover "can learn nothing from it" (94-95). Despite this, the Lover now is eagerly asking Reason many questions and pleading for her to explain things akin to any one of Socrates's disciples. Again, we see that de Meun has altered one of the characters to fit his story. Where the Lover was originally annoyed at *anyone* who lectured him on what



he could and could not do, he now acts as a vessel that constantly needs refilling, unable to retain any thought other than his pursuit for the Rose yet equally unable to draw himself away from anyone who promises nourishment until they ask for commitment. This is not an exaggeration, for de Meun's Lover states, "Love prevented anything from being put into practice... Whenever Reason cast a word into one ear, he threw one into the other, with the result that she wasted all her efforts and only filled me with anger and wrath" (99). When Reason finally asks for the simple promise of becoming a friend to her, the Lover rejects her, affirming that "If I promised my love to you, I would never keep my promise... But I have told you often that I do not want to think elsewhere than on the rose, where my thoughts are turned" (137). He ends the discourse by stating, "When you make me think elsewhere, by means of the speeches that you repeat here, until I am constantly tired of hearing them, you will see me flee away from here if you do not immediately keep quiet, for my heart's attention is turned elsewhere" (137). This is similar to de Lorriss's Lover's statement that "Anyone who lectures me annoys me" in that it sends Reason away, but the meaning of the two Lovers differs greatly. For de Lorriss, the Lover's rebuke is sharp, stating that he refuses to let Love, his master, down. In de Meun's text, however, the Lover's rebuke comes off as a flippant dismissal, describing Reason's company as if she were an insect to be shooed away or, if that fails, to run away from. This Lover is just too busy to be bothered with silly things like Reason.

While such a drastic re-characterization of the Lover and Reason is more than enough to label Jean de Meun's section of the *Romance of the Rose* as shockingly similar to modern fan fiction, I would not support the claim that it should be discarded

because of that. In fact, I would argue the opposite. Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Romance* is a fantastic effort that should be examined in tandem with Guillaume de Lorris's original poem. It does matter that the second half of the text is written by a completely different author, but that makes the *Romance of the Rose* so compelling. Jean de Meun, like many fans of literature, sought to continue the story that de Lorris began, and it is a much more complex work because of his additions. Jean de Meun may have written his own ending to Guillaume de Lorris's work, but both authors drew upon an expansive pool of literature that grew just a little bit bigger with their works. There may not be one singular "author" for *Romance of the Rose* or any other work, as there are countless stories and legends from other poets and creators woven into every tale. Manuscript culture—the tradition of literature that has stretched throughout the ages—has allowed authors and "auctors" to reach out through time and space to share their stories, to retell them, and to add their own to the collective works of man for centuries, just as Jean de Meun, like many modern fans of literature and culture, found the inspiration to continue the dream vision of the Lover in Guillaume de Lorris's stead.

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